



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**June 14, 2014****MEDIA CONTACT:**

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ABILENE, Texas-- Officials at the Abilene Zoo sadly report that four flamingos were killed during the severe weather Thursday night.

“It’s always difficult for our staff to lose an animal,” said Zoo Director Bill Gersonde. “Mother Nature dealt us a devastating blow with this storm.”

The flamingos do have an enclosed building that is used during the cold winter months, Gersonde explained, but the zoo does not shift the birds into this building during summer storms.

“We’ve never had a problem leaving the birds out. They’ve ridden out many storms over the years with no injuries,” the zoo director said, but added that another important factor influenced the decision to leave the birds outside during the severe weather.

The birds are currently nesting, and if they had been forced to move into a building, they could have become stressed and abandoned their nests.

That fact, along with the history of no storm-related injuries, are the reasons why the birds have not been moved indoors during storms, Gersonde said, adding that in light of yesterday’s events, he would reevaluate that protocol. Zoo staff will review this policy and determine if any changes need to be made that would benefit the animals.

Also injured in the storm were three additional flamingos and a sand hill crane. One of the flamingos still is in severely critical condition, but the other three birds are recovering well.

Despite the damage during last night’s storm, zoo staff this morning discovered a new flamingo chick had hatched overnight.

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About the Abilene Zoo: Home to more than 900 animals from 250 species, the zoo offers many educational programs and activities, including camps, birthday parties and Behind the Scenes Tours. The zoo is open 7 days a week (closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last admittance is 4:30 p.m. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$3.50 for children ages 3-12, \$5 for seniors aged 60+. Members are admitted free. Memberships start at \$30. www.abilenezoo.org. 325-676-6085. Summer hours run through August with the zoo is open every Thursday until 9 p.m., with admission ending at 8:30 p.m.