

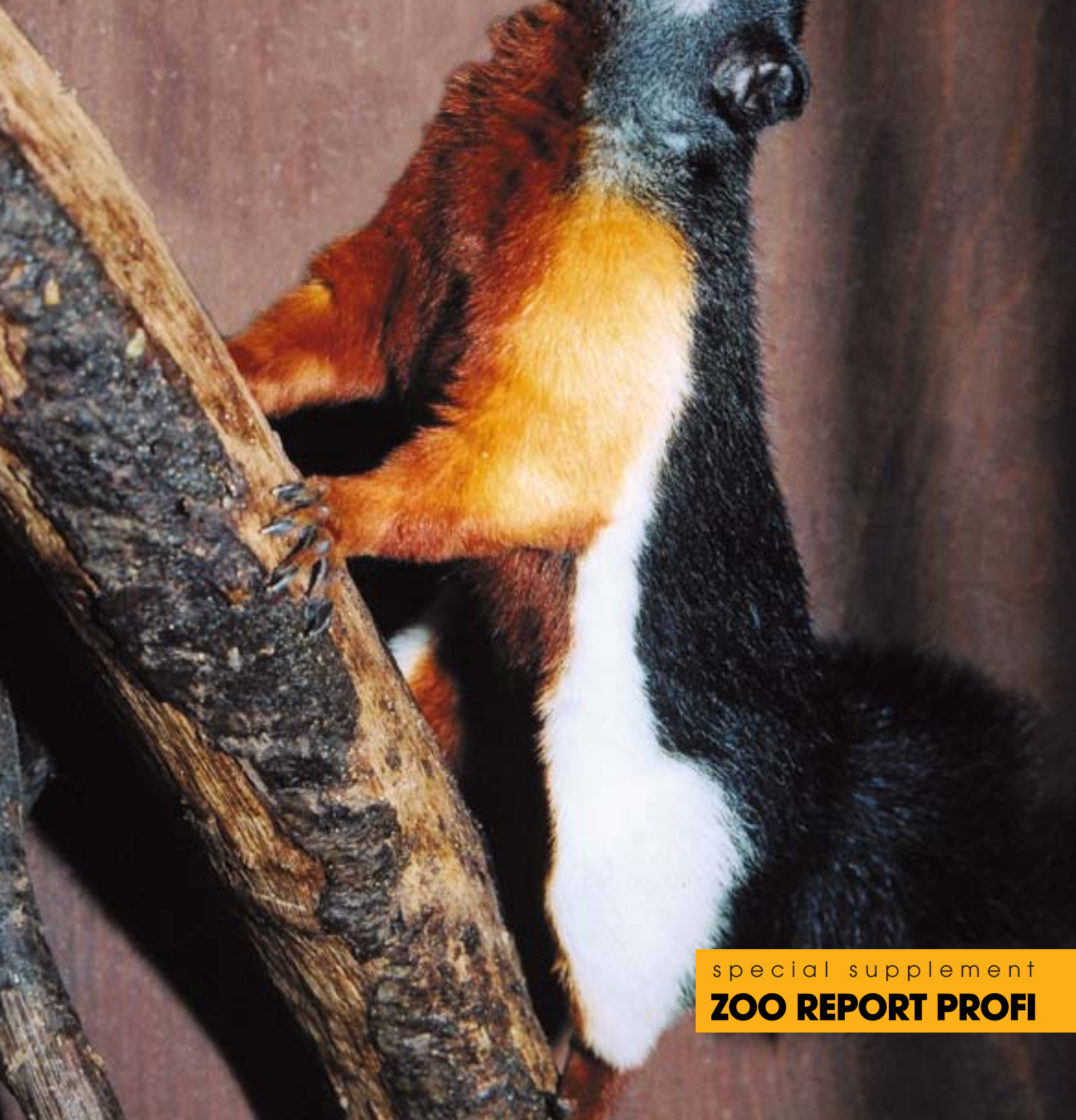
zoo

june 2003

report

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

BRNO



special supplement

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UNSALEABLE

**Some politicians
don't understand the reason
for the existence of zoos**

Zoological gardens have passed through a major transformation in the last decade. Only a small fraction remains of their original mission – to display exotic animals to amazed visitors from behind the bars of small pens. As the environment is gradually and increasingly eroded and nature as such destroyed, zoological gardens have acquired a new and entirely different public order.

Gardens have been transformed into cultural educational institutions, in which adults and children can become acquainted with diverse creatures and observe their behaviour in a natural environment that mimics their native habitat. This may evoke a sense of responsibility in people for life on the planet and its beauty, to feel that this cannot be replaced even by very important publications or films.

**Independence from
nature is only a false
impression**

The tempo of technological development, which has followed us at every

step, is continuously increasing and supports the false impression that we are not dependent on nature. Before I entered the political arena, I was a professional nature conservator. However, I am convinced that we must maintain biodiversity primarily in relation to natural preservation of local and native ecosystems; it is becoming increasingly more apparent that an important element of protection for many critically endangered species are precisely the modern concept of zoological gardens. If it were not for these facilities, some species would no longer exist and it would be impossible to even consider returning them to nature. And that is the second part of the social order to zoological gardens – to help endangered natural diversity.

Not long ago, in a relatively complicated fashion, the Czech Parliament approved a law on zoological gardens, reflecting conditions for operating zoological gardens in countries of the European Union. The Parliament ultimately had to overcome a veto by the new president of the Republic. Such inconsistent ideas demonstrated how some Czech politicians do not understand the significance of the mission of zoological gardens.

František Pelc (*1962)

Ecologist, graduate of the Natural Science Department at Charles University in Prague.

After completing studies and military service, he worked as District Ecologist in Semile and also as the Administrative Director of the Jizerské hory Protected Scenic Area in Liberec. In the period from 1995 – 2002, he was Administrative Director of Protected Scenic Areas of the Czech Republic. In 1993, he established the Foundation for the Protection and Renewal of Jizerské hory, of which he is the Chairman of the Administrative Board. The Foundation supports practical and research projects directed towards the complete rehabilitation of alpine regions damaged by emissions. Author of an array of professional works in the areas of regional ecology and environmental protection; co-author of the State Program for the Protection of Nature and Scenery approved in 1998; and editor of the Program for Development of Protected Scenic Areas. He formulated the modern strategy for renewal of forest communities. He is currently concerned with instruments for environmental protection. Among his hobbies are photographing scenic forms and hiking. He is married and has two sons. Since 1999, he has been a member of Unie svobody (Czech Freedom Party) and Chairman of its Expert Commission on the Environment; he is also Vice-Chairman of Unie svobody – DEU and chairs its Environmental Commission. In 2002, he was elected Member of Parliament of the Czech Republic for the Liberec region.



**Somewhat different
market relations apply
in the zoo**

Exceptions to the law were unhappily justified by the fact that the anticipated legal arrangement favoured business conditions in the area of zoological gardens before other types of business and that licensed zoological gardens do not make sense, since this could ostensibly be made possible by some general regulations resolving mistreatment of animals. Such argumentation from some politicians is evidence that their insufficient relevant information is also accompanied by defective impressions of zoological gardens.

The foggy awareness about the sense of their existence, however, should force a resolve on zoological gardens to improve the presentation of their new mission, both in the area of education as well as environment. To this end, I wish all modernly conceived zoological gardens much success.

František Pelc

RNDr. František Pelc,
Vice-chairman of the Parliamentary
Committee for Public Administration, Regional
Development and the Environment



Photo: Miloš Budík

During the opening of Zoo Brno, among the exhibitions were two caravans of the defunct Kludský Circus. Before long the bears Váňa and Duňa brought offspring into the world in one of them.

The first attraction was a caravan with bears

The Association for the Establishment of a Zoological Garden in Brno, founded in 1934, renewed its activities after the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The Association in the post-war period initially focused on finding a location suitable for establishing the garden.

Mniší hora won out, with its natural reservation 65 hectares in area, covered predominantly by oak growth, with protected thermophilic Pannonian flowers and several rare wood species. A series of amphibian species once lived freely in the area, the edges of which today are formed by the nearly dry brook Hluboček. Today some no longer exist in these locations – for example common nightengale and brook trout. An agreement was established with the Natural Science Department of Masaryk University, the new owner of the desired locality, that both a botanical and a zoological garden would be constructed on Mniší hora. The Zoo received 10 hectares on the southern and southwestern slopes, while the southeastern

slope was to have devolved to the botanical section. After further negotiations, Mniší hora as a whole remained reserved only for the construction of the zoo, as the botanical garden received an area near the building of the Department on Kotlářská Street.

The National Committee for the Brno Region founded the Mniší hora Zoological Garden of the Brno Region by decree dated 6 May 1950. From that day forward, numerous enthusiasts began without pay to build paths, cages and aviaries on the southwestern slopes for future zoological exhibitions. The fate of the Association for Establishing a Zoological Garden in Brno, which was composed exclusively of volunteers, came to a head in 1952 when the Communist regime banned all associations. The members of the Association immediately founded a circle connected to the Zoological Garden, which for many years has continued to help with the development of the zoo.

The celebrated opening of the Zoo took place on Sunday, 30 August 1953. Nearly seven hundred metres of trails passed by about twenty cages or aviaries, wooden fences for camels, yaks and other ungulates, and a caravan from the defunct Kludský Circus with zoo attractions, two brown bears – Váňa and Duňa. Among the 171 animals of 51 species, various strains of domestic animals predomi-



Photo: Miloš Budík

The first pair of lions on Mniší hora. Lions have been kept by Zoo Brno continuously from its opening to the present day.

nated and the common species of wild animals. But in addition to the above-mentioned bears, visitors also showed enthusiastic for a pair of lions, to the attractive exhibitions further belonging, for example, to European Wolverine, the Island Lynx or the Royal Eagle.

By the end of 1953, 34 594 visitors had passed through the new zoo. The single building in the garden was the single-storey hunting lodge built in the 19th century and linked to a ground floor farmstead tract. A gamekeeper had hitherto lived in the hunting lodge, part of the building was reserved for Zoo offices. A few more than twenty people were employed in the ten-hectare garden.

Emil Štiss



Photo: Lubomír Pernica

In the fifties, the leading Brno photographer Miloš Budík devoted himself intensively to taking photographs of animals in the expositions on Mniší hora.

Chomutov Zoo Park sends word: The Earth does not belong to people

The Podkrušnohorský Zoo Park in Chomutov is the most extensive garden in the Union of Czech and Slovak Zoos, its runs and exhibitions covering 112 hectares. The Zoo Park concentrates on the fauna of palearctic sub-regions. A visitor will not see exotic rhinoceroses or caimans, but will learn that in places they know well live creatures that remain a mystery in the age of virtual reality.

Chomutov lies in a region strongly noted for heavy industry. The most valued are the full-grown trees together with other abundant greenery in the Zoo Park, characterized by species wealth both in flora and fauna. The park is overgrown with mixed forest, at various locations certain species of trees always predominate and there are also a series of different biotopes filled with the many organisms linked to them. Among the botanical jewels of the Zoo Park is the century-old garden of chestnut trees, declared a natural monument.

During walks in the Zoo Park, the species diversity of trees, bushes and herbs change along with the species composition of animals that belong here. Just beyond the gate is a run for Roe-Deer, a little further Old World Flamingoes can be admired. Opposite

their pond is a large pond, where pelicans, rare ducks, including Golden-Eye, Northern, Brent, and other species of wild ducks and swans. Only a few steps from the large pond is another colony of birds related to water – Great Cormorants.

The European Bison is the totem animal of the Zoo Park and its run lies beyond the pond for water birds. A second group of bison has been released in the extensive Eurosafari run, which is shared between bison and wild pigs, Převalský horses, European Buffalo, Saiga antelope and other species. The steep slope beyond the run for Barbary macaques leads to small predators and a terrarium. Those who do not know the appearance of a Himalayan Marten or genet, can view small predators right here in these small runs.

With the creation of a children's zoo above the grove, a path leads around the run of rare Pere David's Deer and Mesopotamian Fallow Deer. In the wolf run is a small, adventurous path to the "wolf's lair," a long tunnel where it is possible to see wolves passing by a glass shelter right before your eyes. One and a half hectares of deciduous forest surrounded by an electric fence provides sufficient space for four brown bears, and it is also possible to see animals in the small pond. Above the run for bears we find Northern Raccoon as a display of American species transported by humans to Europe.



Seal

Photo: Rostislav Strach



Children's Day in the Chomutov Zoo Park.

The diversity of animal life in Europe and Asia is great, and we find both Bactrian Camels and Water Buffalo among the animals in the Zoo Park.

One location in Chomutov Park remarks on the fate of animals man has wiped from the face of the Earth. A symbolic cemetery is dominated by a monument to birds that have become representatives of extinct species – the Dodo. Together with this is a small monument with several dozen other already extinct species as a reminder that the blue planet does not belong just to humans.

From the solid booms, visitors are drawn to see the inhabitants of the seal pool. Those who visit on the weekend at 2:00 p.m. can see the seals feed. What else but fish, which can – together with feed for ponies and domestic animals – be purchased at the entrances to the Zoo Park.

Martin Šil



Photo: Eduard Studlík

Capybaras



Photo: Michal Přískula

Patagonian Mara

Rodents in Zoo Brno

For the most part, the order of rodents includes small and medium-sized mammals of various appearance, but with a single anatomical structure. Rodents are the most abundant order of mammals.



Prevost's Squirrel

Zoo Brno keeps, for example, the largest rodent in the world, the Capybara (*Hydrochaeris hydrochaeris*), which occurs in the Amazon and reaches a weight of more than 40 kg. Capybaras live in marshy regions and are exclusively vegetarian. The majority spend their days in the water; they are excellent swimmers and divers, foraging for grasses and other types of plants in shallow places and along the banks of rivers and lakes. Mating takes place for the most part in the water. In Mniší hora, capybaras regularly rear their young, which the zoo then gives to other zoos. From the same zoo-geographical neo-tropical area, but from a different biotope, is the Patagonian Mara (*Dolichotis patagonica*). Maras and capybaras live in a common run with a water reservoir in the South American section of the zoo.

North America is represented among rodents in Mniší hora by Black-tailed Prairie Dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), living in abundant family colonies in their native habitat. Spiny rodents such as the Porcupine (*Hystrix leucura*) and the Indian Crested Porcupine (*Hystrixidae*) originate from the Indo-Malaysia region, from whence also come the

Prevost Squirrel (*Callosciurus prevosti*), which as a new species has recently enriched the Brno rodent collection. A few of these vivacious animals have been designated for an unusual exhibition – a large aviary joining the space of the restaurant U Tygra (At the Tiger) with a souvenir shop located in the Central Services Building in the upper floors.

The Prevost squirrel differs from other squirrels by its exceptional colour, described in some languages by name (in German Schönhörnchen, in English Tri-colored squirrels or Beautiful squirrels, in essence the ancient Czech name also means beautiful squirrel and the Latin *Callosciurus* means beautiful squirrel). Their fur is unusually varied, with markedly distinguishable individual colours. These inhabitants of rain forests in the hinterland of India, Malaysia and Indonesia are excellently adapted to life in trees and nimbly move from branch to branch, using their long tails as balancing poles, but also applied during communication between individuals. They have excellent vision. Claws serve for climbing and during descents along branches, the rear legs can be turned in such a way that the claws can catch



Photo: Michal Piskula



Black-tailed Prairie Dog

in the bark. They survive on fruit, vegetables, seeds, not even spurning worms. Sometimes they shift habitat from the rain forest to the cultivated regions, where they pillage plantations of oil and coconut palms. They build large nests high in the crowns of trees from branches and leaves or live in the hollows of trees. Often they congregate in groups. Their gestation period lasts around 45 days and ends with the birth of one to three young as a rule. Their main predators are birds of prey, small predators and snakes.

Rodents exist in approximately two thousand species, grouped into 28 families. They inhabit the entire world with the exception of the Antarctic, New Zealand, and some oceanic islands, penetrating Australia and some islands only during colonization. Probably the largest species diversity of rodents is in South America, which as an independent continent, remained isolated for a long time. Rodents are a relatively modern order, marked by their adaptation to new environments. One of the factors for evolutionary success is their highly specialized set of teeth, particularly their ability for self-sharpening.



Photo: Michal Piskula

Indian Crested Porcupine

In the near future, Zoo Brno will arrange for additional rodents: Canadian Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) and North American Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*). These species will be shown in an exhibition

already built according to a new concept concentrated on developmentally interesting zoogeographic areas and sub-regions of the world.

Ing. Daniel Zeller, PhD.



Photo: Rostislav Stach

European Ground Squirrel

Has the end come for the European Ground Squirrel in Bohemia?

One of the tasks of the European Association for Zoological Gardens and Aquaria (EAZA) has become the protection of wild nature. The current method of breeding *ex situ* (outside the natural environment), when in its runs the Zoo cares for species threatened by extinction, is already not enough. It must be combined with so-called *in situ* programs (in the natural environment), which contributes to the protection of entire ecosystems in which animals have hitherto lived.

Many members of EAZA already practice the *in situ* method: several gardens take care of selected territories; they contribute to the establishment of funds provided to specialists, furnishing material for reservation guards, animals, education and adult education – they explain to villagers from areas in Asia, for example, where tigers currently live, why they should not kill these animals. Several years ago, Zoo Brno succeeded in sending a pair of Addax to Morocco, which is the original homeland of these antelope and where Addax are already on the verge of extinction.

The scientific potential of the zoo may be beneficial even to nature in close proximity to the garden, with a deeper significance provided to species of local fauna. Zoo Brno considers projects for the protection of selected territories in Bohemia and how to return the original animal inhabitants to these areas. For support, traditional breeding may be conducted for animal species living in the wild of the Czech Republic. For example, an entire section devoted to domestic birds of prey and owls is on the current visitor trail, recently enriched by a pair of small Scops Owls from Zoo Ohrada. The history of Zoo Brno has even recorded one case of reintroduction of a domestic species to life in the wild. In the 1960s, zoo technician František Šujan bred the Common Nightengale in an aviary on Mniší hora, which was subsequently released into the surrounding gardens, where it was once common, but was already unknown at that time.

Zoo Brno now has decided to focus on the European Ground Squirrel. Once the scourge of farmers, thanks to chemical use of cultivated steppes removing nature from Central Europe, this species has practically disappeared. In Poland in 2001, the animal

was even declared extinct. Workers at Zoo Brno would like to colonize the territory of the garden with a group of squirrels originating from nature and to process a methodology for establishing a colony of these animals capable of living in a new site. In co-operation with nature conservators, they would like to transport some of the last populations of squirrels living in the vicinity of Brno to the Zoo. Conservators have outlined the Černovická terasa territory at the south-eastern edge of the city, where the construction of a factory is planned on a site hitherto inhabited by squirrels. The optimal period for transporting the above-mentioned rodents is April, when the females are already with young. In the new environment, where they will give birth, the squirrel mothers already feel at home.

Unfortunately, this year the conservators, without which the zoo could not operate in this matter, failed to determine a colony of squirrels suitable for capture. We were disappointed in the Zoo, but there are enough others who hope this animal that has always belonged here will be returned to nature.

Jan Kameník



Photo: Eduard Suchlík

Scops Owl

Baby bear is already going on walks

The bear born on 17 January 2003 in Zoo Brno first went out for a walk with its anxious mother on Friday, 2 May.

Up until now, it had spent its days in the den where the mother protected it with her own body, fed it and did not release it to anyone. As was later shown, the offspring is a girl, and in August she will be baptised as Haribo. For now, mother and offspring show themselves only every other day – they alternate in the run with the father. It had to be separated from its family, because this could be dangerous for the little one. The pair of European Brown Bears (*Ursus arctos arctos*) have been owned by the Zoo Brno since 1984. But the keeping of brown bears has had a many-year tradition on Mniší hora.



Photo: Eduard Šuchlík

Mother bear is still close to her offspring.

exchange of a Brno male for Jamie, who had traveled to Brno from British Whipsnade. The giraffe move is the result of long-term co-operation between Zoo Brno and Zoo Dvůr Králové. Janin and Janette are descendents of the female that Zoo Brno acquired in 1991 from the Stuttgart Zoo. In 1998, a male was relocated for the purpose of common breeding to Dvůr Králové with the idea that both gardens would share in its first four offspring. Not only the exchange of females, but also the arrival of Janette created the basis for new – and we hope successful – breeding of an endangered sub-species of this noble and dignified representative of African fauna.

female, however, comes from the Estonian Tallin Zoo, which owns a large herd of this type already living only in zoological gardens or preserves and numbering only in several thousand individuals.

(red)

Another giraffe has arrived on Mniší hora

Giraffes in Zoo Brno welcome another female. The half-year old and only three metre tall Janette arrived on 10 April from the Zoo in Dvůr Králové nad Labem to the herd on Mniší hora. In Brno, her four-year-old sister



Photo: Eduard Šuchlík

After the arrival of Janette from Dvůr Králové, the giraffe was introduced into the herd.

Janin, also born in Dvůr Králové, has been expecting her as has the three-year-old male Jamie. Giraffes in Bohemia are bred only in zoos in Brno and Dvůr Králové. Because there is a kindred relationship between the Brno and Dvůr groups, in the Fall of last year, zoologists from both gardens initiated an

Not even Pere David's Deer remains alone

This month in May, a happy change was noted in Zoo Brno ... The newcomers are linked both to the birth of young as well as imports of maturing individuals. In addition to a small Takin, two young gnus came into the world at the Zoo and two reindeer hinds arrived from Finnish Ranua, it is necessary to include five Barbary Sheep from Swedish Boras. Not even Pere David's Deer will remain alone in its run (*Elaphurus davidianus*). Two young hinds were brought by breeders on 13 May from the Chomotov Zoo Park. The



Photo: Eduard Šuchlík

Keepers release one of two Pere David's Deer hinds.



Photo: Ladislav Stehlik

At a young several days old, the umbilical cord can still be seen.

People have nearly forgotten about takins

The birth of a young Indian Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor*), which occurred in Zoo Brno on 30 April 2003, can be considered as the greatest breeding success in recent years – currently in Europe, the breeding of a Takin has successfully occurred in only four gardens.

The ox-like, cloven-hoofed ungulate Takin is very rare in nature and also in captivity. Many zoologists outside of Brno, when they visit Mniší hora, upon viewing the Takin, ask with surprise what kind of animal it is. The Takin forms an independent family of cloven-hoofed ungulates related to the Chamois and Musk Ox. It was scientifically described in 1850 on the basis of a hunter's trophy. A live Takin was first spotted by a European in 1906 in the wilderness of Sikkim. A Takin first reached Europe in 1912, in this case to the London Zoo. However, none of the breeding attempts in England succeeded. In 1974 and 1975, as the eighth and ninth animals in captivity, a pair of Takins were transferred from the Rangoon Zoo in Burma to Berlin's Tierpark. All other European individuals originate from

this pair. In Bohemia, the zoological gardens in Prague and Brno breed the Indian Takin, while Takins in the Liberec Zoo belong to the Chinese subgroup of Golden Takins (*Budorcas taxicolor bedfordi*).

The Brno group of Takins consists of a male and two females, the offspring is also of the female gender. For additional breeding, it is necessary to acquire a non-related individual, and this should originate only from outside of Europe. Zoo Brno therefore is trying to form contact with Rangoon Zoo and with the Association of Indian Zoos.

This mammoth Takin, which weighs up to 400 kg, reminds one of a gnu or bison, or a domestic shaggy Indian Bison on powerful legs. In the withers, it measures 130 centimeters, the body length reaches 230 centimetres. The massive head includes horns about 65 cm long, worn by both sexes. Despite its seeming clumsiness, it manages to leap swiftly from rock to rock. Thick brown fur has various light shades to yellow.

Its native habitat is eastern Himalaya and the high mountains of Tibet, southern China, Bhutan, Sikkim and northern Burma. It lives in mixed herds, only the age of the males differs. The territory of Takins is located on the upper reaches of the forest, where rhododendron growth predominates, and extends up to an elevation of 4500 metres above sea level. In winter, they leave for bamboo groves in valleys, but only during the most brutal frosts do they move below an elevation of 2000 metres above sea level. It has



Photo: Eduard Stuchlik

The mother never strays far from its young.

even developed a sense of smell that when it reaches an unknown location, it begins to rapidly sniff all around itself like a dog. It lives on grass, leaves and tree sprouts, and when grazing it sometimes stands on its hind legs and tastes tree branches. The Takin looks threatening and dangerous, but the snort that it issues when it sees someone is only a manifestation of friendly welcome. To realize what a pleasant animal the Takin is, just have a look at its playful offspring.

The structure of a Takin's body, living in inaccessible areas, has preserved many primitive components of recently extinct animals. The concept for development of Zoo Brno rests in the exhibition of larger groups of Takins in sections, which will also display other animal species affected by isolated environments in forming animal body features.

RNDr. Bohumil Král, CSc.



Photo: Eduard Stuchlik

Rest in two.

Reindeer males look forward to two companions

The male Polar Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*), which over the past few years have lived alone on Mniší hora, will soon become the leading individuals in a five-member herd.

Two young female reindeer, very similar in type to the wild variety, were transported by workers of Zoo Brno to Mniší hora at the beginning of May from the Finnish Ranu Zoo. This garden, lying on the Arctic Circle, is engaged in rearing Arctic animals. The trip from Ranu to Brno, more than three thousand kilometres, was completed by the reindeer in a horse trailer in four days.

In their new home, the brave travellers had to handle a temperature shock. Icy Northern Finland was still covered in snow and the heart of Europe was stricken by tropical. Initially, the females increased their breathing somewhat, but immediately accepted feed and apparently enjoyed Brno water. Acclimatization took place smoothly. The run is shaded by a thick crown of oaks and the reindeer know how to resist not just cold but also heat. Often in Arctic summer, the mercury can climb to more than 25 degrees Celsius! The reindeer in Brno expected a buck born in Belgium and – like the majority of reindeer in European zoo – used to local climate. From these newcomers, on first glimpse, they are distinguished by much lighter fur. The fact that the imported ani-



Photo: Eduard Stuchlik

Young reindeer females from Finland soon after their arrival at Mniší hora taste fresh oak leaves.

mals have a minimum of the features of domestication is a valuable breeding division.

The females at Mniší hora have gotten used to not just the higher temperatures, but also somewhat different feed. Brno zoologists brought a supply of mosses from Finland, which serve the reindeer in the Far North as the main source of feed. To deliver mosses regularly to the zoological garden from such great distances is impossible, so reindeer in captivity are fed with special granules with moss extract. Therefore in addition to mosses, the Finnish reindeer will also receive granules until they adapt to their substitute feed.

ria and spores. So Brno keepers and veterinarians will have to carefully monitor the health of the reindeer from Ranu in the first months, primarily the function of their intestinal tract.

The significant nutritive demands mean the reindeer in the Zoo do not belong among much frequented species; in Bohemia only zoological gardens in Prague, Olomouc, Chomutov and Brno keep them. Zoologists have distinguished about twenty sub-species of Polar Reindeer. This animal lives in the tundra or forest-tundra areas in Alaska and in northern Canada, in northern Europe and Asia, from Siberia the area of occurrence stretches from alpine regions to northern Mongolia. European and Asian reindeer have been domesticated to various degrees, people use their meat, milk and skin and also harness the animals.

In the foreseeable future, the Brno reindeer herd will grow by two additional females from the Vienna Zoo. When a reindeer meets a female, their joy is multiplied, says a northern proverb. We hope that the meeting of reindeer in Brno will always be happy and at least their family will soon double.

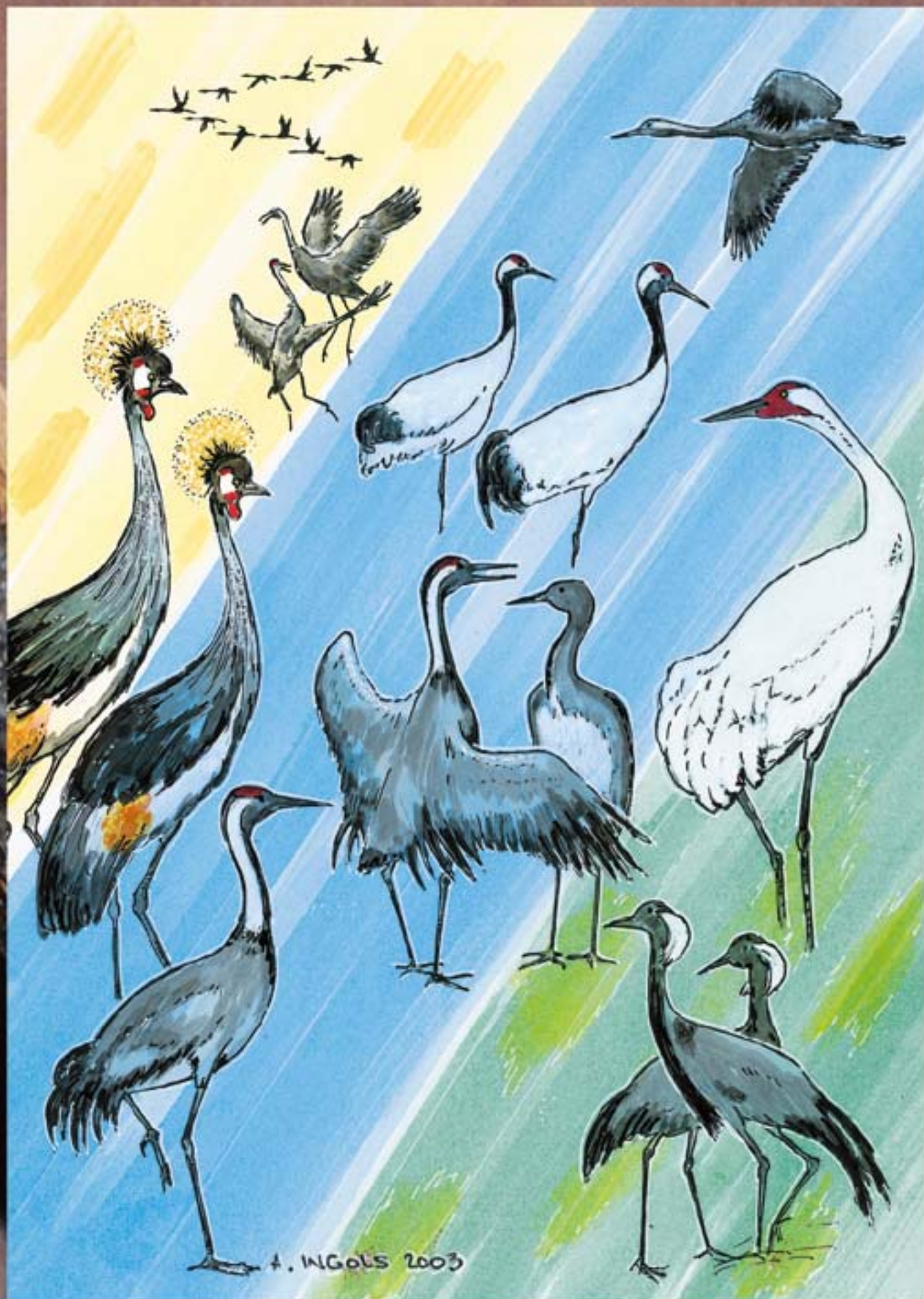
Eduard Stuchlik



Photo: Michal Piskula

The reindeer is one species of deer in which both sexes have antlers, while the males have the most grand.

During the transfer to Central European conditions, the northern animals have not adapted just to high temperatures and substitute feed, but also in particular to a change in the bacterial environment. Reindeer are used to continuously scraping the surface of the earth, which is practically sterile in the tundra. In warmer areas, however, it is richer in bacte-



Cranes