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## Audubon Zoo Hatches Flamingo Chick For Second Year In A Row

(New Orleans, La.) - Audubon Zoo recently saw its flamingo collection grow for a second year in a row.

The latest hatching of a flamingo chick took place on the morning of July 4. The new arrival came almost a year to the day after the birth of two chicks – the first to exit an egg at Audubon in more than five years.

The newest chick, whose gender is undetermined, has proven to be a remarkably animated addition to the flamingo habitat near the Zoo entrance that houses part of the collection of popular American flamingos, known for their long legs and striking pink – sometimes red-orange – hue.

“Flamingo chicks usually spend the first six to eight days after hatching on the nest mound, being fed and incubated by the parents,” said Carolyn Atherton, Audubon Zoo Curator of Birds. “On day three, this little one had enough of the nest mound and kept jumping out. Despite being returned to the nest several times, the chick kept leaving to explore. And it has been running around with the parents ever since. It is a very precocious chick.”

Sticking with a plan that worked well last year, the parents of the newborn chick sat atop a “dummy” egg (a fake filled with plaster) while the real egg was being incubated artificially by the Bird Department.

Later, Zoo staffers removed the fake egg from the parent’s nest, leaving the live one that was about to hatch. This process ensures that live eggs are not knocked off their nests and broken by the birds who move about a great deal.

Down the road, Atherton said Audubon will collect some feathers from the new chick and send them off for DNA testing to determine the bird’s gender. Typically, the Zoo’s bird department does not name any of the more than 90 flamingos in its collection.

While many flamingo eggs were laid this year, Atherton said only one was fertile. As a result, the July 4 hatching likely will be the only one in 2017.

### Flamingo Facts:

- The American flamingo - sometimes called Caribbean flamingos - is the only member of the species found naturally in North America. The bird is also found in the Caribbean and on the Galapagos islands.
- Audubon Zoo has 40 flamingos in the "Uptown" flock on the Zoo's entrance plaza and 53 more in the "downtown" flock in a lagoon near the rear of the Cool Zoo water park.
- The flamingos' pink coloration comes from the high quantities of beta carotene in their diet. Chicks are whitish-grey until the pigment builds up, which can take a year or two.

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