

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Celebrating 25 years at Tropical Butterfly House



The Tropical Butterfly House, Falconry and Wildlife Park in Sheffield will mark its 25th anniversary this month with a series of celebration events that will take place throughout 2019.

Celebrations will commence on Saturday 23 March with a giant Birthday cake for the animals and fun activities throughout the day.

The park is renowned for its collection of exotic animals and endangered species from around the world. Now a landmark for the local area, the park originally came from humble beginnings. It opened during the midst of an economic downturn and started out with just a butterfly house, a nature trail and a small café and shop.

Jo McDonough, operations director joined the park 19 years ago when she left school and has dedicated her career to her love of animals, she explains,

“The park opened with just three employees, butterflies, peacocks, a tarantula and a snake. Many more animals followed and we quickly discovered that the key to our success was allowing visitors to get close to and handle the animals they love. I’m proud to say the same ethos remains with us today”.

25 years on visitor numbers have grown to over 150,000 per annum (in 2018) with a 60+ team of dedicated staff who work hard to connect people with the animals.

The Tropical Butterfly House has changed extensively over 25 years with many highlights along the way, including:

- **2000 - the park welcomed its longest-term resident** a 20-year-old Caiman called Darwin who lives here with his loyal partner Pedra.
- **2013 - Lemur Heights enclosure** opened by the late Barry Chuckle of The Chuckle Brothers, it took around six months to construct with the building work completed almost entirely by the parks dedicated staff. Home now to 7 ring-tailed lemurs and 3 red-ruffed lemurs.

The Tropical Butterfly House remains proudly owned and run by the same family that founded it in 1994, headed by managing director Kim Bellis who took over the reins earlier this year and following in her father’s footsteps (the parks original founder). Kim has spent her life living and working at Tropical Butterfly House, she explained,

“The legacy of my dad’s labour of love is still very clear today, which is to promote and conserve the natural world around us and beyond. The huge success of the Tropical Butterfly House is just as it was when it all began, to inspire the next generation’s passion for nature.”

The wildlife park is also an oasis for native British wildlife. Purpose-built pond environments have attracted many endangered species, including the common newt, frog and toad, great crested newt and grass snakes. Over 100 nest boxes are a refuge for birds including the tree sparrow, a red data species, which has successfully seen one breeding pair in 1998 grow to forty pairs last spring. The park also owns three other conservations sites (in South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and the Peak District).

Not open to the public, they are managed with wildlife in mind to help protect and encourage native species.

Looking to the future, Andrew Reeve, wildlife park manager explains the vision for the coming years,

“The focus is firmly on endangered species, to join the many species that have been added over the years, from lemurs and otters to vultures. This has driven our fundraising efforts, for example when visitors see the lemurs and learn about their story, they are essentially helping to raise funds for survival in their native wild habitat”.

The Tropical Butterfly House is open daily, all year round and is located five minutes from the M1, junction 31, with free parking. See www.butterflyhouse.co.uk to plan your visit.

-ENDS-

Images: #mybutterflymoment

- Close encounters in the Butterfly House
- Stick Insect Exotic Animal Encounter
- Lemur VIP experience
- Facepainting in our Arts and Crafts Room
- Kato and Alfie Macaws with keeper
- Keeper with Tenrec

All photos and video copyright Tropical Butterfly House, Wildlife & Falconry Centre.

Notes to Editor

For further information or to arrange interviews, filming, photography or competitions at the Tropical Butterfly House please contact Niki and Martine, Marketing Managers - marketing@butterflyhouse.co.uk | 01909 569416 ext. 21

#mybutterflymoment (social media campaign)

Many exciting memories have been made at the Tropical Butterfly House so we're encouraging people to share their stories and images from over from the past 25 years to #mybutterflymoment where we hope to capture the excitement of all the hands-on experiences at the park.

About Tropical Butterfly House

Encounter the exotic and discover a wild family day out in South Yorkshire!

Animal encounters: Meet lemurs, meerkats, owls, otters, snakes and other animals throughout the day. Plus spectacular shows featuring free-flying birds of prey, parrots and charismatic mammals.

Indoor rainforest; home to butterflies, birds, bats, crocodiles and creepy-crawlies from around the world and meet and feed the friendly residents of the Farm Barn.

Walk-through mammal enclosure: Get closer than ever to some of the most popular animals, and see if you can get a selfie with a dinosaur.

Children's play: Visit the Realm of Camelot adventure playground, outdoor wet play area and indoor activity and craft centre to entertain children in all weathers.

Themed events take place at the centre during School Holidays.

Facilities include a Picnic Room, Jungle Gift Shop, Lottie's Coffee Lounge and the Butterfly Café, serving freshly prepared hot and cold food and homemade cakes and afternoon tea.

Tropical Butterfly House timeline

1990	Planning permission acquired
1994	Butterfly House opens for the first time to the public (23 March)
1995	First free flying bird displays
1996	Small mammal enclosure opens
2006	Meerkats arrival
2012	Realms of Camelot children's play area opens
2013	Lemur heights opened by Barry Chuckle
2014	Wilderness Walkthrough opens
2016	Lottie's Coffee Lounge opens
2016	First Baby Wallaby born
2017	Visitor numbers reach 150,000 pa
2017	Dino Trail around the park and arrival of REXY the T-rex
2017	Conservation land purchased (Newark and South Yorkshire)
2018	Staff employed 60+
2018	Conservation land purchased (Grindleford)
2019	Baby otters born

Butterfly House by numbers

- Over 50 different species of butterfly
- 7 lemurs and 3 red ring-tailed lemurs
- 2 daily free flying bird shows Birds of Prey
- 1 T-Rex and over 15 dinosaurs on our trail
- 40,000 snowdrops planted / 46.5 acres of conservation land acquired and managed
- Over 60 members of staff
- 150 nest boxes across park and conservation sites
- 40 pairs of breeding endangered tree sparrows
- Original 4 acre site grown to 8 acres
- Over 350 schools visiting pa

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The Tropical Butterfly House, Wildlife & Falconry Centre is a member of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA). BIAZA represents its member collections and promotes the values of good zoos and aquariums. For further information, please telephone 0207 449 6599.