

7 Reasons why you SHOULD visit the Buttonwood Park Zoo!



No twisting of arms is necessary to get kids to come to Buttonwood Park Zoo! (Buttonwood Park Zoo)

When was the last time you gazed into the intelligent eyes of a bear, lynx or river otter? Stood next to the gargantuan bison, watched the playful of harbor seals, or observed the craftsmanship of a beaver? For many of us, the only experience we have with animals, is the food on our plate, a seagull, crow or family pet. Perhaps a documentary.

Being around a variety of animals can be a richly rewarding experience for kids and adults alike. There is an awe and wonder that comes to being within close proximity to animals. "Oohs" and "ahs" abound. A laugh, chuckle or even a little fear accompany being in their presence.

We are privileged to be able to have these experiences because of a zoo right in our own backyard. Established in 1894, making it the 12th oldest zoo in America, the **Buttonwood Park Zoo** is nationally accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association. This means it is part of a small group of zoos and aquariums that agrees to undergo scrutiny and rigorous

inspections. In fact it was during one of these inspections that the AZA declared Buttonwood Zoo to be “one of the finest small zoos in the United States.” High accolades indeed.

Having had personal experience with many of the affable and professional staff at the zoo and seeing the care, effort and pride that they put into their jobs, I felt inspired to come up with a few reasons why you *really* should visit. Without further ado...

1. The Animals

Duh. The animals. Everyone already “knows” that right? But it needs to be re-iterated. Many people come to the zoo, pass through quickly, make a few observations and leave. To have a truly rewarding experience, I’d suggest making a day of it. Slow down. Devour the information on displays. Spend 5, 10, 15 minutes or more observing the animals. You will be shocked at how intelligent they are, their social behaviors, and in some cases habits that will remind you of “Uncle Bob,” your...ahem...significant other, or even yourself.



Need a reason to visit? All the animals are Red Sox fans! (Buttonwood Park Zoo)

I guarantee that if you spend more than a minute observing you will be rewarded. The longer the observation, the greater the reward. Biologists spend decades observing one species of animals and are still in amazement and awe of their subjects.

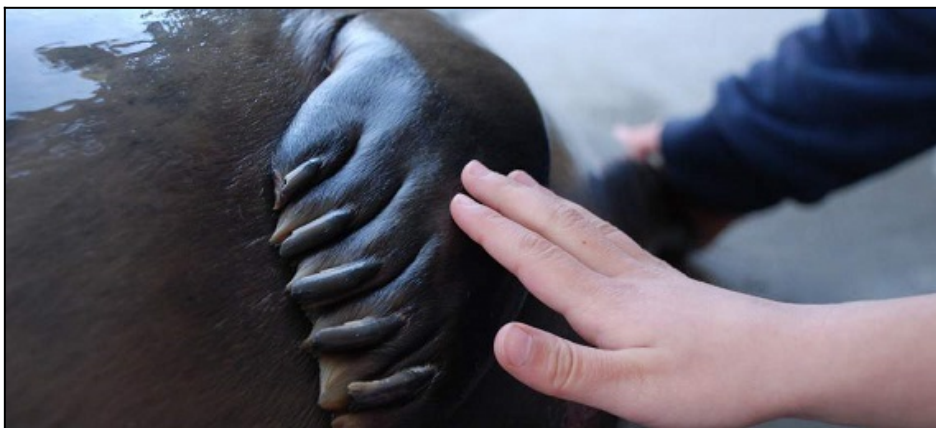
They still learn things even decades later! So every visit to the zoo can be a “new” experience. The worst thing someone can do is explore the zoo and not come back for months or years thinking they have seen it all. Not even close!

Since the seasons affect their behaviors, the exhibits are dynamic and ever changing, and the handlers are always adding “enrichment” to keep the animals from being bored and stressed, you are certain to have a varied and diverse experience with each visit. Click on the section title to see the animals from all over the world that are on exhibit.

2. Entertainment

Besides the animals there are a number of things to do. You could hop aboard the **Wattman Electric Train**, relax and get a grand tour. A huge hit with the kids! Take a spin on the **Wildlife Carousel** and reminisce about all the past fairs, and festivals and perhaps even Lincoln Park. Close your eyes and pretend. We won't tell anyone!

You can meet the animals with the handlers at various times throughout the days. You can observe and perhaps participate in feeding the animals. This is an experience I am most fond of. You can see the full Keeper Chat Schedule **here** and more information **here**.



Being in the presence of the animals can be a profound experience – one that will never be

forgotten. (Buttonwood Park Zoo)

3. Special Events

What many people don't know is that the zoo has an astounding number of special events all year long. Many are familiar with Zoo Nights and Boo at the Zoo but there are many more events. Did you know that you can have your **birthday** there? Or that you can spend the night there? A Critter Camp-In is where you eat pizza, spend the night at the zoo, wake up and have breakfast and then do a bunch of animal related activities.

Every August is **Feast in the Wild** where you explore the zoo while tasting the fare of some of the area's best restaurants.

4. Education

Buttonwood Zoo provides a number of learning opportunities for schools, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or any other small group. There are a number of special programs for kids from pre-school to high school. There are guided tours, seasonal programs, a Wonder of Birds, Animal Adaptations, Vernal Pool Ponderings, and more. You'll be hard pressed to find a better place to learn so much and not realize it!

5. Family Bonding

Advertising the animals and things like the train and carousel are easy ways to get the kids to put down the video games and participate in an activity with the family. While whipping out the phones can't be stopped, at least they will be using them to take photos of the animals and fun they are having. You want have to twist their arms to not text or chat!

6. Promotes Appreciation for Animals

My brother and I have had the privilege of spending a number of mornings before opening observing the handlers and in some

cases participating in **feeding the animals**. Anyone who has spent a minute close to an animal, glimpsing into its eyes, and watching it interact will come away with a powerful, lasting experience. I mention this, because the handlers do this every day, so you can imagine how much more intense their experience is.



Buttonwood Zoo has special programs where your family can get up close and personal for an amazing experience! (Buttonwood Park Zoo)

Every handler I have observed without exception displayed a loving-kindness towards the animals. They entered their chosen field because they love animals period, but after working with the same animals – which they all affectionately name – an indelible bond forms. Just like our domesticated pets become genuine family members, so is the case here.

A child (and adult) can have a similar experience through the **Animal Encounters** program. This will be an experience that will be remembered fondly into old age. This is a MUST for everyone.

7. Conservation

By supporting Buttonwood Zoo you also are helping them participate in local, domestic and international conservation efforts. Your support is far reaching.

The zoo is involved in the Cape Cod Stranding

Network/International Fund for Animal Welfare which helps whales, dolphins and 18 other species survive their stranding.

The zoo maintains a Butterfly Garden, participates in endangered turtle conservation, Earth Week, Frog Watch USA, Homes For Birds, and many more initiatives and programs.

Buttonwood Park Zoo

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