

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Brevard Zoo closes bird experiences as precaution to Avian flu**

MELBOURNE, Fla., February 17, 2022 — Brevard Zoo has been following reports from the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of cases of wild birds testing positive for avian influenza (HPAI), a highly pathogenic illness, in parts of South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky. In January, samples collected by USDA-Wildlife Services from a hunter-harvested blue-winged teal in Palm Beach County, Florida tested positive for the strain as well.

This week, state wildlife officials reported that several ducks in Brevard County have tested positive for HPAI. "Given the seriousness of this disease and the close proximity to the animals in our care, we have implemented our avian influenza plan," said Keith Winsten, executive director.

To protect our bird residents, the Zoo's free-flight walk-through aviaries will be closed to the public until further notice. Zoo birds susceptible to HPAI such as our macaws, black swans, Osceola turkeys and whistling ducks, will be moved to indoor habitats, while other species will receive habitat modifications to prevent contact with wild birds. All Zoo animal care staff will use personal protective equipment while caring for our birds.

Avian influenza - commonly called "bird flu" - is a viral infection that occurs naturally in birds. Wild birds can carry the virus but may not always get sick from it. Some domesticated birds such as chickens, ducks and turkeys, can become infected, often fatally.

Although it is possible for people to become infected with avian influenza, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that the virus does not spread easily from animals to humans.

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*Brevard Zoo is home to more than 900 animals representing 195 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at [www.brevardzoo.org](http://www.brevardzoo.org).*

*Treetop Trek features five aerial obstacle courses that whisk guests above parts of the Zoo and through lush Florida landscapes. More information is available at [www.treetoptrek.com](http://www.treetoptrek.com).*

*The Aquarium Project is a plan to construct a world-class aquarium and conservation center at Port Canaveral. More information is available at [www.theaquariumproject.org](http://www.theaquariumproject.org).*