



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **MARYLAND ZOO IN BALTIMORE ANNOUNCES LOSS OF FEMALE OSTRICH**

**BALTIMORE, MD** -- The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is saddened to announce the passing of 18-year-old ostrich, Laverne. “Laverne was a very interesting ostrich with a big personality. She responded well to her training programs allowing the African Watering Hole team and medical staff to monitor and treat her age-related arthritis symptoms,” said Jen Kottyan, avian collection and conservation manager. “Unfortunately, her condition progressed rapidly over the past few months, restricting her activities. As a result, the decision was made to humanely euthanize her due to her declining quality of life. “

“Laverne has had a history of chronic swelling of her left hock since 2011 that she has done well with, and we have been able to manage with anti-inflammatories and pain medications as well as joint supplements for many years. We recently had an acupuncturist work with Laverne to assist with pain management,” stated Dr. Ellen Bronson, head veterinarian at the Zoo. “

Ostriches, the largest of bird species, depend entirely on their strong legs to hold up their heavy bodies, very similar to a giraffe, elephant, or other large hoofstock. Once one joint has abnormalities, the weight bearing shifts to the other leg and it changes the way they walk and move, causing further problems in other joints. An ostrich normally spends its days on its feet, whether searching for food, interacting with other animals, or scanning the environment for predators.

The Zoo’s other ostrich, eleven-year-old Matilda, will continue to reside in the African Watering Hole with the zebra and rhino. “We are looking into the possibility bringing in additional female ostrich very soon,” continued Kottyan. “I think all of us enjoy watching these huge birds as they interact with one another.”

### [About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore](#)

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo’s varied natural habitat exhibits in areas such as Penguin Coast Polar Bear Watch, the Maryland Wilderness, African Journey and the award-winning Children’s Zoo. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. For more information, visit [www.marylandzoo.org](http://www.marylandzoo.org).

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