

AS I SEE IT

Finding signs of spring in the Boston area

“As I See It,” a weekly photo column by Pulitzer Prize winner Stan Grossfeld, brings the stories of New England to Globe readers.

By [Stan Grossfeld](#) Globe Staff, Updated March 9, 2025, 3:28 p.m.



A pair of Caribbean flamingos at the Stone Zoo together make a heart. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

Woohoo! The clocks have changed, and we've finally got daylight back after work.

Searching for signs of spring keeps a person young. So let's gooooo.

First stop is the Stone Zoo. A flock of Caribbean flamingos are whooping up a storm, flapping their wings, shaking their heads, and honking like Jimmy Buffett was alive and serving free margaritas.

Turns out, this is all about sex.

"Well, for flamingos, March is actually their love month," says Peter Costello, assistant curator at the zoo.



A flamingo flamenco? Not quite, although these birds are adding a little frantic flair to their unique poses in a bid to get a date at Stone Zoo. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

"You'll see the displays they're doing here. Actually, this is when they pick their partner. See the head going back and forth? It's called flagging. They have a whole bunch of

displays that they do,” including standing extra tall, like they are kids trying to pass a height requirement at an amusement park ride.

All to impress the ladies.

“They’re like, ‘Oh, hey, look at me. Don’t I look so different from the one standing next to me? ‘They just march around all day.”

Males tend to be bigger, but telling the sexes apart is difficult.

“We blood sex all of ours, so all the males have green bands, all the females have yellow bands,” he says.



Caribbean flamingos at the Stone Zoo get their pigmentation from eating shrimp. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

But for all their yapping, dancing, and prancing, they are mostly monogamous.

Visitors can observe them up close in their pool area with running water heated to 50-55 degrees.

“They’re not freezing to death here, believe me,” says Costello. " If it’s going to get cold, we just bring them inside. I think a lot of people like it because they’re big, it’s open, you’re close to them. There’s no heavy glass or structure separating you from the birds. They’re not really an aggressive bird, even when they’re nesting.”



Flamingos need a running start to fly. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

They eat flamingo chow, a shrimp-based grub that gives them their vibrant color.

Katrine Lindeen of Winchester and her two kids licking SpongeBob SquarePants ice cream sticks are thrilled. Temperatures are pushing 50 degrees and everybody is having fun.

“Isn’t this wonderful,” she says amidst the honking. “It shows life emerging and reminds you of the beauty of nature and the beauty of the natural world. This definitely cheers me up.”

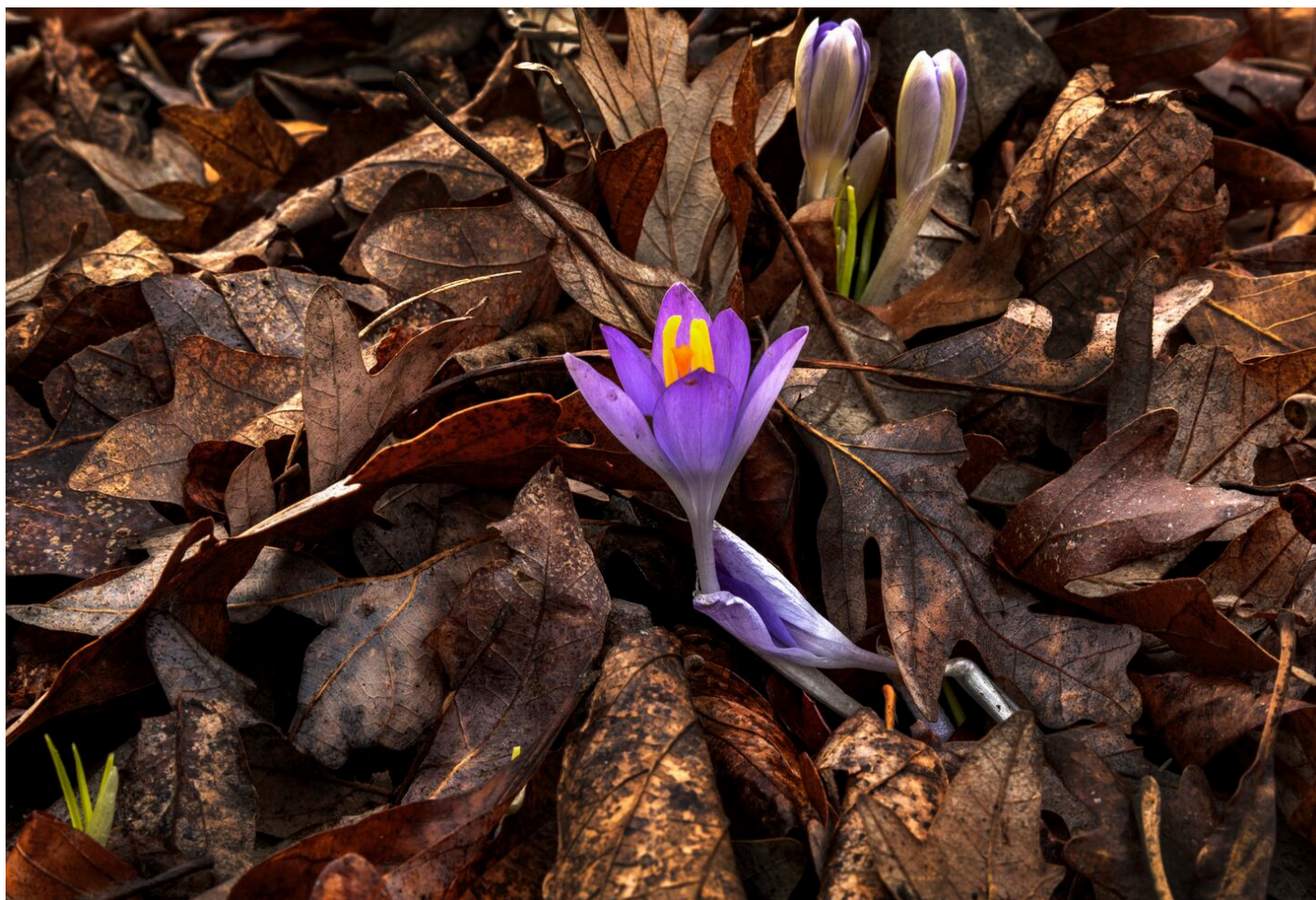


A flight from Logan banks over the waters of Hull during sunrise. As of last Sunday the sun won't rise til after 7 a.m. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

Sunrises and sunsets around the city are crystal clear this time of year. Bostonians can get out of work and still have daylight to sail. A few venture out in sailboats in the 37 degree Boston Harbor waters and watch the sunset dip behind the skyline. Tanker ships crawl slowly away from the sunset leaving behind the Zakim Bridge for long journeys across inky black oceans.

This lengthy cold winter is almost history.

The first crocuses have already pushed their way past the thawed earth and the decaying brown leaves at the New England Botanic Garden in Boylston.



The first crocuses pop up along the trails at the New England Botanic Garden. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

Inside, the “Pixels +Petals, An Orchid Exhibition” (through March 23) features 2,000 orchid plants, including 100 varieties amidst brightly colored blocks.

“We draw people of all ages,” says Liz Nye, public relations director. “Orchids are one of those surprising plants that once you start learning about them, no matter your age or your experience with plants, you can really go down a rabbit hole because they have some incredible adaptations.”

More than once, people have gotten engaged here.



“Pixels + Petals, An Orchid Exhibition” (through March 23) features 2,000 orchid plants at the botanical gardens. Ron Todd of Framingham and Nancy Perry, of Irvine, Calif., enjoy the exhibit. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

On Friday and Saturday nights they even have “Orchids After Dark” parties with beverages, lights bites, and music (through March 19).

“That’s a way for folks to view the exhibition in a whole new light,” says Marissa Gallant, director of education. “Orchids just generally have so many amazing superpowers. There are so many unique species that have just these really intricate adaptations and have co-evolved with their pollinators or other species in their environments so that they can thrive and be happy.”



Dendrobium burana pink orchid rises in the mix of a 100 varieties amidst brightly colored blocks at the New England Botanic Garden. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

Anne O’Sullivan, an actor from New York City, says she has come here in part because “it’s a welcome distraction from the convulsions of our society right now that are happening.”

Better to talk about sex.

She has just learned from her visit that the bee orchid is a “master of disguise.” It has a scent and lip that mimics a female bee to attract male pollinators. “Male bees, drawn in by the illusion, unwittingly pollinate the flower, helping it complete its reproductive mission,” reads the text display.



Oncostele Hilo firecracker 'lucky strike' at the New England Botanic Garden. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

“They give no reward except their beauty,” says O’Sullivan, smiling.

Jayne Todd of Framingham is in a celebratory mood touring the exhibit. Spring has sprung, at least in her home garden.

“My bulbs are starting to come up,” she says proudly.

“I’m happy,”



Sailboats catch the light at sunset from East Boston. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

UP NEXT



As I see it:

Insane: a volleyball match, times 91



As I see it:

Reflections of the Frozen North



As I see it:

Laced up, he goes for a once-inconceivable goal

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