

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

Zooreport

No. 2
October 2020

A close-up photograph of a lynx with thick, greyish-brown fur and prominent black-tipped ears. The lynx is looking slightly to the left with a focused expression. In its mouth, it holds a piece of raw, pinkish meat. The background is a soft-focus green field of grass.

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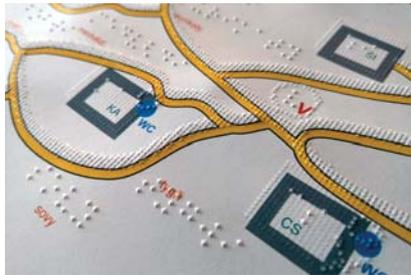
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UNSALEABLE

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

in spring of 2020 time stopped at the Brno Zoo. It was temporarily closed in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the second issue will be a bit unusual. Let us introduce some of our inhabitants who did not get enough attention in the previous issues.

We will mainly focus on the newly bred species which were brought to the zoo for the first time in its history. Most of them arrived last year but were not properly introduced in Zooreport, as they would deserve. We will tell you more about them in several short articles. You will learn why ribbon eels change their colour and what gave New Zealand shoveler its strange name. We will also tell you which animals got a new partner or friend last year.

Last year many juveniles were born. Of course, there were some births this year, too, but the most important ones happened last year. Besides the traditional set of photos of this year's spring animal babies we will also take a closer look on several significant first breedings, i.e. the first juveniles of certain species who were born in Brno Zoo.

Every year, we devote considerable effort to rescue programs and projects for protection of nature and biodiversity. So, we were really happy about this year's baby hoopoes who were found in artificial nesting cavities. The Eurasian hoopoe protection project in South Moravia has recorded the most successful nesting period ever. We discovered about ten hoopoe nestlings in the artificial nesting cavities, which is the highest number since the beginning of the project.

You can also learn about the new exhibit in the Exotarium pavilion. It may not look attractive, but it is definitely worth seeing. You can come and see



for yourselves what ocean polluted by plastic waste looks like. The aquarium with brackish water is not just full of waste – there are fish in it, too. Of course, we made sure not to create the traps that exist in nature when we were making the aquarium. The visitors thus will not see the older type of nets with narrow entry, from which the fish cannot escape, hooks or nylon fishing lines.

The outcome of the cooperation of the Brno zoo with Teiresiás – the Support Centre for Students with Special Needs of Masaryk University was a big help to the visually impaired visitors of the zoo. A new map with tactile and visual layer enables the visually impaired visitors to effectively cooperate with their seeing guide. See page 16 for more details. And we would like to thank our colleagues from MUNI once again.

Finally, we have two good news for you. You can see how our photographer was doing in the nationwide Czech Nature Photo contest. Let me reveal that he was very successful and the winter photo of an Arctic wolf from the Beringia exposition was awarded with one of the notional medals. And even though I have already thanked you before, I would like to thank you again now. I have mentioned this in the last issue, but I must repeat it. We thank you all very much for the huge support that our zoo received from you in spring and also for coming and visiting it. We really appreciate it!

Enjoy reading.
Michal Vaňáč

We Are New Here!

During the last year many new animals arrived to Mniší hora. Come with us and meet some of them. They are definitely worth seeing in the zoo, as well.



Corsacs are found in steppes and semi-deserts of Central Asia, from Southeastern Europe and Kazakhstan to the eastern part of Mongolia, China, and Baikal. Photo: Eduard Stuchlík



New Zealand shovellers are bred in Brno Zoo since 2019. Photo: Petr Suvorov

New Zealand shoveler

A new animal species arrived in our zoo a year ago: four New Zealand shovellers (*Spatula rhynchotis variegata*). The first two birds came to us from German Bernburg at the turn of March and April. Both were males and in summer they were joined by two females from

Cologne. The birds settled in the outer part of the Exotarium pavilion.

These shovellers, as their name suggests, come from New Zealand. There are two subspecies of the Australian shoveler on the Australian continent – *Spatula rhynchotis rhynchotis*, which is found in Southeastern Australia and

Tasmania, and the New Zealand shoveler, which we have mentioned above. Both the subspecies inhabit similar habitats, though. They thrive best in swamps with dense vegetation, where they feed with water insects, molluscs and crustaceans, seeds, and parts of water plants. The way they obtain food is just as variable as their diet. Apart from filtering water or mud on the edges of water areas with their beaks they also get food from deep water by diving their heads, or they catch the insects right from the air.

The most distinctive feature of this member of the duck family (Anatidae) is its flat beak, which gave it its name. And its Latin name refers to it, as well – spatula may be translated as “little shovel”.

Corsac fox

Two small canids can be seen in the exhibit opposite the eagle aviary since last May. They are corsac foxes (*Vulpes corsac*), one of the small representatives of the *Vulpes* genus. They are found in the steppes and semi-deserts of Central Asia, from Southeastern Europe and Kazakhstan to the eastern part of Mongolia, China, and Baikal. The small foxes are about sixty centimetres long and weigh about 1.5 to 3 kilograms. They live in family groups. They prefer to eat small rodents, but they do not mind eating insects or berries, either. If they feel threatened, they have an interesting way of defending themselves against their predators: they stand on their hind legs and start hissing and spitting.

If you visit the zoo frequently, you may have noticed that one of the corsacs has somewhat changed its size. One of the female corsacs who came to us from Heidelberg in Germany in May was returned to her home country, though to a different zoo. She left for Chemnitz, and a young male who was born in Hamerton in Great Britain replaced her. Thus, we may hopefully start looking forward to the offspring of the newly established couple.

Hosmer’s spiny-tailed skink

In the background of the zoo two female Hosmer’s spiny-tailed skinks (*Egernia hosmeri*) are waiting for com-



Baby ribbon eels are pure black, with bright yellow dorsal fin, but once they reach adulthood (see the photo) their colour changes significantly. Photo: Michal Vaňáč

pletion of their new terrarium. These skinks come from the Australian continent. They belong to the Scincidae family and are closely related to Stokes's skink (*Egernia stokesii*), the species that the visitors of Brno Zoo had opportunity to admire in the Exotarium pavilion earlier. The most distinctive feature of both the *Egernia* species is their colour. While the Stokes's skink is uniformly reddish brown, the brown-red skin of the new addition to the Brno Zoo is dotted with spots of different sizes and colours, from which the most prominent are the large, light-coloured spots.

Hosmer's spiny-tailed skink is viviparous, which means that it does not lay eggs like many other reptiles but gives birth to living babies. Female skink can deliver up to four babies at once. It is omnivorous and eats anything from insects to berries and leaves.

Ribbon eel

For more than a year a representative of the Muraenidae family, the Ribbon eel (*Rhinomuraena quaesita*) can be found in the sea aquariums of the Tropical Kingdom. This species inhabits the reefs and lagoons of the Indo-Pacific region from East Africa through

Australia, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia to the waters around the Japanese islands.

During its life, the ribbon eel undergoes several incredible changes of colour. Baby ribbon eels are pure black, with bright yellow dorsal fin, but once they reach adulthood their colour changes significantly. It is the only representative of the Muraenidae family whose change of coloration is related to proteandric hermaphroditism. During

the first stage of their life the ribbon eels are male, with distinctly blue body and yellow jaws and dorsal fin. Later they transform into females whose whole body is yellow.

Ribbon eels are predators. They can be often seen waiting with their jaws wide open to catch the little fish that serve them as their prey. Also, they have two fine fan-shaped formations on their head. It is not just for decoration – these are enlarged nostrils.



Corsac foxes look very different in summer and in winter. Photo: Eduard Stuchlík



A female Canada lynx named Torvi is new to the exhibit. Photo: Matyáš Slavík

We Have New Colleagues!

Now that we have introduced the new species, it would be a shame to leave out the individuals who joined our breeding groups. Here they are!

Canada lynx

In the spring months of the last year, a male Canadian lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) deceased at an advanced age. His partner was left alone for some time, until we managed to find her a company. As the female is quite aged herself, we decided to find another young female first, and then to get a new young partner for both these lynx ladies. So a young female lynx called Torvi arrived at the beginning of this year in our zoo from Hamerton in Great Britain.

There are four species of lynx in the world – the best known to us is the Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*) who is the largest and can also be found in our country. The second largest species of lynx is the Canada lynx, followed by Iberian lynx (*Lynx pardinus*) and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*). Canada lynx is not bred in many European zoos. As an American species it is mostly found in

the zoos in the country of its origin. So it is not easy to find a couple of lynxes of the suitable age who are not mutually related.

Torvi, who is nearly 3 years old, settled in well here. When she was introduced to her new friend, she immediately assessed the situation, took a submissive attitude towards her older colleague and submitted to her.

Red panda

Since September 2019 you may see two fluffy red creatures instead of one in the red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) enclosure. After more than a year, Huan, the male red panda, finally got a new partner. A six-year-old female named Oshin was born in Belgian Antwerp and she came to us from the Lodz in Poland. She and Huan were getting along very well, so we were hoping that their partnership would give birth to at least one

baby panda. And our wish came true – see the next issues for more details.

Despite their name the red pandas are not close relatives of giant pandas (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*), but they belong to a different family: Ailuridae. They are closely related to bears (*Ursidae*), but as for their morphological structure they are very similar to procyonids (*Procyonidae*). The whole Ailuridae family and the *Ailurus* genus, whose only representative the red panda is, stand somewhere between these two families and do not fully belong to either, due to their unique qualities and characteristics, in particular their food specialization.

The name “panda” is probably a corruption of the Nepali word “poonya”, which means “a bamboo eater”. And even though most people probably think of its iconic black and white namesake when they hear a word

“panda”, it was these small ginger mammals who got the name first.

Swift parrot

A group of swift parrots (*Lathamus discolor*) is an old-new addition to the zoo. Sometimes these are called red-faced parrots, too. The first part of the group – three males from Cologne in Germany – arrived in the zoo in July last year and in January they were joined by three females from a private collection. Thus, a fully-fledged breeding group was created, and we hope that the parrots will soon reproduce.

Swift parrot is a critically endangered Australian species. They are found mainly in the south-east of Australia. In September they fly to Tasman Island, where they nest. They return to the continent in March and April. Swift parrots live in hollow trees, often eucalypts.

They got their name after their way of flying. This parrot is considered the fastest flyer among parrots, so in Czech it was named after fast swallows (*Hirundo*) and in English after swifts (*Apodidae*), who resemble swallows.

Margay

The male margay or tree ocelot (*Leopardus wiedii*) came to us from Great Britain last October to join our female Ichika.

These small tree ocelots spend most of their lives in the crowns of trees in South and Central America and Mexico. Their diet depends on the environment in which they live – it may consist of tree rodents, small marsupials, birds, but also invertebrates or small sloths.

Margay is one of the only two species of wildcats that can climb down from the trees head first. The second one is clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*). This is possible thanks to their extremely flexible hind legs, which allow them to turn over completely and firmly grasp the bark of the tree, and it gives them more hunting options.

It is very hard to spot these wildcats in nature because of their hidden way of life. Because of their attractive looks there were attempts to domesticate them, but these were not very successful. These spotted cats have very clear opinion about their personal space and are not willing to change their habits.



Oshin, the red panda, was born in Belgium. Photo: Michal Vaňáč



Swift parrot is a critically endangered Australian species. Photo: Petr Suvorov



This male margay came to us from Great Britain. Photo: Michal Vaňáč

We Are the First Here!

When sharing our news, we can by no means forget the juveniles. Let us introduce the successful first breedings, which we are very happy about.

Common brushtail possum

A joyful event occurred in the Exotarium pavilion at the end of January. A young common brushtail possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*) set out to explore its home on its own for the first time. It has been hiding in the safe shelter of its mother's pouch since last September. At the beginning of January, the baby possum started taking quick peeks outside and then it left the pouch for a while from time to time. In February it stopped coming back to the pouch and let its mother carry it on her back. Also, it started feeding with solid food by itself. At the end of March, the young brushtail possum was caught and vaccinated, and its sex was determined – it is a male.

Common brushtail possum is a quite new species in the Brno Zoo. The first individual arrived in 2018. These Australian tree marsupials were named

after their characteristic face. Thanks to their large ears and pointy muzzle they resemble a fox. Their fur is very dense and fine, and its colour varies from brown to beige and black. Common brushtail possums are often hunted for it. They live in forest areas, but they also occur near large cities. They are omnivorous and do not mind feeding with the waste from a garbage can.

Cinnamon teal

Cinnamon teals (*Spatula cyanoptera*), are bred in Brno Zoo since 2016, but it was not until last June that two baby teals hatched out. Unfortunately, one of them did not survive the first month of life, but at least the second one made it through. This young male grew to a healthy adult individual and in October he left for the German Cologne.

Cinnamon teals got their name after their colour. The males really are red-

dish-brown, like cinnamon. Their coloration is especially striking in sunlight, their feathers can even shine with a copper luster then. Females are light brown and more inconspicuous. Males' dominant feature are their bold, red-coloured eyes. Females' eyes are brown. These birds are distributed almost everywhere in the western and central part of North America, in the western and southern part of South America, and they also appear in some parts of Central America. Cinnamon teal is a migratory bird which regularly leaves its nesting grounds in the north during the cold months with short supply of food to spend this part of the year in warmer and better-supplied areas.

Great horned owl

Two great horned owls (*Bubo virginianus*) have been waiting for their first juvenile even longer than the cinnamon teals. The baby owl hatched out in April last year. The little great horned owl male then grew up and moved to the Děčín zoo in November last year.

Great horned owl is distributed throughout the whole North America and over several relatively large areas in



Fully grown young male cinnamon teal without coloration. Photo: Petr Suvorov

Central and South America. The females are usually larger than the males and they can nest in cavities or on rock cliffs, but they prefer using abandoned

nests of other species. Like many other owls in the Bubo family, great horned owls have distinct ear tufts that look like ears but which are not a part of their au-

ditory system. However, like other owls, great horned owls have excellent sense of hearing which enables them to locate their prey when hunting.



Last year the first two young cinnamon teals hatched out. Photo: Petr Suvorov



The little male great horned owl grew up and moved to the Děčín zoo. Photo: Petr Suvorov



Common brushtail possum. Foto: Adéla Šindelářová



Surprise in one of the booths. Five nestlings were hiding inside. Photo: Zoo Brno

Record Season for Hoopoes

The Eurasian hoopoe protection project in South Moravia has recorded the most successful nesting period ever. We discovered about ten hoopoe nestlings in the artificial nesting cavities – the highest number since the beginning of the project.

“It is a crowning achievement of our long-standing efforts to protect hoopoes. The results show that the birds positively respond to the presence of artificial nesting cavities in the area. This year we moved one of the nest boxes because its previous location did not seem good. We were very happy to find out that the birds settled in it during the very same nesting period. Moreover, it was the first time when hoopoes

inhabited two boxes,” says Petr Suvorov, the project coordinator and curator of bird breeding of the Brno Zoo.

Eurasian hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) is among the critically endangered species of the Czech Republic. “Its population is more or less stable. A slight increase of the population may be observed, but this may relate to global warming and subsequent spreading of the species to the North. In the Mediterranean area,

hoopoes are more common, and they are more often found near human dwellings. The birds in our country are shyer so it is much more difficult to spot them in the countryside. Nevertheless, because of the lack of suitable nesting opportunities for hoopoes in the open landscape it makes perfect sense to take care of them,” Suvorov explained.

The fact that hoopoes are endangered may not be the only reason to protect them. Hoopoe is also a so-called umbrella species. “This means that other rare species are protected together with the hoopoes. In this case this applies mainly to the inhabitants of the short-stemmed steppes, in relation to traditional agriculture. Insects in particular respond positively to grassland management. We create favourable environment for these species by regular scything and grazing of the meadows, which makes more space for the blooming plants. Such plants attract insects and the insects subsequently attract all different kinds of



The same number of young Eurasian hoopoes was found in the very next "dudník". Photo: Zoo Brno

birds – in addition to hoopoes these may be for example stonechats or red-backed shrike. Thus, the diversity and frequency of the individual representatives of fauna and flora increases. And hoopoe is a model species, an ideal representative whom people recognize and see that something specific is being protected here," Suvorov added.

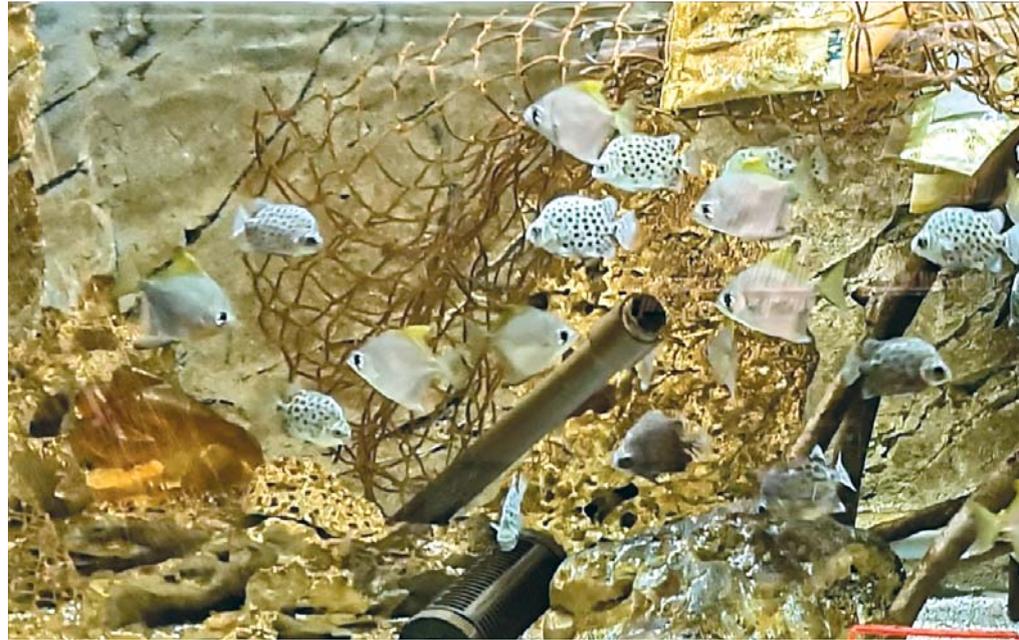
In winter 2017 we placed 15 nest boxes in five selected areas. In the first year one box was inhabited by a couple of hoopoes who bred four babies there. The following year it was the same, except that we found five nestlings instead of four. Last year none of the nest boxes was inhabited by hoopoes but in one of the boxes we discovered nestlings of highly endangered Eurasian wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*).

Partners to this project are Czech Union for Nature Conservation Jaro Jaroměř, Czech Union for Nature Conservation Morava and the Civic Association "Pro záchranu motýlího ráje" (To the Rescue of the Butterfly Paradise).



Artificial nesting cavity called "dudník" in Czech. Photo: Zoo Brno

The new aquarium in the Exotarium pavilion.
Photo: Michal Vaňáč



A New Aquarium in the Exotarium Pavilion is Full of Plastic

We opened a very unusual aquarium in the Exotarium pavilion. The visitors can see for themselves what ocean polluted by plastic waste looks like.

“People are often talking about pollution of waters and oceans, but they cannot really imagine it. It is much more illustrative when they can see it directly

and in detail. We demonstrate what it feels like to animals to be surrounded by waste. And, of course, we hope that this will raise questions which will

make the visitors think about the topic – whether the fish could eat the waste or get entangled in it, what would happen to them then, and where else the plastic waste can get,” says Petr Šrámek, the curator of fish, reptiles and invertebrates breeding of the Brno Zoo.

The aquarium with brackish water is not just full of waste – there are fish in it, too. Specifically, you can find spotted scats (*Scatophagus argus*) and silver moonfish (*Monodactylus argenteus*) inside. Both these species live in South-eastern Asia, a place significantly affected by pollution.

When we were making the aquarium, we made sure not to create the traps that exist in nature. The visitors thus will not see the older type of nets with narrow entry, from which the fish cannot escape, hooks or nylon fishing lines. The size of the plastic waste in the aquarium does not allow the animals to eat it.

“If you think that there is too much plastic in the aquarium, you should know that there are places where animals don’t even fit between all the



The plastic waste from Indonesia is also included in the new aquarium. Photo: Michal Vaňáč



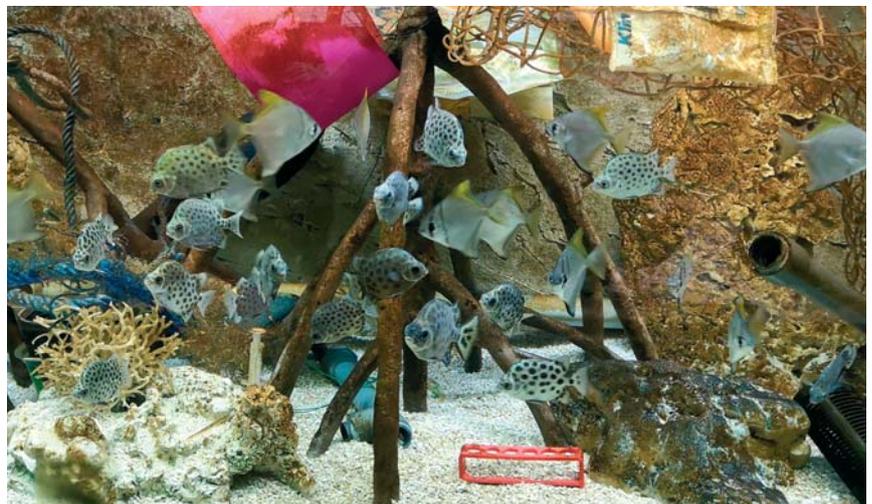
waste. And it is similar for beaches, which people are probably more familiar with as many of them have already been to some of them. Our intention is to raise awareness about a problem, which is relatively new and which occurred solely due to human activity.

The Brno Zoo is participating in several projects, initiatives and organizations which raise awareness about the pollution of the oceans and water, such as Rise Up For The Ocean, Beat Plastic Pollution or Shoal.

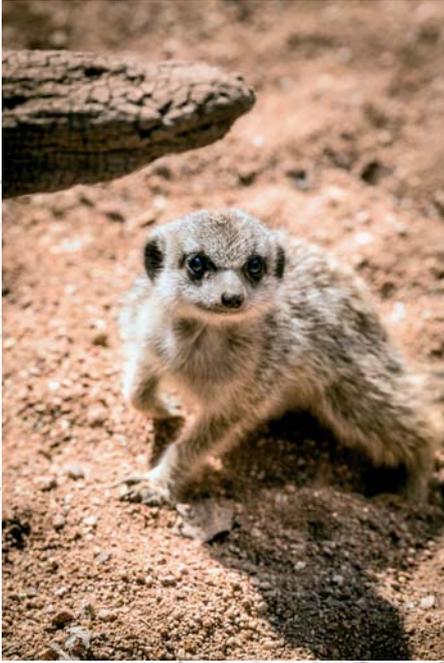
Ocean as a theme also occurs in the latest EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria) campaign called Which Fish? (“Kdyby ryby” in Czech) This campaign has three main objectives – to reduce the pressure on the overfished fish populations and to support consumption of the species that have been overlooked so far, to feed the animals with fish from sustainable resources (hatcheries, aquaculture) and, last but not least, to increase the number of the species bred in the zoos by adding new, endangered species and to increase the populations of such species by breeding them in captivity.



The new aquarium is inhabited by spotted scats and silver moonyfish. Photo: Michal Vaňáč



► *When we were making the aquarium, we made sure not to create the traps that exist in nature.*
Foto: Michal Vaňáč



Meerkat (*Suricata suricatta*).

Photo: Matyáš Slavík



Several generations of young spider tortoises (*Pyxis arachnoides*).

Photo: Michal Vaňáč

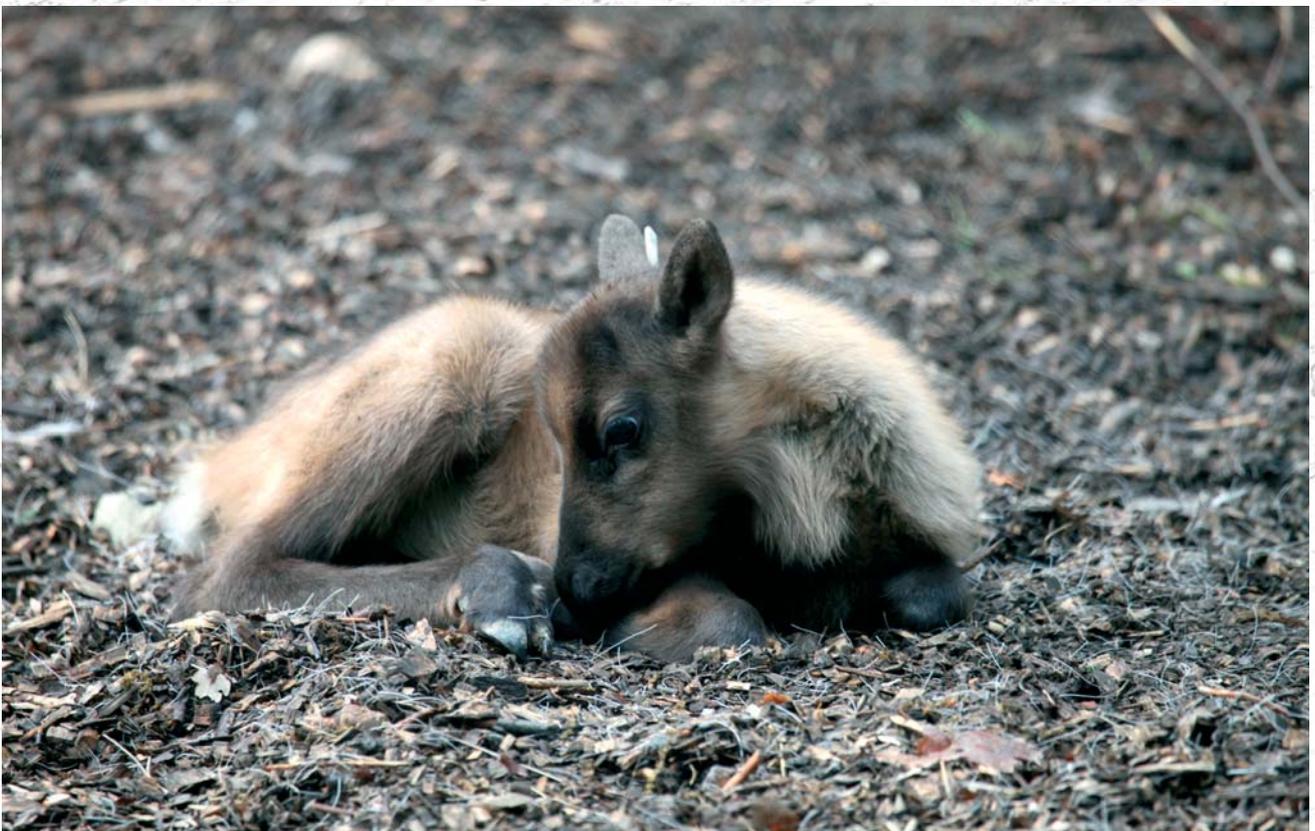


Patagonian mara (*Dolichotis patagonum*). Photo: Matyáš Slavík

►
Moose (Alces alces)
Photo: Eduard Stuchlík



◄
Pied imperial pigeon (Ducula bicolor)
Photo: Jana Moravcová



Reindeer (Rangifer tarandus). Photo: Michal Vaňáč

The visitors can find paths, important buildings and pavilions, Visitor's train stations, toilets, restaurants and kiosks in the tactile map.

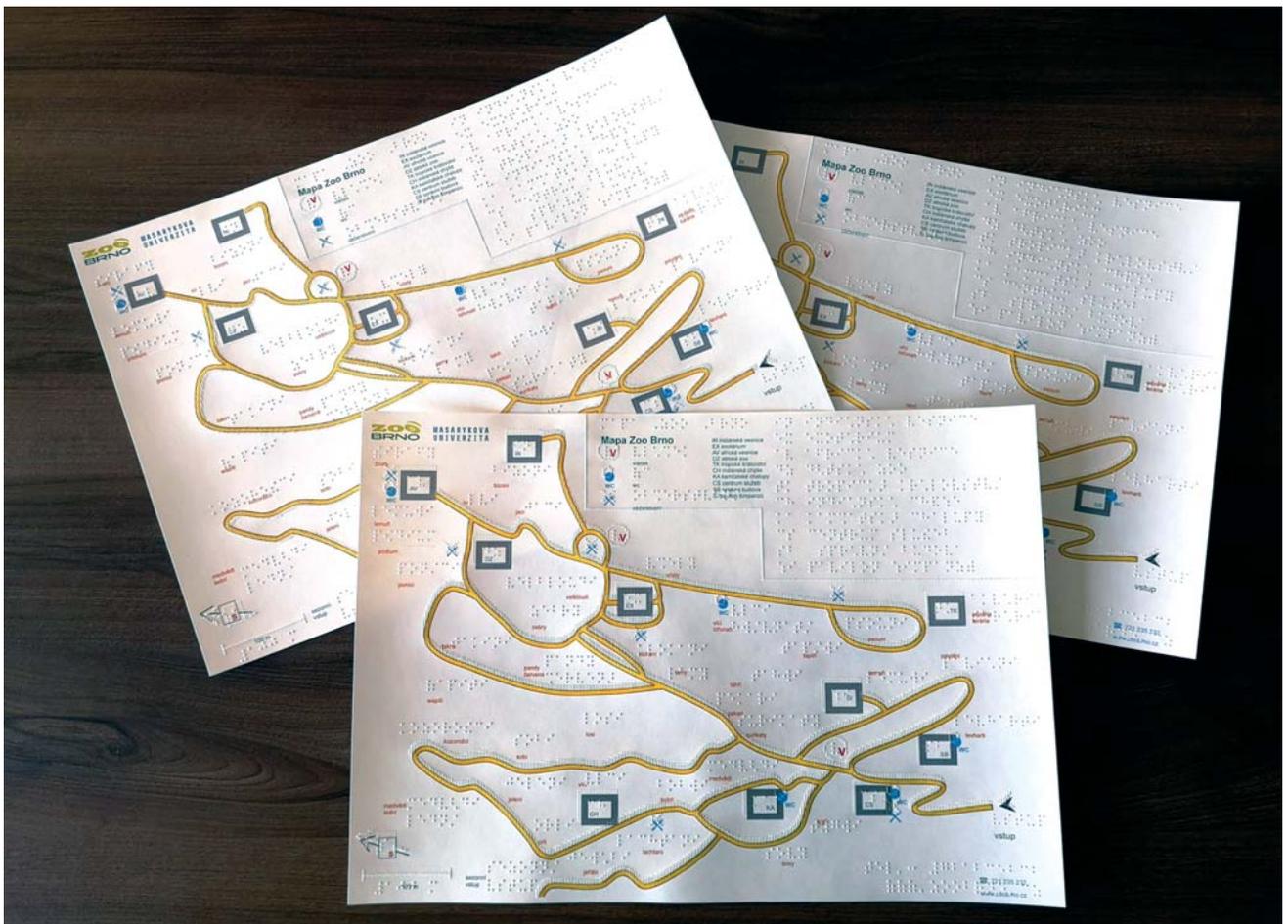
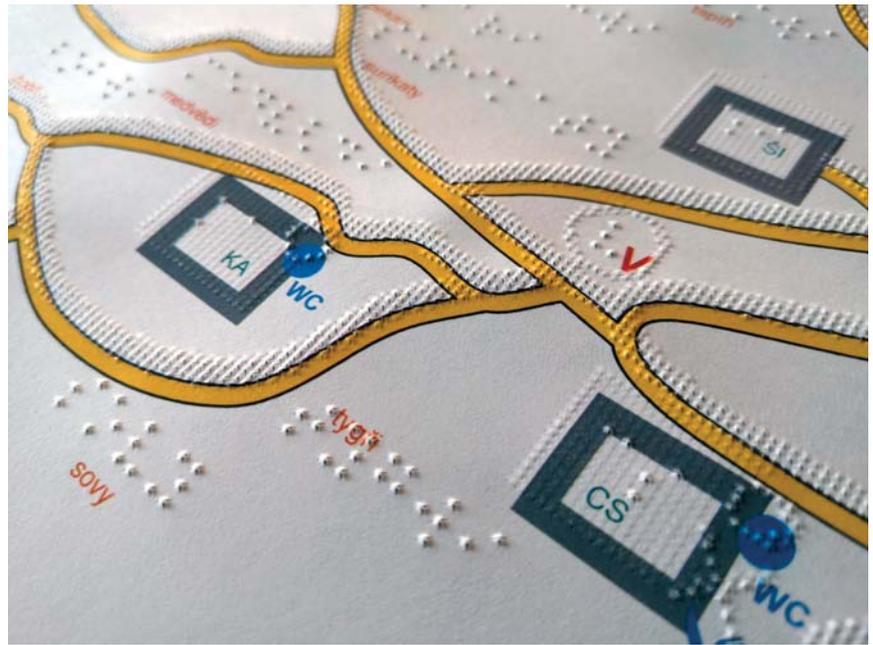
Photo: Michal Vaňáč

The maps are made from paper with embossed dots, the technology of printing is similar to Braille writing system.

Photo: Michal Vaňáč

Tactile maps are available for free at the Brno Zoo ticket offices.

Photo: Michal Vaňáč



resolution as paper can hold less information. However, the maps are very durable, and the material is cheap which makes it possible to print large number copies at low cost," Nečas explained.

Tactile maps are available for free at the ticket offices of the Brno Zoo. We have enough copies of the map, so that all the visually impaired visitors of the Brno Zoo can get their own copy at the

ticket office. Within the ongoing cooperation of the Brno Zoo and the Teire-siás Support Centre tactile descriptions of the relief information in the zoo are going to be prepared, as well.



The award-winning photo from the winter zoo. Photo: Matyáš Slavík

The Photo of an Arctic Wolf Took the Second Place in the Czech Nature Photo Contest

The photographer of the Brno Zoo, Matyáš Slavík, achieved a big success. The young promising artist made it to the three-member finals of the Czech Nature Photo contest in the Animals in Human Care category. Eventually, the photo of an Arctic wolf took an amazing second place.

“There is no extraordinary story about how the picture of the wolves was taken. I have already been photographing in the Brno Zoo for a while, and I try to do it a little bit differently, which is not that easy in zoos. The weather was pretty raw that day. I knew the temperatures would drop below zero, so I took my chance and my camera with an idea of an enchantingly raw photo in my head. After a while it started snowing. And that was it. I knew which animal I wanted to portray. Snow is for sure connected with Arctic wolves. So I quickly moved to the wolf exhibit and started shooting. The wolves were thrilled with the snow. They were running here and there, which gave me the best opportunity to take this Arctic photo,” the author describes.

Matyáš Slavík

I studied photography at high school in Brno. Since I was young, I have been fascinated by nature, and I had close relationship with it thanks to my dad who used to take me to forest and whom I could watch working there. When I go photographing, I try to see the shots in a slightly different way than the other photographers. I think this philosophy can determine my future work. I often set out to the wilderness in our beautiful country and enjoy all its treasures. Taking photos of animals is absolutely fulfilling for me, and I consider it my primary field of activity. I use Nikon d500 with the Nikon 200-500 mm ED, VR f5.6 lens,

but until recently I have been taking pictures with an amateur d3300 SLR. Believe or not, this photo was taken with this very camera.



Photographer Matyáš Slavík.

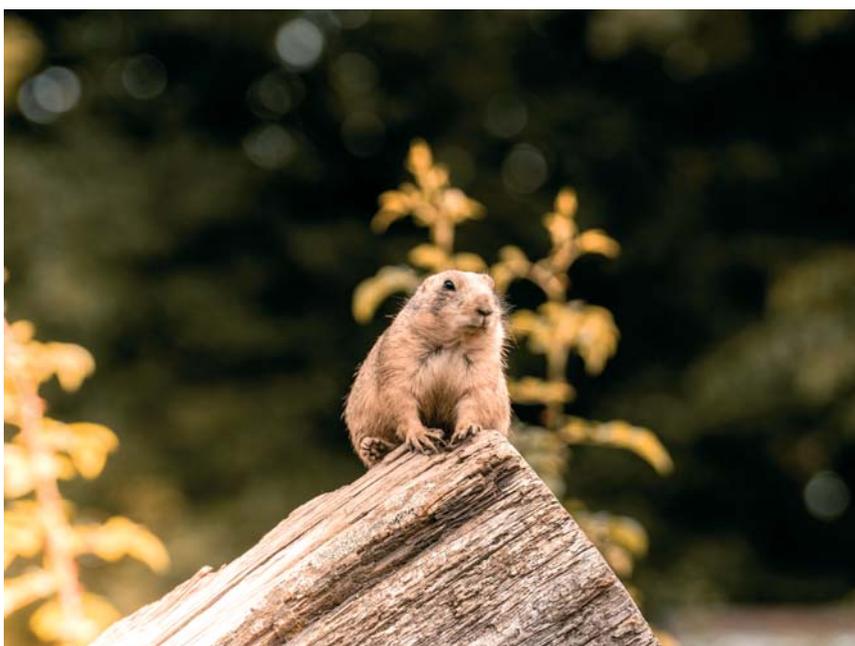
Photo: Matyáš Slavík

Big Thanks

Brno Zoo was closed from 16th March to 27th April due to the coronavirus pandemic. Unlike other institutions we could not stop working because the animals need to be taken care of every day. And it does not matter whether it is working day, a holiday or weekend, or whether the zoo is temporarily closed. Fortunately, the zoo fans did not hesitate and helped us, at least partially, to overcome this tough period by adopting animals.



Black-tailed prairie dogs' exhibit is located near the Tropical Kingdom. Photo: Matyáš Slavík



Surprisingly, adoptive parents had a liking for Pallas's cats this year. Photo: Matyáš Slavík

“We really appreciate your support. It was not easy for us. Although we were saving as much as we could, when the zoo was closed, we had to take care of all the animals as if it was open. We suffered financial loss of millions of crowns, but thanks to that we appreciate any financial contribution even more,” says Martin Hovorka, the director of Brno Zoo.

Since 16th March, the contributions have reached an incredible amount of 470 352 crowns. Just for comparison: last year the amount was 188 245 crowns. The number of adoptions increased from 67 to 188 and the most popular animals for adoption are wolves, prairie dogs and, a bit surprisingly, also peacocks and Pallas's cats.

“A very good news for us is that 80 % of the adoptive parents contributed for the first time. We really want to thank everyone,” says Dominika Zavadilová, the business and adoption specialist of the Brno Zoo.



Arctic wolves are very popular among the adoptive parents. Photo: Matyáš Slavík

Become part of the wild nature!

VIRTUAL EXPEDITION OF BRNO ZOO

Unique experience in centre of Brno.



Radnická 6
(next to Old City Hall)



Monday - Sunday
10:00 - 18:00



ZOO BRNO

B | R | N | O

STATUTÁRNÍ MĚSTO BRNO
FINANČNĚ PODPORUJE ZOO BRNO A STANICI ZÁJMOVÝCH ČINNOSTÍ,
PŘÍSPĚVKOVOU ORGANIZACI