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ZOO report BRNO

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

special supplement

ZOO REPORT PROFI

The Content

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Editor:
Zoologická zahrada města Brna
U Zoo 46, 635 00 Brno, Czech Republic
tel.: +420 546 432 311
fax: +420 546 210 000
e-mail: zoo@zoobrno.cz
www.zoobrno.cz

Publisher:
Peleos, spol. s r.o.
e-mail: info.brno@peleos.cz

Editor's office address:
Zoologická zahrada města Brna
Redakce Zooreport
U Zoo 46, 635 00 Brno, Czech Republic
tel.: +420 546 432 370
fax: +420 546 210 000
e-mail: stuchlik@zoobrno.cz

Editor manager:
Bc. Eduard Stuchlík

Specialist readers:
RNDr. Bohumil Král, CSc.
Mgr. Lubomír Selinger

Translation:
Mgr. Ilja Kašík

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Photos by:
Eduard Stuchlík

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Siberian brown bear
Photo by Miloslav Walter

UNSALEABLE

It feels like home in the Brno Zoo

To be provided a publication space in the Speech section of the ZooReport would seem to be a big opportunity which I should not be let slip. If I were a zoologist, I would seriously and professionally consider the importance of zoos for preserving endangered species. My zoological experience, however, is limited to the problems of breeding my son's degus, and this would be obviously insufficient.

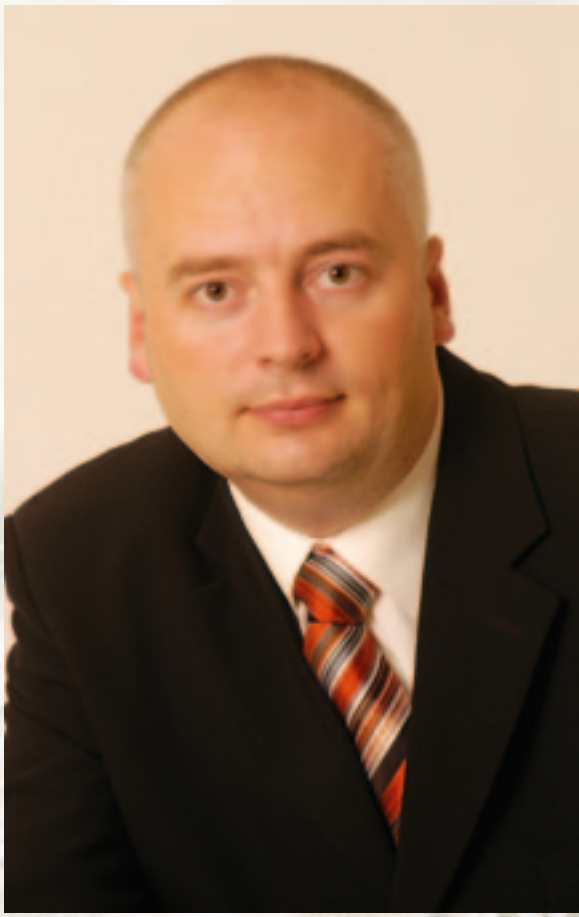
The Speech is nothing else than a more approachable term for an editorial. As a politician, I could draw attention to myself, e.g. by an article about my share in the Brno Zoo's preservation. Our zoo need not be rescued, and a treatise like "A Politician and the Zoo" seems to be impersonal and rough to me.

The Brno Zoo has been an inseparable part of my life since my childhood, which was interwoven by visits to the zoo as by a golden thread. The Bengal tiger seemed then to be much bigger than tiger I saw some time later. I looked forward to what the chimpanzees would do, as they sometimes threw something from the run floor to visitors and, as a rule, it was not a banana. I felt sorry for huge polar bears, which were crowded in a small cage with a pool; and I admired the majestic giraffes in the then-super-modern safari run-out. As for the crocodiles, I was terrified by the idea that the biggest of them might spring up, break the glass of the vivarium, and start eating the visitors. I wondered whether a big tortoise was alive because it was as overgrown as a stone and I never saw it move.

As I grew older, my visits to the zoo became rarer, but I always managed to find the way. The regularity of my visits returned with the birth of my own children, and it has been interesting to watch how the zoo has been changing. The Tiger Rocks were created as well as an attractive run for wolves and beavers, and a motor train began to run up and down the hill. We have recently enjoyed the reconstruction of the chimpanzee run and the opening of Beringia, with Kamchatka bears and a wolverine. The golden thread of experiences and memories of our zoo began to wind through the lives of my children. They will recall forever the playful young bears, Bill and Tom, exhibitionistic seals, the long violet tongue of a sweet-tooth giraffe, and being bitten by a kid in the Children's Zoo.

Although I am a big Brno patriot, I cannot claim there are not any more attractive zoos in the Czech Republic. Still, I feel at home in our Brno Zoo. I know its development, strengths and weaknesses. It is connected with my childhood, and it belongs to my life. I believe many other people feel the same, and that they will overcome problems such as the difficulty of parking near the zoo, that some parts are still a little bit "retro", and that it may sometimes feel like a construction site.

The zoo management has clear visions and is backed up by proud, strong Brno as a founder. If all of us realize what the Brno Zoo means for us, there will be enough money from public budgets because, without it, visions and strategies are only archive documents.



Oliver Pospíšil

Oliver Pospíšil during a ride

Ing. Oliver Pospíšil,
The Deputy Mayor of the City of Brno
For the Economic Field

Ing. Oliver Pospíšil

He was born in Brno in 1970. He studied material engineering at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in the Brno University of Technology between 1993 and 2002. He worked as a building professional and expert agency. In 1995, he became a member of the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD). He became a member of the City Executive Committee of ČSSD Brno-City in 1999 and he has been its vice-chairman since 2010. Last year he worked as a ČSSD local government election manager.

He became a member of the Council of the Brno-Řečkovice and Mokrá Hora city districts in 1998 and worked there as a chairman of the inspection committee until 2002. He was a full-time deputy mayor of this city district between 2002 and 2006. Since 2002, he has actively worked in the Council of the City of Brno – he was a member of the Housing Commission and Property Commission in the City Board, where he also held the position of its vice-chairman. He was elected Deputy Mayor for Economics by Brno representatives in 2006.

He was a member of the Supervisory Boards of three joint-stock companies co-owned by Brno and he is a member of the Supervisory Board of the Brno Zoo. He was ranked 22nd in the list of ČSSD candidates for election to the Council of the City of Brno in 1998. He was ranked 20th in the list of ČSSD candidates for election to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic in 2006.

Oliver Pospíšil is married and has three children.

Opening Ceremony at the entrance part of Beringia exposition complex. The tape in front of the symbolic Bering Strait was cut by (see detail on the next photo): Roman Onderka, the city mayor, Petr Bende, a singer, and Marta Sargánková, director of the Office of the Regional Council South-East.

Entrance area in front of Beringia

Welcome to Beringia!

The biggest investment project in the Brno Zoo history so far – the new entrance area into the exposition complex Beringia – has come true. The zoo opened the new area on 9th October 2010. The construction cost approximately 75 million CZK and was co-financed by the EU through their Regional Operational Programme.

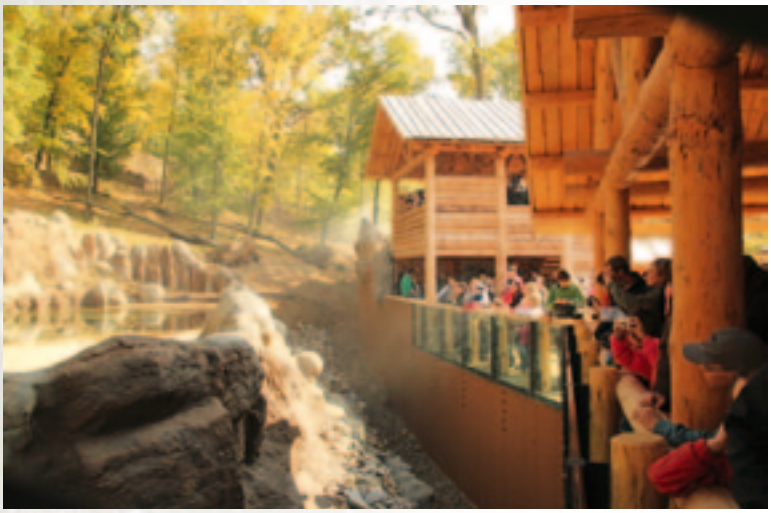
The area is located in the lower part of the zoo between the Tigers' Rock and the wolves' and beavers' run-outs. It covers an area of about one hectare. The refreshment stand At the Tigers, the emu and ibis run-outs, and a row of five obsolete expositions called the Alley of Beasts of Prey had to make room for it. We found alternate placements for the animals from the abolished run-outs in other parts of the zoo.

The biggest part of the new area belongs to a large run-out of the Kamchatka brown bears, which are the second biggest subspecies of the brown bear. They reach a height of three meters and may weigh up to 750 kg. Visitors will also find an additional exposition of the wolverines, and a part-through aviary divided into two parts, with snowy owls in one part and three bird species in the second one: ruffs, northern pintails, and Eurasian oystercatchers. There is a traditional Kamchatka homestead in the middle of the area, where a display of photos of Kamchatka's nature and ethnographical artefacts can be seen.

The ceremonial opening of the new exposition complex started at 1 pm. Visitors, invited guests, and journalists watched a show moderated by a professional. Instead of having several speakers, there was a launching ceremony of a DVD called Kamchatka, Love on the Other Side of the Planet. The singer Petr Bende was the sponsor. (There is an audiovisual documentary about a journey of Brno zoologists to Kamchatka on the DVD.) Later the special guests and municipality representatives – Roman Onderka, the city mayor, Martin Ander and Ladislav Macek, the deputy mayors, Marta Sargánková, director of the Office of the Regional Council South-East, and Petr Bende – touched champagne glasses with Martin Hovorka, the zoo director.

Mr. Onderka, Mrs. Sargánková and Mr. Bende cut the tape in front of the entrance to Beringia. Visitors stepped across a symbolic Bering Strait made of iron in front of the new exposition, hostesses gave them vodka and bread with bacon, and a young man in the costume of a Cossack conqueror invited everyone in. While the crowd headed to the view point at the exposition centre near the bears' lake, the Brno mayor and a group of journalists set out to the breeding area in back to release the robust male bear into the run-out for his first. The female was already waiting for him.

Eduard Stuchlík



View from the Kamchatka cottages into the bears' run-out

Dominant part of the run-out – a lake with adapted banks

Kamchatka Brown Bears Are Comfortable in Brno

The Kamchatka brown bears from the Brno Zoo, male Jelizar and female Kamchatka, were born in January 1993 in the mountains around Jelizovo at Kamchatka. They were caught and transported to the Rostov-on-Don Zoo in June 1993. Conservationists find several orphaned young bears in the wilds of Kamchatka every year. They catch them and hand them over to zoos. Jelizar and Kamchatka appeared in Brno on the morning of 1st October.

It was a long journey for them. They went from Rostov to Moscow on the body of a truck (each in his own transport box). The boxes were boarded and air lifted to Frankfurt-on-Main. The last part of the transport from Frankfurt to Brno was again on a truck. A crane loaded the boxes in the lower part of the Brno Zoo onto a lorry that drew them to their recently finished facility. Then the crane lifted the boxes and moved them close to the entrance of the breeding facility. Breeders prepared a special encouragement for them to go inside: a path made of sugar with other goodies at the end – fish, apples, tomatoes, cucumbers, beetroot, pumpkins, cabbage, carrots, dark bread, and branches of sallow. After a short hesitation they both moved inside, each to his own box, first the male, followed by the female. They took some food and fell asleep. They have been going out only to the background yard until the opening of the new exposition.

The bears, who used to live in a run-out with a concrete floor, adapted to the new surroundings each in his own way. When the male first appeared in the run out, followed by a curious crowd of visitors to the ceremonial opening, and felt the soft ground, he started to dig as if he was building a lair. He dug several holes and then started to feed on leaves from the bushy part of the run-out. He stayed in the bushes; a lake with fortified banks didn't interest him. He was so absorbed in digging and eating that he only took his first bath on the sixth day. On the other hand, the female stayed put on the hard floor for the first weeks; she mostly lived on the paths connecting the outer and inner part of the exposition.

Bears came to see if there are any fish in the lake.

The new exposition of the dominant species of Kamchatka brown bears, is just the entrance to the planned complex for animals from both shores of the Bering Strait. In the future Beringia exposition shall live 68 species, among which, e.g., will be North American river otters, polar bears (for which we plan to build a whole new area), reindeer, moose, musk oxen, bald eagles or Steller's sea eagles. The existing expositions of Arctic wolves, North American beavers and Canadian lynxes belong to the complex, too. The initial idea for creating Beringia is a reminder of the importance of land connections, which used to join America with Asia in the area in the Ice Age, in shaping fauna from adjacent parts of the two continents.

Eduard Stuchlík

Male Jelizar

A Suitable Place for Living

The public watched the opening of new expositions in the Beringia complex with great attention, especially as it was the biggest investment in the history of Brno Zoo. After such an event, doubts and unanswered questions also appeared, of course. The most common question was: "Why can the animals hardly be seen in the run-outs?"

The most looked-for animals were the brown bears. The huge male could be seen digging a lair in the run-out during the opening ceremony. However, during the next days, when bursting crowds headed for the zoo, the bears could hardly be spotted. This was even more regretted because many visitors had travelled from a distance to see the bears. What exactly happened then?

At first it's necessary to explain that it was a real derring-do for our zoo to acquire male Jelizar and female Kamchatka. We managed to get these wonderful, big adult animals, which we hoped would draw more attention than young ones. Looking at the early lives of our pair, we find out that both were captured as orphans; their mothers had probably been killed by hunters. They lived the following years in a not-very-spacious cage exposition with a concrete floor. After they had bred twice, they spent several years apart. Our zoo has now prepared a generous run-out with a big pool, a waterfall, and many full-grown trees for them. And the bears reacted: Although the male entered the outdoor part the first day, he stayed at the same place for several days almost motionless; the female didn't even leave the concrete surface. How come the bears didn't joyfully enter the pool and explore the whole area? Surprisingly, they were stressed! Their organisms underwent so many new impulses and suddenly had to solve a whole slew of new situations. This messed up their old routine life rhythm. Wouldn't it then have been better to let them live as they were used to? Let's answer straight: No, it wouldn't have been better!

It took several days until the bears decided to get acquainted with their new surroundings. At first, they had to learn how to trust each other again and to restore their relationship with people. They had to understand what the breeders wanted from them and how they should behave towards them. In my opinion, the bears stood the test, and they deserve admiration. They started to explore the run-out relatively quickly, the distance between the two bears shortened gradually, and finally the expected dip in the pool took place. I believe that we have a pair of highly adaptable specimens; other breeders have had similar experiences. For example, breeders in Veszprém Zoo, Hungary once experienced an analogous situation. Their brown bear hadn't entered its new spacious run-out for almost a year, and it often exhibited stereotyped movements. Let's add that it took a bit longer but, in the end, the bear reconciled itself to its new surroundings and became one of the most popular animals of the zoo.

The brown bears at Brno Zoo will also probably understand only after some time that the new exposition is a suitable place for them to live in. And only then we will we be able to observe the whole range of their natural behaviour; and only then also will our visitors be quite satisfied.

On the occasion of the opening of the Beringia complex, it remains only to regret that not even in the 21st century will mankind be able to offer wild animals enough space in nature.

Ing. Miloslav Walter,
Gamekeeper in the Beast Department

Female Kamchatka

Aviary of the Snowy owls (left part) and water birds. In front: corridor connecting the wolverines' facility and their run-out.

Wolverine

Snowy owl

Ruffs

Northern pintails (females)

New animals in smaller expositions

An exposition of wolverines [*Gulo gulo*], an aviary of snowy owls [*Nyctea scandiaca*], and an aviary of a group of water birds are the new parts that belong to Beringia. As these breeding facilities are much smaller than the one that houses the Siberian brown bears, it will be a bit more difficult to create optimal surroundings with appropriate comfort for the new animals.

The breeder has to be in permanent contact with the architect during the projection of a new exposition, and both have to be able to imagine the animal's behaviour along with the possible dangers and accidents. Even after many hours of consultations and changes during both the projection and construction, we are still not sure whether something unexpected will happen. It is still necessary to watch the animals, observe the facility, and repair possible defects even after the construction is complete. For instance, we had to modify a pool entry in the snowy owls' exposition.

Although in their natural surroundings there are deeper water bodies, our birds that have been born in captivity knew only a pond where they could stand on the bottom. However, the new pool is deeper and thus the owls didn't know how to get out when they fell inside: They hadn't been in such situation yet. So, we placed several thick branches across the pool and since then the owls like to sit there and wet their claws. The water element is also an important part of their happy life and thus it's also a part of the breeding facility, of course.

We are going to complete the aviary with two more species: the ruffs [*Philomachus pugnax*] and the northern pintails [*Anas acuta*] will be joined by the Eurasian oystercatcher [*Haematopus ostralegus*] and the common eider [*Somateria mollissima*]. It is better to start with a low number of animals bred in smaller expositions.

Finally, our wolverine male got a partner in November. Their future common life depends on how they get along with each other. Even animals that are die-hard solitaires in the wild can happily live in pairs or in multimember groups in a zoo. We would be very happy if the two wolverines find their way to each other.

The contractor executed high-quality work when building the new part of Beringia. Visitors have no idea about the technical achievements that are hidden inside the highly functional objects and facilities. For example, all four water pools in the new expositions - bears', wolverines', owls' and water birds' - have complicated filter devices. While observing the animals, the breeders also can use cameras that react to movement even in the dark.

Also a large background for the animals offers modern delivery rooms, spacious preparation rooms, economical recuperative heating, and feed outfits through which vitamins and medicaments can be added to the food.

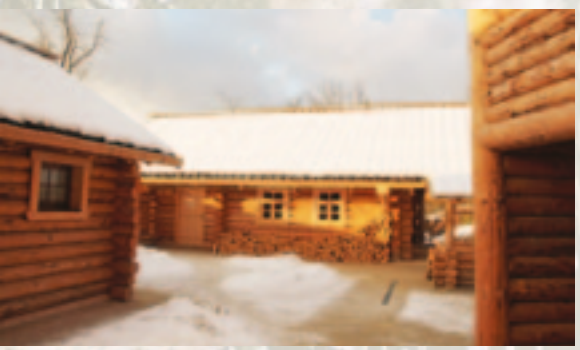
The breeders at Beringia will not have less work, but I believe that it will be joyful work and that the new expositions will bring many new supporters to us.

Ing. Miloslav Walter,
Gamekeeper in the Beast Department

Entrance to the yard of bear-hunter: sauna on the left, hayloft on the right, residential building in the middle at the back

Kamchatka Cottages

Just as a log cabin of the Haida Gwaii Canadian Indians is in the Brno run-out of the Arctic wolves, the new entry to Beringia is complemented with "Kamchatka cottages". They are reminiscent of people who used to live, and may still live, somewhere connected with the country. At the same time, they give us a view of the bear run and offer visitors a place for rest and the drawing of new knowledge.



Residential building

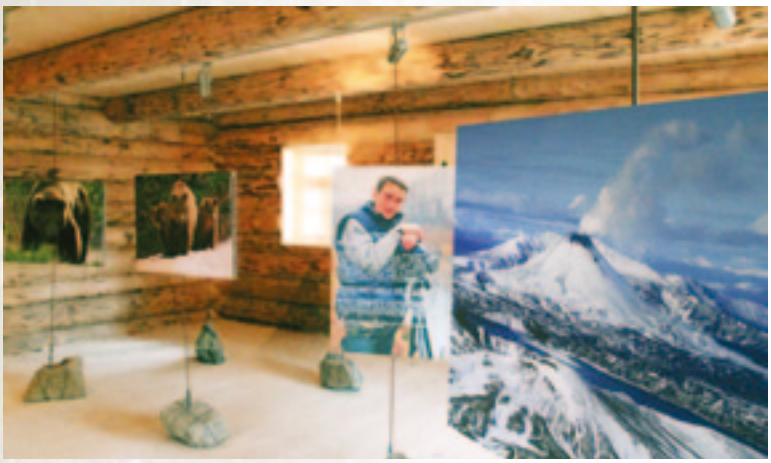
Iconostas in the corner of kitchen

The three wooden Kamchatka cottages, built in the style of Russian folk architecture, represent a compound of a bear hunter, and consist of a residential building, a sauna, and a hay barn. The structures form a closed unit, and are grouped around an inner yard with a timbered well. The farmhouse also includes a farm carriage because, besides their main craft, ancient hunters also tried to farm land. In front of the gate to the farmhouse, we can also find items associated with the traditions of the Korjaks, the original Kamchatka inhabitants - a wooden cage for a young bear and a drum from a hollowed-out stem which emits different notes when hit on its various parts.

The residential building has two rooms. We installed a photographic exhibition of Kamchatka bears in their natural environment in the bigger room. The photographs were taken by Igor Schpilenok, an internationally recognized Russian environmentalist and countryside photographer. (For more information about the exhibition and its author, see our next edition). A roofed entry to the room affords a view of the bear run. The smaller room is a kitchen equipped with oven, furniture, kitchenware, and other artefacts of Russian folk culture. The sauna in the interior has a practical use - toilets. The ground floor of the hay-barn, where visitors can find information boards, provides another hidden view of the bear run. After going upstairs to the roofed outlook platform, we get a birds'-eye view of the run and its surroundings.

Under the Kamchatka cottages there is a basement containing technical and social facilities for employees, and bear and wolverine lodgings which have corridors connecting to runs. The basement is off limits to visitors. The Kamchatka cottages and the runs surrounding them form a unique breeding-exposition which significantly enriches the whole zoo. *Eduard Stuchlík*

Stove



Exhibition of Igor Shpilenok's photos

What is Beringia

The fact we have been using the term "Beringia" in our zoo almost every day in recent months makes us think of where the term has originated and what it can express.

Vitus Bering, a Danish seafarer who worked in the Russian military navy in the 18th century, is a well-known figure. The sea strait between Chukotka and Alaska, the sea southwards of the strait, and one of the islands in the sea are named after him. Beringia is a continental shelf which repeatedly emerged from the waves of the above-mentioned strait for thousands of years, connected Asia with America and then hid in shallow waters. The phenomenon in which the world's ocean level dropped because it did not have water bound into Arctic and Antarctic icebergs has occurred many times in our planet's history. Beringia has emerged at least four times during the Ice Ages, the first of which started a million years ago. The analysis of sediments from the bottom of the Bering Strait indicates that it might have appeared and disappeared even six or eight times. It disappeared in interglacial periods when warming occurred. The last time that this happened was approximately ten thousand years ago.

Plants and animals from Asia and America migrating in both directions - from the New World to the Old World and back - met on the Beringia land connecting the continents. The predecessors of present-day horses and camels came to Asia from America over Beringia. Later, people from Asia came over and settled in America.

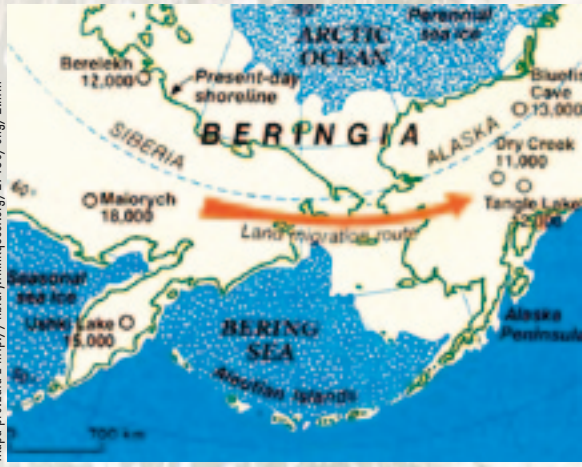
Before its last disappearance, it was possible to walk over Beringia without getting a foot wet for approximately six thousand years. (The entire fourth Ice Age lasted for approximately twenty thousand years). The sea level was then about 130 meters lower than today and Beringia was up to two thousand kilometres wide in the north-south direction. The land bridge created an obstacle to the cold sea flowing from the Arctic Ocean, and a more moderate climate prevailed in the southern coast of Beringia. Tundra and grassy steppes covered in places with dwarf wooden trees and bushes sustained a lot of animal species, including huge mammoths.

When the world's ocean level dropped, the bottoms of shallow coastal seas also emerged at other parts of the planet, but the connection of the two continents caused an evolutionary impulse in Beringia only where there was an unusually high biodiversity and a high number of endemic species. Ethnographers, archaeologists, palaeontologists, zoologists, botanists and other specialists have been examining the Asian and American parts of the region around the Bering Strait. They use the term "Beringia" for a widespread area from the Siberian Kolyma River and Kamchatka peninsula, through the Chukotka peninsula and Alaska to the Mackenzie River in the northwest of Canada.

Beringia has also become the name of protected areas, preserves, and conservation organisations from this biogeographically earmarked region. The animal species that are gradually being included in the Brno Zoo in its Beringia exposition complex come from this region.

The Brno Zoo started the successive building of the Beringia exposition complex with the Canadian beavers' run-out in 2003. Expositions of Arctic wolves followed the next year and in 2008 the exposition of Canadian lynxes has been built. The entrance part of the complex with the Siberian brown bear as a dominant species has been finished in 2010.

Arctic wolves



Mapa převzata z http://library.thinkquest.org/27130/eng/2.htm

Beringia 18 000 – 10 000 years ago. In dots: compact ice sheet on the sea surface, which was seasonal south from Beringia and permanent north from Beringia.

Canadian lynx female with four kittens

Jeníček Has Returned to Mařenka

When Mařenka (Gretel) gave birth to four kittens on 9 May 2010, it was the first time Canadian lynxes [Lynx canadiensis] reproduced in the Brno Zoo. The event was also important for the zoo because the young ones of related European lynxes were born here many years ago.

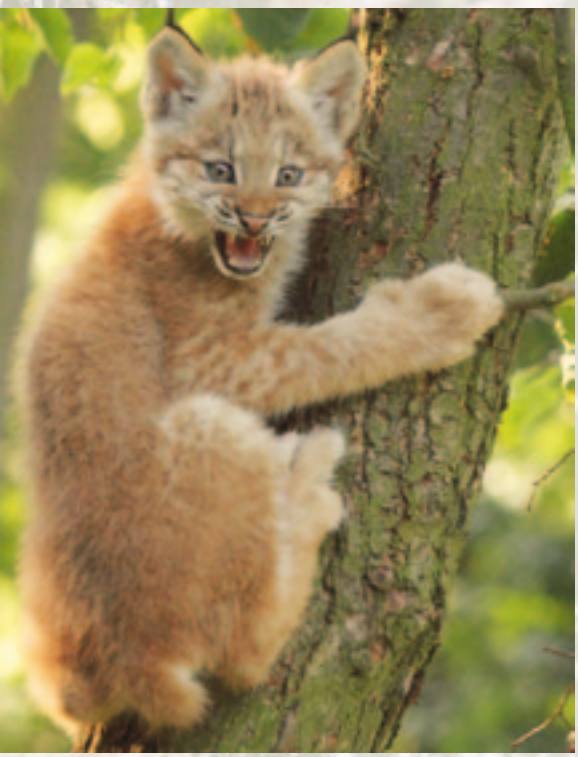
The zoo built a new breeding facility for lynxes on approximately 500 m^2 between the polar bear and arctic wolf expositions in 2008. As an exposition complex of Nordic animals, Beringia, has been formed there, we selected the Canadian lynx for the new exposition. The sloping forest land where the lynx run is built is formed by an entrenched gorge, and the natural environment is completed by hollow-stem and fallen tree-root decorations. A wooden kennel which is partitioned into three boxes serves as the lynx lodging. It is connected with the run via a return corridor - an approximately five-meter-long wire tunnel.

Our zoo started breeding Canadian lynxes in 2003, but only after 14 March 2009 did we manage to acquire a prospective breeding couple. On that day, a female born in May 2005 in a private breeding station in Minnesota, U.S.A. arrived in Brno. A male born in May 2002 which came from the Ostrava Zoo waited for it in the recently finished exposition. We brought the female from America because the European population of Canadian lynxes shows a high degree of consanguinity.

Both predators liked their new home. They often sat at elevated places, climbed grown trees, and looked into the distance. Breeders therefore named them Jeníček and Mařenka (Hansel and Gretel) as in the fairytale. The rutting season started with them exactly on 1 March 2010. Formerly quiet animals, they emitted a wide range of sounds like that heard during cat copulation. Jeníček, usually a submissive individual, did not leave the female for a moment, and watched her all the time. We first observed mating 2 May, which was repeated during the next five days.

The anticipated birth of kittens necessitated some modifications to the breeding facility. We planted several low conifers in the run so that the young would have enough hiding places. We hung toys made of hoses, skins, and furs on tree branches and bushes, and thoroughly disinfected the lodging and the passing corridor.

Mařenka delivered the young on the 69th day after the first observed copulation. The birth occurred in a box accessible to the female in the all day. At first she stayed inside with the kittens and carefully guarded them. After two days, we managed to find out that there were four of them. Jeníček still stayed in the run, sometimes peeping in the corridor. Although lynxes commonly take care of the



Young lynxes like to climb tree trunks

Lynx female with a young one

young in couples, with the male actively participating in upbringing (e.g. by bringing a kill to the young), we did not want to risk anything and decided to separate Jeníček from the other family members before the young started coming out of the box where the female would not be able to guard them so well. On the tenth day after the birth, we moved the male to the currently unoccupied neighbouring exposition.

Mařenka has always behaved as a good mother. When we checked the box, she always angrily defended her young. They started seeing after 14 days, and immediately started examining the kennel they lived in. We additionally fed the young with meat cut into small pieces, and their mother got enriched food containing feathered birds and whole kids. After a month, we caught the young, de-wormed them with Drontal junior, treated them against ectoparasites with Frontlin, and vaccinated them against common cat diseases. Each of the young was implanted with a chip. During its application under the skin, we also determined the sex and found out that there were three males and one female. A week later, the young started coming out of the kennel to investigate the corridor. At that time, they discovered a small chink in the fence through which they managed to get to the free area outside the breeding facility. We therefore enclosed them in the kennel and repaired the weak place in the corridor. During the repair, the female could not come to her young and she got very angry. The offended mother, angry against everyone, thought out her retribution to try to prevent other similarly awkward incidents: Immediately after we had opened the kennel containing her young, Mařenka started bringing all of the kittens to a hole in the hollow stem of a huge tree in the middle of the run. The young soon found out that they felt better in the branches of the surrounding high vegetation than on the ground and started climbing the trunks to the crowns of the high trees. The morning checks thus became quite demanding for the keepers because finding all the young, each of which ruled over a different tree, was a mammoth task. More complications came when we tried to catch the young for revaccination. All of them gathered under one tree and, when we approached, they climbed to the top as nimbly and quickly as squirrels. We only managed to catch their mother and one young male. We put both of them into a single box in the kennel and left the neighbouring box open. Our expectation was fulfilled:

Young lynxes had a popular hiding place in a hollow trunk on ground.

At night, the remaining small lynxes came as orphans to the empty box so as to be as close as possible to their mother, and we closed them in there the next morning.

We enjoyed watching the development of the young under the thorough supervision of their mother. Mařenka placed surplus food at various points in the run for her young and called them for nursing by with a rumbling sound, which the tiny kittens answered thinly. The mother also used this characteristic rumbling to call the young down from the treetops when she felt they might be losing control.

In the autumn, the kittens found new homes in other zoos, and Jeníček returned to his Mařenka. In the next season, we would like to raise a lynx family in the presence of the male to verify whether the new family would be able to live permanently together.

Ing. Miloslav Walter,
Keeper at the Beast of Prey District

Lynx female with a young one

Photo by Michal Balcar

Tapir with a young one ▲▼▶

Photo by Michal Balcar

Tapir Female Gave Birth to a Second Young One

A happy event took place at the Brno Zoo in the lowland tapirs' [*Tapirus terrestris*] run-out on 8th August 2010. Exactly at 1.30 pm, five-years-old Neny gave birth to her second young one after 397 days of pregnancy. The birth passed without complications. The young female already starting suckling 90 minutes later and, when we weighed her the other day, she had reached 10,5 kg. Bibi, as she was later named, first used to leave the inner part only for the paddock; but, on the 16th day, she went to the run-out with her mother. She met her one- year-older sister, Adina, there. All the three females – Neny, Adina and Bibi – spent their first night together in the inner part after another five days.

The history of breeding tapirs at the Brno Zoo is quite short, but these two young ones are a sufficient encouragement. The first tapir came to Brno in October 2005. It was a male called Klarnet, born on 16th June 2004 in the Gdansk Zoo, Poland. Neny became our second tapir one year later. She was born on 16th September 2006 in the Riga Zoo, Latvia. We placed the tapirs into a run-out called South American, where they live together with capybaras and nandus. The first offspring of the breeding pair, and thus also the first tapir bred at our zoo, was Adina, born on 14th June 2009. She was weighed the second day of her life, after she had suckled for the first time, registering 8,10 kg. That's almost two kilograms less than Bibi at the same age. We let Adina into the paddock when she was 11 days old. She patiently waited there until her mother came back from the outer run-out. They had been communicating with each other with intensive whistles. The young tapir, accompanied

Photo by Michal Balcar

Photo by Michal Balcar

Young Lowland tapir shortly after its birth ▲▼

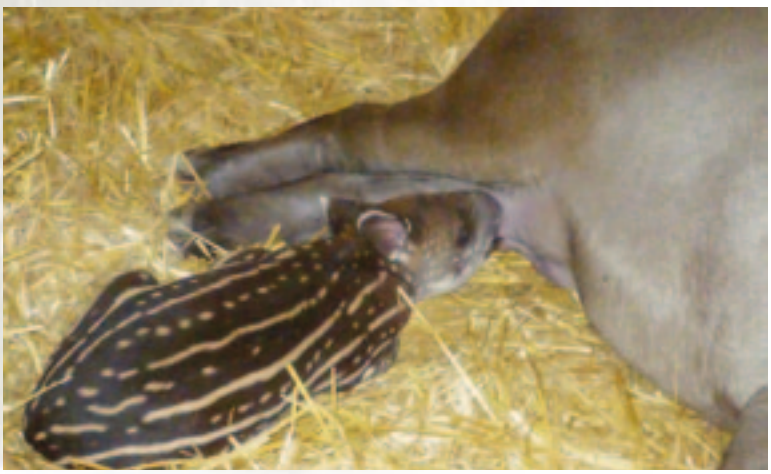


Photo by Michal Balcar

by her mother, appeared in the outer run-out for the first time on 30th June, and repeated their walks every fine day. Klarnet was kept separated from them. He carefully watched Adina and her mother from a neighbouring run-out. The whole family met for the first time at the beginning of September, at first in the outer run-out and, several days later, also in the inner part. Klarnet was literally fascinated by little Adina, and hardly left her during the first days.

Unfortunately Bibi's and Adina's father isn't at the zoo anymore. Breeding brings both the gladness and sadness. Klarnet got an intensive, insidious, and infectious disease in the middle of October 2009. Although the five-year-old male tried to fight it (with the help of keepers and vets), he died in November 2009. As Neny continuously met Klarnet in the run-out after the first birth and they showed a high interest in each other, we hoped the young female would soon be pregnant for the second time. When we observed the couple mating in a filled pool around midday on 6th July 2009, our hope was fulfilled.

Most of the older reports say that tapirs are primarily solitary animals with mostly night activity. However, the newest research and observations in the wild show much wider toleration inside more numerous groups, and even an inclination towards daytime activity. The behaviour of tapirs kept in zoos is highly dependent on the personality of the specimen, its experience during breeding, its food, and even the size and arrangement of the breeding facility. Some zoos have problems with keeping even two specimens together, others (e.g. Singapore Zoo and Kuala Lumpur Zoo) successfully keep 5–10 animals together. Some tapirs are aggressive both against other tapirs and their keepers; on the other hand, some are almost domesticated, and can be approached and scratched without fear. However a certain cautiousness is always in order.

Tapirs and capybara

The tapirs [*Tapiridae*], an ancient family of the Perissodactyla order, are the oldest mammals on our planet. They used to be plentiful in the Tertiary period and they have been preserved almost unchanged since then. They once used to occur in Europe, China, and North America. Nowadays they are scarcer, and represent only a negligible part of the original species diversity. We know only three species, which live in South and Central America, and one species from Southeast Asia. The Baird's tapir [*Tapirus bairdii*] from Central America, Mexico, and the northwest of South America, mountain tapir [*Tapirus pinchaque*] from the Andes parts of Columbia, Ecuador and Peru, and the only Asian representative – Malayan tapir [*Tapirus indicus*] from South Burma, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, and Sumatra belong to the "critically endangered" category in the Red List of Threatened Species. The lowland tapir has the state of "vulnerable". Its main occurrence area lies east of the Andes and goes through South America from Venezuela to Brazil, northwest Argentina, and Paraguay. The lowland tapir also lives in Peru, Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, French Guiana, and Surinam. It's already been six years since the Brno Zoo announced its plan to cooperate on saving the lowland tapir during the EAZA annual meeting in Colmarden, Sweden, in September 2004. We have experienced both failures and successes. Joy in the newborn little tapirs predominates, and we hope our breeding will successfully continue.

Tapir and nandu

Michal Balcar,
Breeder in the Terrarium,
Aviary and South America units

Desert cat with young ones

The Third Natural Breeding of the Desert Cat

In 2010, the Brno Zoo was successful in its third natural breeding of the desert cat [*Felis margarita harrisoni*] – four young, three males and one female, were born on 1 June. Previously, in June 2009, our desert cats also had kittens. Then, three were born. The first natural breeding occurred in our zoo ten years ago, in 2000. Breeding desert cats is not very common. According to the 2008 records, only five zoos reproduce them in Europe. *(red)*

Umca again with Cora

Umca, a male polar bear, spent approximately three weeks at the end of 2010 in one of the brown bear lodgings, where we had moved him so that Cora, the female, would have a quiet atmosphere for breeding her young. The huge bear was moved in a transport box which was transferred to a tractor trailer from the run by a crane. Umca returned to his partner on 7 December and, since then, they have been together all the time.

On 21 November 2010, we think that Cora gave birth to twins. The camera showed a single cub but voice signals indicated the presence of two, which unfortunately did not survive. They were not probably viable and their mother responded as she would have in the open countryside and ate the dead bodies.

To ensure that nothing disturbs Cora during breeding, on 19 November we moved her to a closed birth box in the den with conditions corresponding to the natural environment of polar bears. The birth occurred when Umca had been separated. As during the successful breeding of polar bears in 2007, we monitored the activity in the box using a camera system with a microphone and assessed the condition of the young according to their voice manifestations. However, the calls of the young stopped after several days and a change occurred in the behaviour of the female: She was quite nervous. Keepers therefore decided to visit the box on 24 November to find out what had happened. Unfortunately, we did not find the young.

An even higher mortality rate of polar bears occurs in zoos than in nature. According to statistics, only eight per cent of the polar bear young born in zoos live to be adult. Despite this fact, we believe Cora will be pregnant next season again and we hope she will be more successful in her next motherhood. *(red)*

Our Horses Carry Children Outside the Zoo

Christmas at the Brno Town Hall, which is an entertainment programme prepared for the 23 December and which ends with fireworks, was held for the eighteenth times by the City of Brno in 2010. As in the previous years, animals from our Children's Zoo were also presented in the historic premises. A worker of the breeding unit who brought a Hermann's tortoise to the Parliamentary Hall at 1:45 p.m. was immediately surrounded by a group of children. Not only they but also adult spectators listened to a speech about breeding tortoises and their life in nature. Other keepers presented two horses at the yard of the Town Hall: the Irish cob called Clive, and Belfigor, a stallion of the mini Appaloosa breed. The visitors looked at the animals, and stroked and admired them, while keepers answered their questions and some children had a short ride. In other events during the pre-Christmas season, the Welsh sheep performed in live Nativity scenes organized by city district offices in Žabovřesky and Žebětín.

Animals from the Children's Zoo, particularly ponies, entertained the public at various parts of Brno throughout 2010. Our small horses of medium-sized breeds carried children in the Avion shopping park in Dolní Heršpice, amongst other places, during the festive start of the sailing season at Brno Dam, and also on Children's Day of the City Police of Brno.

Belfigor, a breeding stallion, was awarded the audience's award as the most beautiful and most skilful horse at Techagro, an agricultural exhibition at Trade Fairs Brno! *(red)*

Belfigor

Irish cob Clive on courtyard of the Brno City hall

Both the Giraffes Whelped

Both our reticulated giraffes [Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata] gave birth to young in 2010. The first baby – a female – was born on 5th September in the stables by the Safari exposition, where the pregnant giraffe had been watched by a camera. The little giraffe stood on its legs an hour after the birth; another hour later, it suckled its mother's milk. After about a week, it went out for a short walk with its mother. In good weather, they used to go out only to the background yard but later, during shiny autumn days, they also enjoyed the large common run-out where they live together with zebras, wildebeests, and ostriches. For safety reasons, we kept most of those animals away when we released the mother, her young, and another adult female into the large run-out for the first time.

The mother, called Tosha, born in July 2006, had been bred naturally in the Dvůr Králové Zoo. She has lived in Brno since 2008. The father was called Jamie, but unfortunately he died in September 2009. Other than Tosha, we also keep a female called Jannett; she and Jamie had a little female, Julia. Julia moved at the age of about two to the Dvůr Králové Zoo, when we exchanged her for Tosha. Also, Jannett managed to become pregnant by Jamie for the second time. That baby, a male, was born on 10th November 2010. Both the young ones who were born after their father's death and their sister Julia are a considerable strengthening of Czech breeding stock, because they are lineal descendants of genetically valuable male, Jamie, who came from the British Whipsnade Zoo. *(red)*

Head of young giraffe

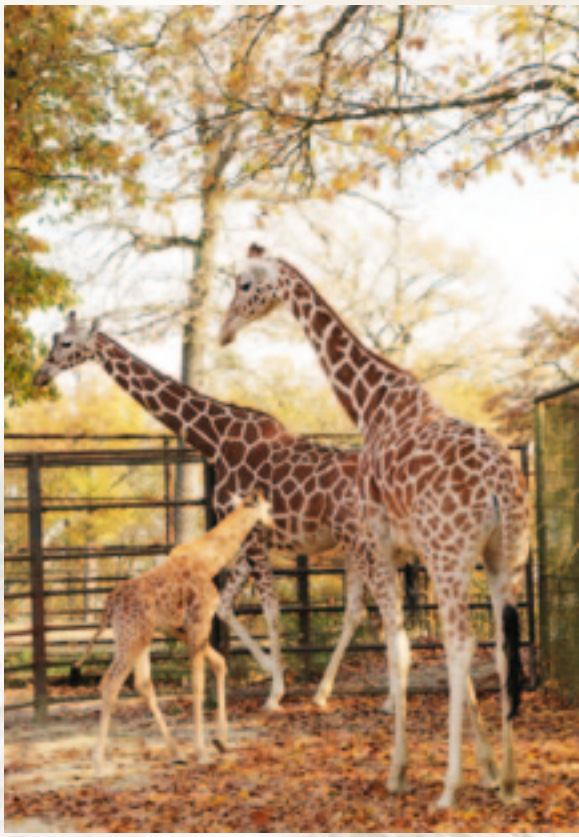
Little Stallion in the Group of Grevy's Zebras

Visitors have been able to see a young stallion in the run-out of Grevy's zebras [Equus grevyi] near the Children's Zoo since 4th September 2010. It was born on that same day. Its mother is eight-year-old Míša, originally from the Poznan Zoo, Poland. We keep two other adult females. The younger, Božena, born in Poznan in 2007, hadn´t had a baby yet. Thirteen-year-old Šaráda gave birth to her second young one on the last-but-one day of 2008; and, shortly after her, on New Year's Day 2009, Míša also whelped. Both of the females born then have already found their new homes in other zoos. The father of all the young ones, eleven-year-old Arnold, is being kept separately nowadays: He could hurt them because of his natural aggression. The stallion, an unrelated specimen who was born in the Tierpark in Berlin, became the new leader of the Brno group in 2007. *(red)*

Ape Pavilion's Opening Ceremony

One of the two ape pavilions built in the 1960's at Brno Zoo finally got a new face. Long-time troubles of the considerably obsolete facility became history after the radical reconstruction. The rebuilding was finished on 9th October 2010, when the opening ceremony took place. The chimpanzees that live there will enjoy a much larger living space. Also, visitors like to find themselves in close proximity to the sympathetic apes, only divided by a hardened glass wall from the tastefully adapted new surroundings.

The new inner part of the facility, the so-called bedrooms, were built on an up-to-now unused ground floor. Above it, the apes have an inner exposition which was enlarged by using part of what had been the corridor for visitors. The original cages, which are now connected, are serving as a temporary outdoor run-out. A new one will be built in the slope above the pavilion during the second stage of the reconstruction. A smaller, separated part of the pavilion that is almost finished includes the completely changed original facility of the chimpanzees and a new spacious outdoor run-out adjoins it. This part will serve some of the smaller apes; we haven't decided yet about the exact species. (More information about the ape pavilion is on pages 16 and 17.) (red)



Giraffes with a young one in paddock

Zebra called Šaráda with her second descendant

Chimpanzees in new exposition

Apes Obediently Went Through Joined Cages

Before its rebuilding started in September 2009, the Ape Pavilion used to be the home of chimpanzees as well as mandrills and binturongs. We have found an alternative room for the latter two in the zoo, but we have not managed to move the group of four anthropoid apes to any other zoo, so the chimpanzees had to stay in the current exposition during the reconstruction.

It was necessary to minimise stress caused by the activity in the construction. We partitioned the visitor- and the parallel service-corridor along the chimpanzee lodging with a door, behind which there was an area that the workmen intended to change into a completely new chimpanzee exposition. The area consisted of the former visitor corridor and three vacated lodgings, one of which had belonged to the mandrills, the second one to the binturongs, and the third one of which had been unoccupied. Not too much dust and noise from the construction reached the chimpanzees over the partition, and visitors also could come to it and observe the apes. This proved to be beneficial, especially as winter was approaching and the animals were losing interest in going to the outdoor run.

Apes' pavilion before reconstruction

Apes' pavilion after first period of reconstruction

The reconstruction was commenced by the disassembling of the empty lodging cages and a glass wall separating the lodgings from the former visitor area. The work was only noisy in fits and starts, and the chimpanzees coped with it quite well. They even sometimes wanted to look to the construction site through the opened door. Quite calm days continued until the middle of March, when the reconstruction picked up pace, dust and noise increased, and work continued over the weekend. The chimpanzees then became stressed. They were downcast, in a bad mood, and disobedient. They also suffered from diarrhoea, and occasionally from vomiting as well. During these hard days, a sad event occurred: Pegina, the alpha female, whose health had not been good for a long time, died on 22 April. The cause of her death was a malign tumour on her internal organs. On the following days, the chimpanzees looked for her and were unusually quiet, maybe even abashed. They later coped with her loss.

Modifications to the part of the pavilion intended for the chimpanzees were getting to an end, and the time for moving the animals in approached. Before doing so, we had to resolve a technical challenge - to build a means by which the chimpanzees could get to their new home without tranquilizing them. The only possibility was to connect the four cages in front of the pavilion facade which served as runs for the four different ape species which had originally been dwelling in the pavilion. They were separated from each other by a two-meter space. There was a connection between the first and the second cages. The first one had served the chimpanzees as a run, but a small tunnel to the adjacent cage built in the 1980s had never been used. It now became useful when the chimpanzees started going through it for walks to the adjacent cage. After approximately two months, zoo technicians connected that cage by another tunnel to the third cage. From there, a passage was secured by means of a sliding partition to the newly reconstructed part of the pavilion. The way through which the chimpanzees would get from the old to the new lodging without being tranquillized was prepared.

The transfer was carried out on the morning of 8 July. The chimpanzees cooperated perfectly with their keepers when going from one cage to another. We let them stay for a while in the third cage, where they found themselves for the first time. In the afternoon, they entered the newly reconstructed indoor exposition where we had prepared decorations, swings, rest areas, and other equipment from their previous run so that they found objects that they already knew by sight and smell in the new environment. To make the glazed barrier separating the animals from the visitors easier to see, we have stuck a black strip simulating grating on the glass. (To be continued on the next page)

Mariana Hubíková,
Ape keeper

Chimpanzees in new exposition

New Chimpanzees´ Home

The apes seemed to be very joyful in the first moments in their new exposition. Whatever was at hand, they happily smashed against the floor. After having some fun, they carefully explored the surroundings. When they discovered that we had hidden food for them at various places, they searched all over and ate what they found.

They liked the new home. It is four times as big as their original lodging, and is equipped with tree branches and fire-fighting hoses for climbing and resting. The floor has two levels, dividing the exposition into two approximately equally large parts connected by artificial rocks and a drinking fountain, which was missing in the chimpanzee run until now. The difference in height is about 1.5 m. The lower part is scattered with a layer of 10-cm thick pine bark, and there is a passage to "bedrooms" in the former cellar rooms. We spread wooden padding as a sleeping net on the concrete orange layer in the upper part, which communicates with the outdoor run. In both levels there is additional floor heating near the glazed barrier. The main heating system is situated in the ceiling, covered throughout the area with a solid metal net. The net enables chimpanzees to move by brachiation (moving hand over fist), alternately hanging from first the right and then the left upper limb. The exposition walls are mostly faced with oak boards, and are painted with ochre washable paint. The equipment also includes one wooden plank bed, which will soon be supplemented by another two. The chimpanzee bedrooms are also furnished with wooden plank beds, floor heating, and feed boxes. However, the apes spend little time there but in fact only go for the delicacies we put into their feed boxes. Then they run up to the exposition with their armful of fruit. They sometimes like spreading sticky food over the glazed wall, from where they slowly eat it. After such a feast, it is a keeper´s turn to come in with a cloth and bucket in hand.

The original chimpanzee run from which they set off to the new lodging had to be demolished because it impeded further reconstruction work. After moving, the chimpanzees could first use the connected second and third cages, which were soon also connected with a fourth cage. The apes now use the whole area as a temporary outdoor run.

Each of our chimpanzees has found its favourite place in the new environment. Fáben, the male, likes resting and having a snack on a head-piece which connects supportive poles, and he has chosen his sleeping area at the sliding partition in the corridor leading to the outdoor run, where he can check and control the door - to our great dissatisfaction.

Nimba, the female, occupies the place on the fire-fighting hose at the window, where she has a nice view of the forest. Dadyna, another female, has chosen the position near the ceiling immediately under the heating system. She is warm there and, because Fáben is sometimes aggressive, she feels safe there. Unfortunately, Dadyna, the oldest animal of the Brno Zoo (it was born in the wild countryside of Equatorial Africa in about 1967), did not enjoy the new environment of the reconstructed pavilion for long: She died, to our great sorrow, on 14 November 2010.

In mid-September 2010, reconstruction of the remaining part of the pavilion finished, as well as construction of a new adjacent outdoor run with a small lake and a waterfall. The exposition still waits for its final touches, and there have been no animals introduced as yet.

The construction of a new outdoor chimpanzee run should start within two years. It will complete the reconstruction of the ape pavilion. Our chimpanzees are quite old, and they will live to the end of their days in the new areas with dignity. We will earmark the pavilion for an exposition of Madagascan nature in future, and it will then be permanently occupied by lemurs.

Mariana Hubíková,
Ape Keeper

Photo by Ladislav Laža

Common crane in Jeseniky

Will There Be a Sixth Czech National Park in Jeseniky?

The Jeseniky Protected Landscape Area (PLA), established in 1969, covers an area of 740 km² in Hruby Jesenik – the highest Moravian mountains that, together with Nizky Jesenik, create the easternmost part of the Bohemian Massif (Sudeten) formed in the end of the Palaeozoic. The Hruby Jesenik Mountains with its highest peak, Praded (1492 m above sea level), are one of the colder regions in the Czech Republic. It is also a high precipitation area – there is snow on the ridge usually from the second half of October till the end of May. Although 80% of the PLA is covered by forest, we can also find smaller biotopes of low-mountain meadows and grasslands, alpine meadows, wetlands and moors, a network of rivers, and scattered vegetation here.

The PLA is considered to be one of the least anthropogenically changed mountain complexes in the Czech Republic; nevertheless, even here, several representative species have been exterminated due to human activity, e.g., the brown bear [Ursus arctos], the grey wolf [Canis lupus], the wildcat [Felis silvestris], and the golden eagle [Aquila chrysaetos]. The European lynx [Lynx lynx], the last living big predator in Jeseniky, is critically endangered even though it has relatively good conditions in which to live and to reproduce on large area there. However, we can add some new or almost new species to the list of Jeseniky fauna, e.g., the Eurasian pygmy owl [Glaucidium passerinum], the peregrine falcon [Falco peregrinus], and the Eurasian otter [Lutra lutra]. At the time of writing this article (summer 2010), a pair of common cranes [Grus grus] had successfully nested for the second year in Jeseniky.

Birds are the best researched group of animals in Jeseniky. Alpine meadows followed by a forest belt at its natural higher border (ranging between 1200 and 1300 m above sea level) are inhabited by, e.g., water pipits [Anthus spinoletta], meadow pipits [Anthus pratensis], and ring ouzels [Turdus torquatus], plus more rarely by dotterels [Endromias morinellus], Alpine accentors [Prunella collaris], and red-spotted bluethroats [Luscinia svecica svecica]. Not long ago, the meadows provided the right environment also for western capercaillie [Tetrao urogallus] and heath grouse [Tetrao tetrix], but neither species managed to acclimatize to the civilization influx caused especially by tourism. There are species representing the typical forest avifauna under the border of the forest: the hazel grouse [Bonasa bonasia], the stock dove [Columba oenas], the white-back woodpecker [Dendrocopus martius], and the boreal owl [Aegolius funereus] amongst others. The quality of Jeseniky avifauna was proven by a declaration of the Important

Photo by Ladislav Laža

Egg laying of Common crane

Bird Area Jeseniky (a part of the worldwide Bird Life International programme) in 1992 delineating the Bird Area Jeseniky (part of the European Natura 2000 Networking Programme) on 70% of the PLA in 2004.

We also have to mention one of the unoriginal species of cloven-hoofed game – the chamois [Rupicapra rupicapra], that has adapted itself in Jeseniky after its reintroduction in the Alps in Austria in 1913. Chamois still arouse discussions about its future existence in this protected area. There are about 140 specimens in Jeseniky nowadays.

The invertebrates, especially with local endemic species – the Sudeten ringlet [Erebia sudetica sudetica] and the mountain ringlet [Erebia epiphron silesiana] – belou to the very important fauna of the mountain part of Jeseniky.

The last issue of ZooReport told of the Krivoklatsko Region, that should become the fifth Czech national park (after Krkonose, Sumava, Czech Switzerland, and Podyji). The Ministry of the Environment, in its conception, approved Jeseniky to become a national park, too. However it is not a question in the next few years. The current projects shall have yet to be revised considerably.

Mgr. Ladislav Hajný,
Zoologist of the PLA Jeseniky Administration

Photo by Tomáš Pospíšil

Peregrine falcon

Frogs, Favourite at Home as Well as in the Lab, Like Escaping to Wildlife

One of the most frequent frogs appearing in terrarium breeds is the African clawed frog [Xenopus laevi (Daudin, 1803)]. It is also often bred for laboratory purposes. It belongs, together with the African genera of Hymenochirus and Pseudohymenochirus and American genus of Pipidae. These frogs attract especially children and students at the Brno Permanent Aquarium Exhibition.

The African clawed frog comes from rivers and wetlands of the south and southwest Africa, but it has escaped from breeds to the wild in many countries of Europe and America. The female grows up to 12 cm; the male is usually a third smaller. The African clawed frog has strongly developed back legs with five fingers fitted with webs because it spends almost all its life in water. Webs, however, are missing on weaker four-fingered front legs. As all Pipidae frogs, the African clawed frog has no tongue. White formations on the sides of its body, so-called "stitches" contain a special sense organ sensitive to vibrations which enables to register a kill even in muddy water. If the biotope it lives in dries out, it is able to survive in the stiff state and thanks to the skin breathing in the muddy bottom for several months.

It occurs in two colours in breeds – albinotic, which is cream-white and natural when individuals are olive-green with a lighter cream abdomen part. An aquarium with the volume of about 40 litres is sufficient for African clawed frogs per couple which is supplemented by floating plants and hiding places with the water temperature of 23 ° C and the water level height of approximately 30 cm. We put glass on the reservoir to prevent frogs from jumping out. In wildlife, the African clawed frog reproduces in the rain period from July to September. Matting can recur up to 4 times a year. Before the reproduction season, which is influenced by temperature and light in captivity, it is suitable to reduce the temperature to 15 ° C for a period of approximately two months. Then we increase the temperature in the reservoir with soft, lightly acid tepid water to 26 ° C, add a grid eggs fall through and mildly ventilate. The male invites the female by croaking (but unlike other frogs, it does not have a sound sack). During 24-hour matting the female lays about 2000 eggs by sticking them to the bottom. Tadpoles are hatched from them after 48 hours. We feed tadpoles by infusorians since the 7th day. Later, they get food for aquarium fish, ground dried nettle, spinach and in the end by small shellfish – water fleas and copepods. It is suitable to sort out the tadpoles by size and often change water for the fresh one. The African clawed frog sexually matures at the age of eight to twelve months and then it lives up to fifteen, or even thirty years in captivity. It is a highly voracious frog; it eats all small water animals.

African clawed frog

Until the 1960s the African clawed frogs were used for pregnancy tests because gonadotropin contained in the blood and urine of pregnant women causes ovulation to the African clawed frog and within 24 hours upon injecting the urine of a pregnant woman to the African clawed frog, the frog starts laying eggs. Since the 1960s the African clawed frogs have served as model organisms in the study of early embryogenesis. Their eggs and developing embryos of 1–2 mm can be easily handled during a genetic research.

Unfortunately, they are masters of escapes. They often escape from domestic as well as laboratory breeding facilities. They have attained eleven states in the U.S.A. They appeared in the wild in Mexico and Chile. In Europe, we can find them for example in Britain or France. They have formed viable colonies in these countries and endanger local species of aquatic animals.

Ing. Vladimír Spurný,
Manager of the Permanent Aquarium Exhibition