Flamingo massacre: Fox kills dozens of birds at US National Zoo

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Flamingos stand in a heated pool at the National Zoo in Washington in December 2002.

A wild fox that breached an enclosure at Washington's National Zoo killed 25 flamingos and one duck before escaping, the facility said

Tuesday, one month after a rabid fox went on a biting spree near the Capitol.

Birdkeepers arrived early Monday to discover the carnage and spotted a fox inside the flamingo yard, the Smithsonian National Zoo said.

Staff "are devastated and mourning the loss of 25 American flamingos and one Northern pintail duck killed by a wild fox yesterday in the Zoo's outdoor flamingo habitat," it added.

Three flamingos were additionally injured and are being treated at the zoo's veterinary hospital.

"This is a heartbreaking loss for us and everyone who cares about our animals," zoo director Brandie Smith said.

The remaining flock, whittled down from 74 flamingos before the attack, has been moved to an indoor barn while the ducks have been relocated to a covered outdoor space, the zoo said.

According to zoo officials, a softball-sized hole in the metal mesh surrounding the flamingo yard was discovered, but the dig barrier around the enclosure remained intact.

"The barrier we used passed inspection and is used by other accredited zoos across the country," Smith said. "Our focus now is on the well-being of the remaining flock and fortifying our habitats."

In early April, a fox was put down after biting at least nine people including a congressman at the US Capitol and testing positive for rabies.

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