Outdoor/Animal Hazards Fatality Report

INCIDENT

There was a fatal mauling of a zoo intern by a lion that escaped from a locked pen.

Alexandra Black, 22, was attacked while cleaning an animal enclosure with other staff members. It was at least the 10th instance of an escape or attack by an animal at a privately-run North Carolina wildlife facility since 1997, according to the Humane Society of the United States.

Officials said the lion somehow escaped from a nearby pen and killed the recent college graduate just two weeks after she started working at the Conservators Center near Burlington, about 60 miles northwest of Raleigh. Sheriff’s deputies shot and killed the animal before retrieving Black’s body.

Before deputies fired on the lion, officials made several attempts to tranquilize it or hold it at bay with fire hoses, the Caswell County Sheriff’s Office said.

It was not immediately clear how the lion escaped or whether it got out of the enclosure that was being cleaned. Staff said the lion never made it beyond the park’s perimeter fence. The park was closed indefinitely as part of an investigation.

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