



Let There Be Lights!

Visitors stop to take in the colorful lights near the polar bear exhibit at the Lights Before Christmas at the Toledo Zoo.

Blade photos by Katie Rausch

Zoo is aglow with holiday spirit

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Sometimes a little spectacle is a necessary distraction from the drudgery of short days, long nights, and cold temperatures. Each winter the Toledo Zoo paints the night with brilliant displays for the Lights Before Christmas to highlight the season and drive away seasonal blahs with color, nostalgia, and a sense of wonder.

This year is no different. Electric penguins, sparkly trees, wild animals, and millions of lights greet visitors to the zoo on the Anthony Wayne Trail.

Last year a record number of people — more than 179,000 visitors — attended the Lights Before Christmas. The 2013 version started in late November and runs until Dec. 31, and if the weather holds up it's sure to challenge last year's attendance numbers.

New this year is an ice rink that can hold

about 100 people during each 15 to 20-minute skating session. The cost is \$3 and folks can bring their own skates or rent them on the site.

The event has grown since 1986 when 50,000 bulbs were strung up at the zoo. This year the number is more than a million.

Nearly 10 miles of extension cords are stretched across the sprawling facility and more than half the lights are energy-efficient.

Hours for the exhibit are 3 to 8 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, with the zoo closing at 9, and 3 to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with the zoo closing at 10 on those days.

Admission is \$13 for adults between the ages of 12 and 59; \$10 for adults 60 and older; \$10 for children ages 2 to 11, and free for children younger than 2. Save \$1 per ticket when you purchase tickets online.

For information on the wide array of music, food, and children's activities that will be available at the event, go to www.toledozoo.org.



A green-wrapped tree glows near the primate area at the Toledo Zoo.



Randy Jakab of Ann Arbor and his daughter Olivia, 4, watch the model train exhibit.



Danny Rome, Jr., 11, of West Toledo strikes a pose after landing.



Haley Rome, 8, balances on one skate while skating at the zoo with her family.



Mike Mayhugh of South Toledo holds up his daughter Mackenzie, 7.



A penguin figure is one of many animal light displays at the zoo.



Gloria Klempert of Northwood holds her granddaughter Simone Grimes, 2.