



City of New Bedford  
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

City of New Bedford  
Office of the Mayor  
Contact: Elizabeth Treadup Pio  
(508) 979-1410  
[etreadup@newbedford-ma.gov](mailto:etreadup@newbedford-ma.gov)

Contact: Keith Lovett  
Director of Buttonwood Park Zoo  
(508) 991-6178 ext. 15  
[klovett@newbedford-ma.gov](mailto:klovett@newbedford-ma.gov)

Date: March 2, 2015  
For Immediate Release

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **Buttonwood Park Zoo's Harbor Seals Undergo Surgery**

**New Bedford, Massachusetts** – The Buttonwood Park Zoo's two Atlantic Harbor Seals, Yellow and Blue, age 32 and 12 respectively, underwent surgery last week to improve their vision and overall ophthalmic health. The surgeries involved removing vision impairing cataracts from the eyes of both seals and the repair of a luxated or fallen lens in one of Blue's eyes.

Unlike most mammals, seals' eyes contain differences to their corneas and lenses that allow them to see under water and above water. Therefore, eye care for seals requires a highly trained and specialized ophthalmologist. Seals also have unique breathing adaptations for deep diving that requires complex and precise anesthesia. Due to the complicated nature of these procedures, the Zoo brought in Dr. Carmen Colitiz, a board certified veterinary ophthalmologist, and Dr. James Bailey, a board certified veterinary anesthesiologist, whom are recognized as the country's leading pinniped ophthalmic veterinary team, to perform these surgeries.



Each surgery took over three hours to perform and the Zoo is proud to report that both seals are doing well and recovering as expected from their procedures.

The post-surgery recovery for the seals will occur in the off-exhibit dedicated seal holding building adjacent to their habitat. This means the seals will not be viewable by zoo guests during this estimated three week recovery period.

Much research has been performed on the care and health of marine mammals in captivity and the Buttonwood Park Zoo has taken proactive measures to provide the best environment for its beloved Atlantic Harbor Seals. Recent improvements to the seal habitat include darkening the color of the pool along with the installation of a shade structure to reduce sunlight exposure and reflection, improvements to its operant conditioning training programs to allow for voluntary

veterinary procedures by the seals, significant upgrades to its water filtration system, and switching their pool from fresh water to salt water. The Buttonwood Park Zoo will provide regular updates on Yellow and Blue during the recovery period.

**About Buttonwood Park Zoo & Buttonwood Park Zoological Society**

The Buttonwood Park Zoological Society (BPZS), a private, non-profit organization, was founded in 1969 to support the Buttonwood Park Zoo (BPZ) so that the Zoo will be a significant contributor to the conservation of nature both at home and throughout the world.

Buttonwood Park Zoo (BPZ) features over 180 animals and 30 exhibits, including elephants, bison, mountain lions, bears, eagles, seals, otters, and farm animals. BPZ is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and has been called "one of the finest small zoos in the United States" by that organization. For more information, visit [www.bpzoo.org](http://www.bpzoo.org) or call (508) 991-6178.

###