

zoo report

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the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

BRNO



special supplement
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Zooreport

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Lowland tapir

UNSALEABLE

Zoos Have Already Gained Their Place in the Sun

Zoological gardens have already gained their place in the sun: they participate in programmes for threatened species from all over the world and in protecting animals in their habitats in the nearest surroundings of the zoo, too. They help to preserve the biodiversity in every possible way. They also play an important role in ecological training and education, focused mainly on the youngest generation. Not even the best atlas can make up for meeting the animal face to face.

The Brno Zoo pays attention to the species included in the European Endangered Species Programmes (EEP), species indexed in both the European and international studbooks (ESB, ISB) and also animals from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The zoo keeps 20 species in the EEP programmes; for example, Brush-tailed bettong, Mishmi takin or Reticulated giraffe have been successfully bred.

The Brno Zoo is also engaged in breeding the specially protected species of our and Eurasian fauna

and it joins the rescue programmes for some of them. Together with the Czech Union for Nature Conservation, the Brno Zoo participated in a project of mapping the appearance of the Little owl in South Moravia. The zoo has also monitored the populations of the European ground squirrel together with the Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic and plans to set up breeding that should lead to the ground squirrel's return to the wild. The zoo cooperated with other European zoos in saving the Steller's sea-eagle already in 2002. The zoo has also helped during the great rescue operation of zoos, thanks to which hundreds of Malaysian giant turtles survived after they had been confiscated in Hong Kong. That's why the zoo participated in an international turtle conservation campaign called Shellshock, too. The participation in this campaign led to a cooperation with other Czech zoos in a project called Kura Kura – Turtles in Danger. Its aim is to build a rescue station for turtles in Indonesia and help to preserve the local priceless but threatened original biotopes. This year, the Brno Zoo is also engaged in the Madagascar Campaign 2006/2007. A birth of three Collared iguanids was a special contribution to this campaign; only two European zoos have managed to breed this species. The Brno breeders succeed in breeding reptiles, e.g. the Cuban boa, the Rhinoceros iguana or the Cuban iguana, regularly for many years.

RNDr. Martin Bursík

was born on 12th August 1959 in Prague. He graduated in environmental protection at the Faculty of Science of the Charles University in Prague in 1984. In 1989, he signed a citizens' initiative called Civil Freedom Movement. He was involved in the Civic Forum from the beginning and after its dividing, he was involved in the Civic Movement. He was a member of the Committee of Environmental Protection of the Prague Council, where he put through, among others, a municipal police reform, a voluntary property declaration of the council members and a control of public contracts. He was also solving problems of traffic, conflict of interests and corruption. While being a Minister of Environment in the government of Josef Tošovský in 1998, he helped the Ministry to emancipate and to become an equal partner to other departments. After the parliamentary elections in 1998, he worked as an energetic and environmental consultant and a director of a reference bureau called Ecoconsulting Ltd. He is a chairman of the Green Party since September 2005. He was elected a Member of the Parliament of the Czech Republic in June 2006. He is a co-author of the new act supporting the production of electricity from renewable energy sources. He managed an expert team of the Ministry of Environment for preparing an ecological tax reform conception. He was appointed the Vice-premier of the government and Minister of Environment on 9th January 2007.



Martin Bursík

The Brno Zoo has been laying a great stress on education already since its founding. Lately, this becomes evident in building new expositions with ecosystem and zoogeographic approach. A unique group of expositions of Nordic animals called Beringia is a good example to mention.

I wish the Brno Zoo to prosper in future in both the breeding sphere and the protection programmes. And I wish the results of the work in Brno would have an impact not only on the wild, but also on the satisfaction of the visitors.

Martin Bursík,
Vice-premier of the Czech Republic
and Minister of Environment



Male called Bagoun

Seals Like to Practice

The present group of South African fur seals (*Arctocephalus pusillus*) at the Brno Zoo is made up of one male, Bagoun, and two females, Geisha and Bobina. Bagoun was born in 1993 at the Antwerp Zoo in Belgium, where they called him Uto. We brought him to Brno in 1998, and in 2002 the Antwerp Zoo gave us Bagoun as a gift, because they quit breeding this species. Geisha was caught in the wild in Namibia and she came to Brno in 1993 as a one year-old pup. Bobina, born in Prague in 1998, is the daughter of the legendary Gaston. The Prague Zoo placed her in Brno in 2000.

Originally, the Brno Zoo was breeding California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*). Their pool



◀▲ South African fur seals

was made in 1970 on the southern side of the "Mniší hora" hill in close proximity to the terrarium building, although it only functioned for about a year. There was only service water there, which appeared to be inadequate for the seals for health reasons. The pool was also open to the public on three sides, so the animals did not have enough peace or privacy. In 1971, the seals were moved to a pool near the newly constructed veterinary block. Later, they were exchanged for Southern sea lions (*Otaria byronia*), and today we keep South African fur seals there.

An outdoor pool with two rest islands dominates the seals' exposition. The L-shaped pool is about 1.8 m deep. The longer side is 11 m long, the shorter one is 5 m long and the pool is 5 m wide. The bank covers an area of about 25 m². Part of the pool is in the shade all day. The concrete walls and bottom are painted dark green. The seals also have the use of an indoor dormitory with two smaller pools and also a bank.

Despite their opportunity to use the indoor dormitory, the seals liked to spend time outside during the hard winter of 2005/2006. We took the precaution of leaving them inside when it was colder than 20 degrees below zero. During the heavy frosts, their food demand slightly increased, and we enriched their food with other vitamins and minerals. We feed the seals market fish, mackerel and herring once a day. The seals prefer fish about 30 cm long.

The male consumes about 8-12 kg of fish daily, and each female about 4-6 kg. In addition to the main afternoon feeding, the seals get several fish with vitamin preparations in the morning. They get vitamin B-1 and fish oil in capsules regularly, and occasionally they get vitamin A, D and E.

The seals' mating season takes place from the end of April to June. The male tends to be aggressive and he may even attack. The females are more timid. They bask in the sun with the male on the bank in the afternoon. We saw the younger Bobina with him more often last year. They probably even mated – they often stayed pressed to each other closely. However, we haven't noticed a pregnancy so far.

The seals go through a common practice session with one of the three keepers once a day during their feeding at 1:30 p.m. The keeper teaches them several basic exercises. The level of skill is different for each animal. All three can jump out of water and climb the base on command. In addition to that, Bagoun and Geisha extend their flipper to the keeper. Geisha also leans on him, and Bobina slides on her stomach. The practice has a beneficial influence on the physical and psychological condition of the animals and it can also entertain the visitors. We plan to add the practice session to the feeding demonstrations.

Simona Blahoňovská,
Beasts Section foreman

Economic Boom in the Warsaw Zoo

The Warsaw Zoological Garden was founded in 1928. At that time, it covered an area of 12 hectares and was home to approximately 500 animals, mainly representing Polish fauna. The biggest breeding success of that time was the birth of a female Indian elephant named Tuzinka in 1937. It is still the only elephant born in any of the Polish zoos. During the Second World War, our garden, like the rest of the town, was completely destroyed, so we had to start over from the beginning. In July 1946, town authorities decided to rebuild the zoo, and two years later, the garden was opened to the public again. But real prosperity did not start until the 1980's, when the Warsaw Zoo was incorporated into the new development plans of our town.

Since that time, a lot of new buildings have been built and the standard of living of our Zoo inhabitants has improved significantly. Nowadays, the Warsaw Zoo covers an area of 40 hectares. One can say that the Warsaw Zoological Garden is still having its economic boom. Many things have changed for the better. The last of the old cages and old-fashioned animal houses have disappeared forever. In the last decade, we have built the Reptile House, an Aviary, the Fantasy Zoo, a modern Elephant House, and the Australian Enclosure.

Last year, we managed to open the Invertebrate House and a modern enclosure for jaguars. For our 80th anniversary in March 2008, we are planning to finish a brand new facility for apes – chimpanzees



Cheetah female with six cubs

and gorillas. We are going to build a new enclosure for hippos as well as a big aquarium for sharks in the near future. We are the only Polish zoo that has two Indian rhino males in its collection.

The Warsaw Zoological Garden is especially proud of many breeding successes with several EEP species. We run 38 European Endangered Species Programs. Our zoo breeds cheetahs and African hunting dogs regularly. We still hope to breed a herd of African elephants. A year and a half ago, we were very happy about the birth of a Giant anteater male, which left for the Aviv Zoo in Israel shortly thereafter.

The Warsaw Zoo is visited by 600,000 people every year. We also run school lessons, lectures for

students, and activities for children with disabilities. We run many different exhibitions every year.

We are a member of several international organizations, including EAZA, and we participate in all its campaigns and, of course, in the Madagascar Campaign 2006/2007, too. There are about three thousand animals, representing over 500 species, at the Warsaw Zoo. We do our best to develop ourselves, improve standards, and successfully try to implement and meet all the EAZA guidelines all the time. The annual EAZA Conference will take place in the Warsaw Zoo in September 2007.

*Dr. Jan Maciej Rembiszewski,
Director of the Warsaw Zoo*



African elephants



Giant anteater (young one with its mother)



White stork release ▲▼▶



Rescue Station Admitted Almost 50 Species

The rescue station for disabled animals at the Brno Zoo admitted 198 animals from 48 species during 2006. 34 of them were included among endangered species and 18 specimens were ranked as highly endangered. We usually release the recovered animals in the area where they were found.

The most common causes of injury to wild animals are collisions with cars and electrical burns with birds of prey. Unfortunately, such injuries tend to be fatal. Some animals may be wounded by a shot; also small birds or young squirrels that were bitten by a cat are

quite often patients... The station also admits healthy animals that are just peckish and stressed, when they lodge somewhere in a built-up area, or young ones unable to stand on their own feet.

Two European beavers were an example of highly endangered animals admitted by our station. One of them was „arrested“ by officers on the 7th of May in the Husovice Tunnel and brought to the zoo. The animal was not injured, just disoriented, so we were able to release it in the Mušov Ponds area two weeks later. Before that, the vet implanted a transmitter and procured samples for DNA identification. The second beaver was brought to us by zoologists from the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague on the 20th of August from an area near Břeclav. They found an injured specimen, while studying the wild population of beavers, that'd had its tail bitten, probably by its rival. We left the beaver in quarantine after its treatment and then it was returned to the conservationists from Prague, who were satisfied with the cooperation with our zoo. Then they released the beaver in the area of its discovery. On their request, our vet implanted a transmitter too and procured samples for DNA identification. Common pipistrelles and Noctule bats (altogether nine specimens), four Sparrow hawks, two Barn owls, and two Golden orioles were among the other highly endangered animals that were admitted by our station.

In 2006, we admitted 21 birds of prey from three species. We returned 8 out of 15 Common kestrels, all four Sparrow hawks, and three out of six Common buzzards back into nature. We admitted ten owls. Two of them were Long-eared owls (one was released), six Tawny owls (three were released) and two Barn owls (both were released).

A beaver walking along a street or swimming in a garden pool is not really a rarity nowadays – these rodents are successfully returning to our environment, searching for new territory. But it is a rarity to catch a Eurasian badger in the middle of town; you probably wouldn't even encounter it in the forest, because it spends most of its life underground. On the 19th of April, we got a tip from the apprentice school on Opuštěná Street that there was an unknown animal in the building, maybe a racoon. The school staff first suspected it was a thief, because someone had repeatedly raised the alarm during the two previous nights. Later, they found a four-footed being; they were afraid to come near it, so they called the rescue station for help. After its transport to the zoo, the vet examined the animal closely and found no injuries, just a certain lethargy, which raised suspicion that the beast could have eaten some poisonous bait. The badger recovered completely at the zoo, so we gave it to foresters who found a suitable place for its release.



Barn owl release ▲►



A European mole was a curious patient. It was the first time that a gardener, who would rather lash out at a mole with a spade, brought in one of these animals. However, it was badly injured – one foreleg was crushed and sepsis was spreading throughout the organism. The mole had to be put down.

Of the two we admitted, we released one of the White storks; the second one is still at the zoo and is ready to be released. The first stork fell out of a nest atop a chimney in Vlasatice in the Břeclav area. There were three little birds in the nest and, because it was hot at that time, the birds were cooling themselves by flapping their wings. In doing so, one of them fell out and was brought by residents to the zoo. The young bird was eating regularly at the rescue station, so we were able to release it on the 3rd of August in a stubble field, where older storks have taken their young and taught them how to catch mice. We believe that the third young bird returned to its family and flew away with the others to warmer areas.

Exotic animals also come to the rescue centre when they escape from captivity. These are usually various kinds of parrots and ferrets. We even admitted a Veiled chameleon that

fell out of a tree in Brno-Juliánov on the 2nd of September. For her own reasons, a woman from Košínova Street brought us a Leopard tortoise, which she had found in her garden. She must have known that her neighbour is a keen breeder of exotic reptiles; he came for his tortoise, which is worth 20 000 CZK, the next morning. In most cases, the owners claim the animals and, after they prove their ownership, we return the animal to them. No one claimed the chameleon, so it ended up in our exposition. No one claimed a meerkat either, which strayed into the Eurocar shop on the 2nd of June. There's a possibility that it was the same specimen that had been stolen from our zoo in November 2005. However, we did not do the genetic tests. It would be too expensive, and the meerkat wouldn't join the functional family with stable inner relations and the regular appearance of young ones anyway.

The most frequent specimens were hedgehogs, as in previous years. Their numbers in the station culminate in autumn, when young ones from the late fall appear. We admitted 47 hedgehogs, altogether: 16 have been released, 19 spent the winter at the zoo, and 27 died. Common swifts came in second place; we

admitted 18 swifts, and 12 of them have been returned to the wild. They were followed by Song thrushes, Common kestrels, Tawny owls and squirrels.

Eduard Stuchlík



Gray heron release ▲▼





Photo by: Petra Buchtová



Photo by: Petra Buchtová

Students of the Faculty of Fine Arts Displayed Photos from the Zoo

The Brno Zoo and the Photography Department of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Brno University of Technology prepared a display of photos called "Animals at the Brno Zoo Through the Lenses of the Students of the Faculty of Fine Arts" in the conference hall of the Permanent Aquarium Exhibition on Radnická Street. It was open from the 11th of January until the end of February 2007. These photos were taken by the stu-

dents during the summer term of 2006 as a part of an academic project. The students firstly had to acquaint themselves with the unusual and, for most of them, also quite exotic surroundings of the Brno Zoo. Then, alone or in groups, they tried to capture the natural setting, the visitors, and especially the animal inhabitants of the zoo. During repeat visits, they worked both according to plan and experimentally, but their work was mainly influenced by the inspiration of the moment, as a reflection of their observations of the animals' lives. None of the students

were photography majors; they all studied other programmes. In spite of this, or maybe because of this, they showed a great ability to concentrate on the target and they were as patient as real hunters, while waiting for the crucial moment. Their pictures are on a professional level and can be successfully used in the promotional materials of the zoo. The zoo would like to continue in cooperation with the faculty in this direction.

Mgr. Irena Armutidisová,

Head of the Photography Section, Faculty of Fine Arts of the Brno University of Technology



Photo by: Petr Hrach



Photo by: Veronika Psotková



Photo by: Veronika Psotková



Pair of Lowland tapirs, female called Neny in front



Lowland tapir (male called Ľapi)

Tapir Pair: Neny and Ľapi

We brought a female Lowland tapir to Brno from Riga, Latvia, on the 22nd of November 2006. When our zoologist asked in Riga for its name, the answer was: "Neny". Later, it was discovered that "Neny" is not a name, but a Latvian negation; but the nickname soon took hold in Brno. The young tapir was about one year old and her weight was estimated at 150 kg. Right from the start, everybody has said that she is a real pet, because she is very friendly to almost anyone who comes near. During transport, she was eating only from the zoologist's hand. She seems to be even friendlier than Klarnet, a male that came to Brno in September 2005 from Gdansk in Poland. He was also about one year old, and we started to call him Ľapi.

After the transport, the female spent her first two weeks in Brno in quarantine, where we gradually winterised her, because she lived in a heated stable in Riga (there were already frosts in Latvia in No-

vember). At first, she was walking alone only in the back yard, but she went with Ľapi into the enclosure shortly thereafter. Now they both walk naturally through the exhibit and, when they spot a visitor, they run closer and friendly bare their teeth.

The tapirs live in a common exhibit with maras, capybaras and nandus. The exhibit has plenty of room for the animals, including a large pond. We only need little striped tapirs to appear among the inhabitants...

Automatic Gate at the Safari Exhibit

There are 19 animals in the stables of the Safari exhibit nowadays. There are four giraffes, and also zebras, wildebeests, and ostriches. Their exposition is located at the highest point on the zoo property as well as the farthest from the administration building, so it is the worst one to supervise at night, when the breeders are off-duty. That's why the zoo has been petitioning to install an electronic fire-protection system for many years. We managed to realise our plan at the end of the last year. The stables are now protected by dozens of fire detectors. If any of the detectors raise the alarm, the security guards at the zoo have to reach the stables within a certain time limit and assess the actual situation. If the guards don't get there in time and switch the alarm off, all the gates will be automatically opened so the animals can escape into the enclosure.



Lowland tapir (male called Ľapi)

Subspecies Change in the Wolf Exhibit

We knew we wanted to breed Arctic wolves (*Canis lupus arctos*) when we were building the new wolf exhibit that was opened in 2004. However, this species wasn't available then, so we acquired Mackenzie Valley wolves (*Canis lupus occidentalis*). We managed to get the Arctic subspecies, which is characterized by a white colouring on its entire body from its youth until the end of the last year. On the 16th of November, two females were transported to Brno from the French Amnéville Zoo, and we are now hoping to get a male from the Olomouc Zoo. The Mackenzie Valley wolves are waiting for transport to another zoo. (red)



Arctic wolf



Little owl



Head of Little owl

Little Owls Are Threatened in the Czech Republic

On the 23rd of November 2006, the Brno Zoo organized another special seminar focused on using the full potential of zoos, while protecting threatened fauna in the Czech Republic. This time, the seminar was about the Little owl, a bird that today is probably the most endangered type of owl in the Czech Republic.

The conclusion of the seminar was that it is highly important for the Little owls to

be provided with suitable living conditions in their present habitats. Firstly, it is necessary to maintain the low grassland areas, so that the Little owls can reach food easily – rodents and insects can take cover from the owls in higher grasslands, and then the owls don't have enough food for themselves or their young ones.

We should also create safe nesting places by hanging special nesting boxes. The construction and placement of these boxes must ensure that a marten or a cat will not threaten owl eggs and fledglings. Little owls also often die after they fly into a chimney or a ventilator. Installing grills over air vents can prevent this. Road traffic is another important negative factor that decreases the owls' population; this ensues from foreign studies. During autumn and winter, the

owls hunt small rodents that have moved from the ploughed fields into road ditches. During their flights between the ditches on either side of the road, the owls are hit by cars and die. With the present development of roadways, this danger is almost impossible to eliminate.

One possibility of strengthening the wild population is to release the young birds that are bred in captivity, e.g. in zoos or rescue stations. But an approval of state preservation authorities is required; it can only be approved on the basis of reviewing the breeding methodology and flawless management of the difficult release process. According to the current experience of other European countries, young Little owls that have been released with insufficient preparation, have only a small chance of survival.

Czech and Austrian ornithologists, who work on the Interreg III A programme, assisted from the EU, endeavour to preserve the Little owl in wild in Southern Moravia and the Weinviertel border regions. In addition to accurately mapping the appearance of the Little owl around the border, they chiefly want to coordinate preventive measures and the propagation of the protection of Little owls. From their experience, we can conclude that preserving biodiversity is a common aim of both the laic and expert public on both sides of the border. And this is a piece of good news, not only for Little owls, but also for all other kinds of animals and plants which have been negatively affected by the changes of the present Central European cultural landscape.

Mgr. Libor Opluštil,

Czech Union for Nature Conservation,
Břeclav local chapter



Photo by: Libor Opluštil

Nesting box for Little owls



Young Reticulated giraffe female called Julie ▲►

Young Giraffe Was Named Julie

Janette, a female Reticulated giraffe, gave birth to a healthy young one during the night of the 7th to the 8th of December. Her approximate birth height was 175 cm and weight 60 kg. She was named Julie.

Her father, Jamie, was born at the Whipsnade Wild Animal Park in Britain in February 2000. Her mother was born at the Dvůr Králové Zoo in November 2001. In addition to this pair, the Brno Zoo keeps Janette's older sister Janine, who – unlike Jamie and Janette – was bred artificially. The zoo acquired the father in 2002 as an exchange for Isiolo, another male born at the Dvůr Králové Zoo. This exchange genetically enriched both the Brno and the Whipsnade breeding programmes. The confirmation of Jamie's virility, as well as Janette's fertility and nurturing capabilities, is very important from the breeding perspective. This is the underlying beneficial aspect of the exchange.

Gestation lasts about 15 months for giraffes. Janette's pregnancy was showing for the last two months before the birth, and on the last day, we could see a considerably enlarged udder with four dugs. The new arrival was born in a separate box of the common stable near the Safari exhibit. Giraffes give birth while standing on their feet, so the baby has to drop from a height of about 2 meters before

it first touches the ground (covered with soft bedding at the zoo). When the keepers discovered the baby in the morning, it had already been cleaned up by its mother. They could judge by its good condition that it had already drunk her breast milk. Feeding was regular from the beginning, but Janette demanded peace. She hated the presence of humans, so we had to observe breast-feeding from the distance of the gallery. The presence of Jamie, who was curiously trying to get to the young one all the time, also disturbed her, so we moved him to the furthest box of the stable. For the first time, mother and daughter took a short walk to the side-yard during the unusually warm weather in the end of January. Other sojourns in the open air depended on the weather. They could not go out when it was freezing, windy, or if the terrain was slippery.

Giraffes live in sub-Saharan Africa in savannas covered with trees and bushes. They appear in at least nine subspecies that often cross near the bordering areas. Zoos try to breed thoroughbred subspecies and Czech zoos are quite successful, except for one exception: unfortunately one crossbreed was bred in Brno years ago. Only two subspecies appear at Czech zoos: Rothschild's giraffes and the Reticulated giraffes that are only being bred at the zoos in Brno and Dvůr Králové.

The first giraffes came to Brno in 1976. A male, Igor, and a female, Linda, both born in Prague in



the same year, were both Rothschild's giraffes. Another male, Max, again from Prague, joined them in 1978, but unfortunately, he died two years later. The original pair remained without descendants in Brno until 1983, when Linda died. The zoo acquired a pregnant female Reticulated giraffe called Vanilka from the Dvůr Králové Zoo in 1987. The first baby was born on the 12th of July 1988, but it died the following day. As a partner had not been found for Vanilka, she was covered by Igor. She gave birth to a second little one in 1990, and this crossbreed was moved to Katowice in Poland two years later. In 1991, Vanilka finally got a male partner of the same subspecies, Dhaifu, acquired from Stuttgart. Sadly, Vanilka died the next year. Dhaifu lived alone in Brno until 1998, when he was relocated to Dvůr Králové as a genetically suitable male for the four females there. According to the agreement, our zoo was to receive some of the offspring from the breeding programme. When the young pair Isiolo and Janine appeared in Brno in 2000, later joined by Janine's younger sister Janette, the Reticulated giraffe breeding programme was saved.

Eduard Stuchlik

RESTAURANT "AT THE TIGER"

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