
**People for the Ethical
Treatment of Animals**
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State of the Zoo Industry

Factsheet

Many zoos and aquariums are facing financial difficulties and declining attendance and relying on hefty taxpayer subsidies to survive. Contact PETA for documentation.

November 18, 2004: “Lowry Park Zoo plans to raise the price of admission about \$3 a ticket. Even after attracting 100,000 more visitors than the previous year, zoo officials said they didn’t make enough to break even during 2004.” —*The Tampa Tribune*

November 13, 2004: “The Philadelphia Zoo plans to slash its roster of humans ... as it wrestles with a \$4 million budget shortfall.” —*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

October 29, 2004: “Bloomington’s Miller Park Zoo will lose more than \$58,000 in state funding this year as part of a plan by Gov. Rod Blagojevich to shore up the state’s shaky finances.” —*The Pantagraph*

September 12, 2004: “The Ross Park Zoo in Binghamton faces a 109-thousand-dollar deficit. Executive Director Jarod Miller blames the shortfall on legal costs associated with unionization, static admissions and fund raising efforts, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in slashed funding. ... Ross Park has been plagued by financial and structural deterioration for nearly a decade.” —WSTM-TV

July 30, 2004: “Closing the [Baltimore Zoo’s] reptile house was one of several cost-cutting measures announced earlier this month.” —WBAL-TV

July 27, 2004: “Attendance [at the Houston Zoo] has declined in the last two years ...” —*Houston Chronicle*

July 25, 2004: “[The Potawatomi Zoo] continues to deal with a \$475,000 deficit that is expected to grow by year’s end. ... Board members ... are worried how the zoo will pay staff and maintain any news exhibits, given [the zoo’s] current deficit.” —*South Bend Tribune*

March 7, 2004: “Fiscal year 2003 was a bad year [for the Capron Park Zoo] with receipts of only \$73,000 ...” —*The Sun Chronicle*

March 1, 2004: “Dallas Zoo officials, seeking to give the perennially cash-strapped facility a firm financial footing, have proposed converting the 114-year-old city institution into a county-owned operation. The nonprofit Dallas Zoological Society is trying to persuade Dallas County commissioners to place a property-tax proposal before voters, probably sometime next year, to fund the zoo.” —*The Dallas Morning News*

December 23, 2003: “The Detroit Zoo will close on Mondays and Tuesdays from Jan. 1 through March to make up for \$1 million in lost state revenue, donations and tourism. Belle Isle Aquarium also is scaling back hours.” —*Daily Tribune*

December 17, 2003: “The Kansas City Zoo ... is laying off 19 workers to help make ends meet.” —WDAF-TV

December 5, 2003: “In a belt-tightening move attributed to declining attendance at the San Diego Zoo, 34 full-time employees from the zoo and Wild Animal Park were laid off ... Visitor counts at the zoo have dropped as much as 300,000 a year since 2000.” —*North County Times*

November 28, 2003: “[The Franklin Park Zoo] is fighting for donations and government support.” —*Chicago Tribune*

November 25, 2003: “The 22-acre [Blank Park Zoo] has received less money from area cities over the past few years. The decline, coupled with lower attendance, has made it difficult for the zoo’s \$3 million budget to keep pace. Some worry that the trends could threaten the 37-year-old zoo’s future.” —*The Des Moines Register*

November 25, 2003: “Jane Ballentine, a spokeswoman for the [American Zoo and Aquarium Association], said budget problems are being fought by zoos across the nation.” —*The Des Moines Register*

November 25, 2003: “Hanging in the balance may be the long-term viability of the Chaffee Zoo.” —*The Fresno Bee*

November 21, 2003: “For the second time in a year, the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Board has increased the cost of going to the [Fort Wayne] Children’s Zoo. ... [T]he fee increase will be used ... to keep the attraction running at a break-even point.” —*The News-Sentinel*

November 19, 2003: “[The Minnesota Zoo] is headed for fewer visitors, more cutbacks, more deterioration, and lower morale unless it gets more money.” —Associated Press

November 13, 2003: “The New England Aquarium’s 220 full-time employees received word that the financially troubled institution was laying off 20 percent of its workers ...” —*Concord Monitor*

November 5, 2003: “The Baltimore Zoo is being forced to lend out its beloved elephants Dolly and Anna—victims of budget cuts that claimed 20 jobs and are forcing the removal of about 400 reptiles, amphibians and birds, zoo officials said yesterday.” —*The Baltimore Sun*

November 1, 2003: “Fixing cash flow problems at The Florida Aquarium cost the city \$850,000 last week. ... More than eight years after it opened, the downtown attraction continues to rely on tax money ...” —*Tampa Tribune*

August 14, 2003: “[A]ttendance this year at the Beardsley Zoo is flat.” —*The Hartford Courant*

August 3, 2003: “Attendance at the [National Zoo] this year is down about 30%.” —*Los Angeles Times*

May 30, 2003: “From Nevada to Philadelphia, zoos and animal parks are taking some unusual steps to cope with municipal and state budget cuts, like putting their snakes on a diet, axing entire exhibits, and shipping off some longtime zoo residents. Indeed, nearly half of the country’s zoos are facing cutbacks this year, according to the American Zoo and Aquarium Association. Attendance, meanwhile, is down about 3% nationwide ...” —*Wall Street Journal*

April 21, 2003: “Attendance at Animal Kingdom is less than at Disney World’s other parks and has steadily declined since the first full year the park was open.” —*Orlando Sentinel*

April 15, 2003: “As part of a doomsday budget, Mayor Bloomberg will propose today that both zoos [Queens Zoo and Prospect Park Zoo] be shut. ... The two closures are expected to save \$7.8 million combined ...” —*New York Daily News*

January 16, 2003: “Attendance at Ocean Journey dropped 24 percent last year as the struggling aquarium continued its path through bankruptcy court.” —*Rocky Mountain News*

December 11, 2002: “The Little Rock Zoo will close a popular petting zoo and cancel this summer’s Zoo Days to handle an expected flat 2003 budget.” —*The Arkansas Democrat Gazette*

December 4, 2002: “Attendance at the Kansas City Zoo continued to plummet in 2002, forcing managers to borrow against a rainy-day fund to stanch a tide of red ink nearing \$1 million.” —*The Kansas City Star*

October 19, 2002: “Unable to afford two koalas who are on pace to eat \$44,000 worth of eucalyptus leaves this year, the Toledo Zoo has decided to return the animals to the San Diego Zoo by year’s end.” —*The Cincinnati Enquirer*

September 13, 2002: “City taxpayers will spend \$200,000 to bail out the Lowry Park Zoo because it did not raise enough money to pay its bills this year.” —*St. Petersburg Times*

March 23, 2002: “The [North Carolina] Zoological Park lost \$1.3 million of its \$14 million annual operating budget this year, and state budget writers are asking for an additional \$980,000 to \$1.54 million in cuts next year.” —*Charlotte Observer*

December 27, 2001: “Zoo Atlanta, faced with declining revenue and attendance even before Sept. 11, recently raised its adult admission charge.” —*Kitchener-Waterloo Record*

November 28, 2001: “[C]ontroversies of recent years have led to declining attendance [at Topeka Zoo].” —*The Topeka Capital-Journal*

October 2, 2001: “The Shedd Aquarium will lay off 16 percent of its full-time work force, an unprecedented move at the aquarium, which this year is celebrating the 10th anniversary of its popular Oceanarium. The layoffs of 44 workers reflect concern about ‘financial trends before the events of Sept. 11,’ said Deb Fassnacht, executive vice president of the Shedd.” —*Chicago Sun-Times*

July 15, 2001: “While attendance—the [Hogle Zoo’s] lifeblood—is sputtering, taxpayer subsidies of the privately operated zoo more than tripled over a decade to \$3.5 million last year.” —Associated Press Newswires

December 27, 2000: “The NEW Zoo ... is scheduled to shut its doors after Sunday until March 1. ... ‘We were asked to make budget cuts ...,’ zoo manager Neil Anderson said.” —Associated Press Newswires

December 24, 2000: “Daytime attendance at the Phoenix Zoo was down 3 percent last year from 10 years earlier, even as the Valley grew. And across the country, after years of increasing attendance, half of all zoos and aquariums reported a decline in attendance last year. An additional 13 percent reported flat attendance from 1998 to 1999, according to the association.” —*The Arizona Republic*

December 23, 2000: “Cheyenne Mountain Zoo’s attendance plummeted 13 percent this year.” —*The Gazette*

December 21, 2000: “[Mesker Park] Zoo attendance has declined nearly 50 percent since 1998 and in recent years, the zoo has dealt with a slew of public relations nightmares.” —*South Bend Tribune*

November 28, 2000: “Years of declining attendance and revenues have nearly crippled the [Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium].” —*The News Tribune*