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# **ZOO** report

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

## **BRNO**



special supplement  
**ZOO REPORT PROFI**

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Zooreport

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NEPRODEJNÉ

## Zoo – Integral Part of the Human Culture

**Zoos are an integral part of the human culture. The interest in them is undoubtedly the indicator of the state of society which establishes them...**

With little exaggeration we can say that zoos have been part of the human culture since the ancient era. Their founders were emperors of ancient and vanished civilisations who had them established for entertainment and pastime. The first evidence comes from the third dynasty of Sumerians, when the emperors of the legendary town of Ur had their zoo park as early as 2300 years B.C. Since Aristotle we have had evidence of the existence of probably the first public zoo in the Egyptian Alexandria, which was established by Alexander the Great on the basis of his private menagerie. A common part of diplomacy at Medieval European court was to present a monarch or a rare guest with an exotic animal. Europe, however, keeps its historical supremacy because one of the first and probably the oldest still existing zoos is the Vienna Zoo founded in 1750 by Mary-Theresia and her husband on the basis of the imperial menageries near Schönbrunn.

Of course, we can ask about the purpose or mission of zoos today. We can currently substantiate the existence of approximately 1 200 officially founded zoos which are of a great interest of the public in

many countries. In the United States, there are 181 zoos with accreditation which breed approximately 800 000 animals. The interest in them is huge and according to the data from the USA, every year they attract more than people than professional sport! What is the reason for such a success? Why are some zoos in the centre of interest of the public and enjoy extraordinary attention of media, and others lack it? Can the level of interest and the level of care of zoos by the public show anything about its state and mental state? These are only some of the questions we may ask. It is obvious that a modern zoo should be the place or space of meetings. Not only of meetings of a man and an animal, but a man himself. A zoo should be the place for pausing and thinking, the place, where an enforceable permeation of education, cultural enjoyment and recreation occurs.

If we think of the meaning, function and mission of zoos in today's hurried world, we cannot forget of the role which they play in science, research and nature protection. We often speak about the importance of zoos for the protection of biodiversity. There are many ways zoos contribute to it or may contribute. The list of species endangered by extinction is long and the speed it is becoming longer with should be alarming. The truth on the state of our planet is unpleasant for many and uncompromisingly hard. It is said the number of people has been continuously and inexorably increasing and the number of undisturbed places in nature has been continuously



**Milan Gelnar**

and inexorably decreasing. Zoos thus become an imaginary Noah's Ark in the eyes of many, where land beings may find refuge from the coming flood. Preservation of life on the Earth is the matter of all of us and leave zoos alone in their effort would be an irresponsible buck-passing.

No doubt that the importance and meaning of zoos is great and that these institutions deserve support and attention of the public, schools, scientific institutions, media, sponsors and politicians. I wish the Brno Zoo to be successful in its noble activity and to manage to maintain the ability to awake interest in people in nature and everything nice in it.

Assoc. Prof. RNDr. Milan Gelnar, CSc.  
Dean of the Faculty of Science  
Masaryk University

### **Doc. RNDr. Milan Gelnar, CSc.,**

*was born on 16 November 1955 in Olomouc. After finishing the Grammar School of Mikuláš Koperník in Bílovec, he studied biology at the Faculty of Science at the Masaryk University in Brno. In 1981 he gained the title of the Doctor of Science (RNDr.) and started the internal scientific research assistantship at the Parasitological Institute of the Czech Academy of Science in Prague, which was later relocated České Budějovice. Since 1985, as a researcher, he specialized in the study of systematic, biology and ecology of fish parasites. In 1990 he started work as a specialist-assistant and give lectures on parasitology, later also ecology. In 2000 he habilitated at the Charles University in Prague, he is a member of several international scientific associations and scientific boards of many institutions. He has worked and given lectures in many countries. He has published, together with his students and co-workers, more than 100 scientific works and participated in several parasitological expeditions to the west Africa. He has taken part in the organisation of several worldwide scientific conferences and is a holder of the prestigious project of the Ministry of Education "Centre of the Basic Research of Ichtyoparasitology". Since 2003 he has worked at the Faculty of Science of the Masaryk University in Brno as a dean and, in this position as a leading representative of the University, he ceremonially opened the Czech important station of J. G. Mendel on the James Cook Island in the Antarctic at the beginning of 2007. He is married and lives in České Budějovice.*



Adult Milky frog...



...and her young ones

### **The First Breeding of Tropical Amphibians: Young Milky Frogs**

Since the establishment of the Brno Zoo visitors could observe various species of amphibians in its terrariums – e.g. salamanders, newts, toads and tree

frogs. However, these were the amphibians, which were entered in the lists of the bred animals in the smallest numbers of species and quantities of all the vertebrates. Some years they were completely missing, not to speak about a birth of a young one.

Since 2005 we have been writing a new chapter in the history of breeding of amphibians in our Zoo, when we obtained several, about one month old milky frogs (*Phrynohyas resinifictrix*) living in rain forests of the Central and South America. After a year we transferred the group of six small frogs to the "Tropical Kingdom" pavilion.

The microclimate in the exposition of milky frogs in the Tropical Kingdom is formed by dense vegetation, the high air humidity is ensured by a small waterfall falling along the artificial rock to the small lake built at the bottom of the terrarium. We found jelly-like clusters of eggs for the first time in the spring of 2007. Next, mostly unfertilized lying followed until the middle of August. The first egg-laying appeared on 19 February 2008. Approximately half of it contained healthy fertilized eggs with the diameter of 1–2 mm individually spread over the surface or in clusters of 20–30 pieces lying on the bottom. We carefully took them away and transferred to a 50l aquarium richly planted, where we installed a weaker aeration. We kept the water temperature at 25–26 °C. After 30–35 hours (21 February), 4–5 mm long tadpoles began to hatch and fall to the bottom. In the following

1–2 days, approximately 25 tadpoles rested on the bottom or were caught on plants and they gradually started swimming. In this short period they breathed oxygen dissolved in water through the outer gill of the fruticulose shape. Only after the visible gill disappeared and tadpoles started breathing through the inner gill, they also started accepting the first food – crushed tetramine.

The stage of metamorphosis followed, when an individual as if shortly repeated the development of the species and the water animal became a land animal. After 28 days of hatching from eggs (20 March), back legs started growing to tadpoles, which were 4–5 cm long, and after another 10 days, front legs appeared at first of them. At that time, tadpoles stopped accepting the food and on 1 April they were going out of water. At the land, where they breathed through lungs, they did not responded to food for the first 2 or 3 days and lived from the stock deposited in their tails, which was getting shorted until it completely disappeared. Only then the small metamorphosed frogs started catching small insects. We gave them the smallest stages of crickets and the flying form of fruit flies.

The group of fifteen bred individuals was situated in a hygiene-furnished terrarium with a fluorescent lamp and a shallow bowl with water. All small young frogs were light grey at the beginning and they changed to a marked black and white pattern approximately a week after their metamorphosis, when they spent most of the time on the walls of the terrarium or on the branches, where they were on the watch for a kill. The black colour becomes grey or gains a brown shade on older individuals and greenish shades appear in the white fields.

Milky frog, sometimes called Amazonian milky frog, is the first species of tropical amphibians bred by the Brno Zoo. Breeding of the beautiful frog, which, thanks to its colour reminds us rather of a representative of the attractive family of Dendrobates, has become a welcome contribution to other activities by which the Brno Zoo participates in the campaign declared by the European Associations of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) for the protection of amphibians, the critically endangered group of vertebrates.

*Michal Balcar,*

The keeper at the Terrarium Section

## The Šumava National Park

The Šumava National Park is situated at the territory of the South Bohemian and the West Bohemian Regions in the zone along the border with the Upper Austria and Bavaria. It was declared at the area of 680 km<sup>2</sup> in 1991, especially to protect the mountain climax spruce growth and the moor land. Other, often quite interesting biotopes are spread a lot over the relatively large area of the park, such as glacier lakes and their cirques, complexes of stone seas, water flows or debris mixed forests nearly untouched by human interventions. The western part of the park continues the German Bayerischer Wald National Park.

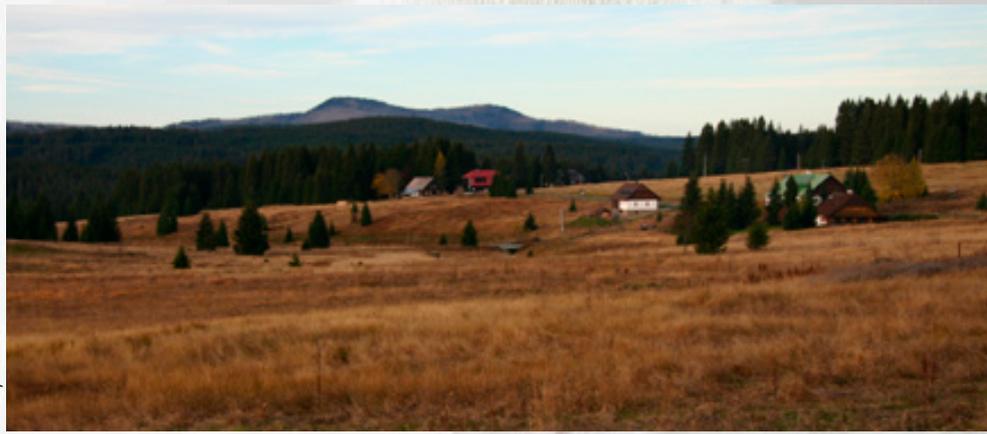
European lynx (*Lynx lynx*), probably the most important local mammal, has one of the core populations in Šumava, which is important for the entire Czech republic. It was distinct in Šumava



Wood grouse

in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it returned thanks to the reintroduction in the 1970s and 1980s. Quite typical and still spread species is Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*). It is the animal living hidden along streams and small river flows, its presence is often revealed by traces on banks, the characteristic droppings or remains after the feast with fish and mussels. The object of the telemetric monitoring is red deer (*Cervus elaphus*). The research shall determine the time-area structure of the populations of this species and its influence on the forest renewal. Of bats, the psychrophile subalpine and alpine

Photo by Jiří Kadouček



View of the so-called Breast of Šumava, peaks called Velký Ostrý (1293 meters above sea level) and Malý Ostrý (1266 meters above sea level), from Filipova Hut

species belong among the most interesting ones, such as the northern bat (*Eptesicus nilssonii*) and the parti-coloured bat (*Vespertilio murinus*). Small mammals also have their unique representatives there, such as black alpine shrew (*Sorex alpinus*), northern birch mouse (*Sicista betulina*) from the family of rodents, which lives at peaty meadows in the southern and central part of the park.

The flag bird of Šumava is wood grouse (*Tetrao urogallus*) living in spruce forests at higher elevations. Unfortunately, the numbers of the Šumava population are adversely influenced by tourists walking, riding bicycles and skiing just at the places of the wood grouse occurrence. Other typical forest birds of the Šumava National Park are Ezo three-toed woodpecker (*Picoides trydactylus*), Richardson's owl (*Aegolius funereus*), pygmy owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*) or ring ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*). In recent years the numerous inhabitants of Šumava include e.g. red crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) or common raven (*Corvus corax*). The Šumava population of heath grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*) or the local nesting place of grey falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is of the all-national importance.

The fauna of reptiles at the Šumava National Park is quite poor; viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and common viper (*Vipera berus*) are the only species regularly seen in higher elevations. We should mention alpine newt (*Triturus vulgaris*), European toad (*Bufo bufo*) and common European frog (*Rana temporaria*) of the amphibians' family. The findings of fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*) are very rare at Šumava.

Fish and cyclostomata are represented in the Šumava streams mainly by brown trout (*Salmo trutta m. fario*), bull head (*Cottus gobio*), brook minnow (*Phoxinus phoxinus*) and brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*).

Novels could be written about important invertebrates in the Šumava National Park. We should mention moor land species of cranberry blue (*Vacciniina optilete*), Palaeno sulphur (*Colias palaeno*) or Northern fritillary (*Boloria aquilonaris*). Generally known species include Menetriesi violet ground (*Carabus menetriesi*) or pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*).

Although the fauna of the Šumava National Park is systematically surveyed, we still may expect a lot of important findings.

Libor Dvořák,  
Zoologist assistant  
of the Šumava National Park Administration

Photo by Oldřich Voňáč



European lynx

Photo by Markéta Růžalová



Family by the water

### Small Bears Were Named Bill and Tom

The first six months of life, when the young polar bears successfully lived in our zoo, culminated in christening. The twins born in Brno Zoo on 23 November 2007 were named Bill and Tom.

Christening of little bit grown-up small playful bears was held on 24 May at the outlook above the exposition of polar bears. Champaign was poured not over the young bears – they were running with their mother in the run-out showing no interest – but over their christening certificates held at this festive occasion by Martin Hovorka, the Zoo director. Martin Ander, the deputy of the Mayor, symbolically christened the small bears in the representation of Roman Onderka, the Mayor of Brno, other godfathers were Stanislav Juránek, the President of the South Moravian Region, and Boleslav Polívka, the actor. The event did not make without sponsors, journalists and the general public; other celebrities of the political and cultural



Godfathers of the young bears (from left): Martin Ander, deputy governor of the South Moravia Region, Stanislav Juránek, governor of the South Moravia Region and Boleslav Polívka, actor



Mother reasons with her son

life, as well as all participants of the poll, whose suggestions for the names of young bears won, were also invited. The names of the young bears were selected from suggestions sent to the zoo by its visitors and supporters from 3 to 24 April by phone, mail, emails or by inserting their suggestion to the box at the entry to the zoo. Of the total number of approximately 2800 received votes, the Zoo employees excluded unsuitable and corrupt expressions and collected 2239 names, which were included in the vote. The public could vote at [zoobrno.cz](http://zoobrno.cz) from 28 April to 11 May. The following names received most votes: Tom (386) and Bill (347), followed by Mat (107), Pat (103), Mikki (98), Kimmi (91), Pája (58), Jája (55), Nanuk (50) and Pú (39).

we found that both small bears are males on 14 May when the young bears undergone the first mandatory vaccination – against distemper, parvovirus, leptospirosis and hepatitis. At this occasion, the Zoo vet got them rid of endoparasites and applied identification chips under their skin. We also weighed the month-old bears; one of them had 13kg and the other 19kg. The process of weighing, however, corresponded to the temperament of the weighed objects, which if not in deep sleep, romp around all the time and do not stay for a while. First, a breeder had to be weighed with a young bear in arms and then he was weighed alone.

Since 11 March, when they first appeared in the exposition, the young bears have become very popular. They have immediately attracted crowds of curious people; about 9 thousand of them came to see them at Easter. The daily duty consisting of the Zoo workers and temporary workers at the bear run-out supervised the behaviour of visitors and monitored reactions of the small bears. A web camera focused on the run-out as well. Cora, the mother, confirmed it is an exemplary mother, who does not let its young bears go away of her eyes. Apart from others, it did not allow them enter the small lake until the beginning of April. For example, when the smaller bear fell to the lake at about half past eleven on 21 March, Cora immediately responded and picked it up to the bank with its paw.

Even if they could not go to the water, the twins went at first at least to the shallow place and watched the bathing mother, often with their heads submerged under water so as not to miss anything of its swimming and diving art. One of them left the role of a spectator on 6 April and tried its own underwater production. It submerged head-on as its mother. Only after a while it emerged at the same place and chambered out of water. Its performance was supported by mother's assistance when climbing on the bank. In a few minutes the first testing submerge of the second young bear followed, again assisted by Cora when it wanted to leave the water. The stays under the water level were not the only attempts. The more courageous small bears submerged again but not to appear at the same place. It swam several meters under water and climbed on



**Female with the young ones in the upper part of exhibit**

the opposite bank itself. This time, its mother did not intervene and let the small bear experience the triumph of its first independent swim.

Nowadays, both young bears move in water with the same brilliance as Cora, but some difference can still be seen: the bigger and more active bear has a bath more often and for a longer time, the smaller usually runs along the bank, where it waits for its brother going out of water and plays with it. The small bears play with anything; they find a club and they fight for it, they release as tone from the path or tear off a lump from the pile of straw. To amuse, they use balls and rubber tyres and they got a toy at their christening - wooden sticks roped together.

All three of them sometimes set out to the upper part of the run out up the steep hill, where they appear in immediate proximity to the visitors, who are enjoyed by that. But if a small bear wants to set out on the climb alone, Cora calls it back by its characteristic puffing. As the small bears grow, they start imitating the mother's behaviour. They have recently tried to stand on back legs...

The successful breeding of polar bears belongs to the most important events in the Brno Zoo history. As if it divides it to two eras - before and after the birth of the twins Bill and Tom.

*Bc. Eduard Stuchlík*



**First swimming attempts under mother's control**



**Half-yearly young ones**

Photo by Natálie Kantorová



Winning work of a design competition, category of 8–12 years old. The author is eight years old Magdaléna Škrábalová from basic school from Újezd u Brna.

### Frogs Raise the Alarm!

The seventh of the previous campaigns for the preservation of an endangered group of animals annually declared by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria was devoted to amphibians. It was declared in September 2007 and will last to September 2008. Its goal is to gain money to a fund for financing projects for the preservation of amphibians. Like all the previous campaigns, this one also points out the promotional education. The campaign is officially called “EAZA Year of the Frog Campaign 2007/8 – Amphibian Alarm”.

The Zoo visitors may contribute to the above-mentioned fund by buying a T-shirt with a motive of an amphibian in U Tygra the souvenir shop. Our zoo informs on the worldwide crisis of amphibians in several ways.

Visitors may familiarize themselves with the causes to the dramatic decrease of amphibians and the means which could stop this development at the boards installed in the Zoo and the Permanent



Photo by Milan Kríž

Awarding the most successful entries of the competition organized within the Frogs Raise the Alarm! campaign

Aquarium Exhibition. We have extended the offer of teaching programmes for compulsory and grammar schools by the theme of the amphibians' protection and we used the reproduction of frog voices living in the Czech countryside in its processing. We organized a contest trail focused on amphibians at the celebration of the Earth Day, which was held in our Zoo on 19 April. The entertaining programme of the celebration was complemented by entries, when a zoologist informed about the running campaign and those interested could gain more details from the Zoo workers waiting for them in a specially prepared stall.

The main part of the campaign in the Brno Zoo consisted of the children's art, literature and modelling competition organized for two age categories (8–12 years, 13–18 years). We sent out invitation cards for it to comprehensive and grammar schools in Brno and its vicinity in February. Pupils and students, who sent their applications to the competition, sent 527 art works, 44 written works and 26 models to the Zoo. The most successful competitors were invited to the so called May Day for Frogs held in the Zoo on 1 May. The ceremonial evaluation and handover of prizes and rewards occurred there. The eight-year-old Magdaléna Škrábalová from the Comprehensive School in Újezd at Brno and the sixteen-year-old Michaela Smíšková from the Grammar School in Boskovice gained the first two positions in the art competition. The ten-year-old Michaela Pujmanová from the Comprehensive School

at Botanická Street and the fifteen-year-old Andrea Hašková from the Comprehensive School at Jana Brozkvy Street won the literature competition. The nine-year-old Alena Janová from the Comprehensive School at Novolíšeňská Street and the thirteen-year-old Jana Zemánková from the Grammar School at Terezy Novákové Street were the best in the modelling competition. The winning works of art are exhibited at the U Tygra souvenir shop, in the conference hall of the administrative building and in the pavilion of exotic birds.

We divide amphibians to the tailed (e.g. newts, salamanders), tailless or frogs (bull frog, tree frog, toads, fire-bellied toads) and legless (caecilians). Amphibians are the most endangered species of all mammals; one third to one half of them is endangered by extinction. The bigger catastrophe concerning one group of animals was only dying-out of dinosaurs in the Mesozoic. Amphibians suffer from the loss of their natural environment caused by drying out of wetlands and the pollution of countryside by wastes from industry and agriculture. Other negatives include predation by imported species or an excessive collection for food purposes. And one more scourge appeared, maybe the worst of all: chytridiomycosis, the fungi disease which is fatal for hundreds of species of amphibians. This disease has spread from Africa to nearly all the planet for the previous fifty years.

*Mgr. Michaela Ryšavá,*  
Promotion and Education Department

## We Have Equipped the Station of Young Naturalists

From 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2005 to 5th January 2008, the Brno Zoo organized a public collection; its goal was to support the breeding, modernization of exhibits or creation of new educational programmes through donor SMS. People have sent 109.288,71 CZK during the mentioned period. This amount served the purpose of printing work sheets for educational programmes and equipping the Station of Young Naturalists. We bought 22 new cages for ferrets, rabbits, guinea pigs and parrots and 12 vivaria for agamas, banded geckos, turtles, common snakes and other reptiles. Warm thanks to all the donators. (red)

## This Spring's Young Ones

In addition to Caribous, South American squirrel monkeys and Amazon milk frogs, which we write in another article about, there were nine other species reproduced at the Brno Zoo this year. Twins were born to a pair of Pygmy marmosets (this



Emu poul



Pere David's deers



Fila, a female Chapman's zebra, with her young one

pair had one baby last year, same as our second pair of the smallest monkeys of the world). Two young ones also appeared at the Jacob's sheep and Pere David's deer. Both the species reproduce regularly for several years. Also Bactrian camel, Barbary sheep and Elk belong to yearly arrivals. The Emu male reliably hatched eggs again and now raises seven young birds. The kids and lambs always make the visitors of the Children's Zoo happy and, same as the last year, there was born a Shetland pony again. The children's area has an unusual attraction - five Domestic mini-pigs. (red)

## New Exposition of the Wolverines

In not so distant past, we had bred Canadian lynx in one of the oldest expositions near the route from the Indian loghouse to the bears' exhibit. A new aviary has been built instead of the obsolete so-called double-cage. It is not decided yet which bird will be moved in there; we temporarily placed a Wolverine female there. She comes from Siberia and her age was estimated at two years. She came to our zoo within a long-term exchange with the Kazan Zoo. In future, we plan to get a male from wild, but it will be necessary to build a larger breeding facility. (red)



Wolverine



Young caribou



Caribou female with her young one

### A Promising Impulse in Breeding Caribou

Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) was born in the Brno Zoo for the first time in the spring of 2005. The following two years passed without further young but this year a promising attempt came: 17. May one female gave birth to a small male and on the following day the second one gave birth to a small female.

The breeding of caribou was commenced in the Brno Zoo in 2001, when a male was imported from the Zoo Planckendaal, the Netherlands. We managed to compile a breeding couple two years later, when we gained a female from the Zoo Schön-



Male Vašek

brunn, Austria. On 5 May 2005 in the morning, this female delivered a healthy young, the birth took for about half an hour. This is how the first Brno increment appeared in the Zoo. The young caribou was very weak at first and stand up on its legs only with difficulties and we did not have a guarantee that the primipara would sufficiently take care of it. Fortunately, all concerns showed to be vain; the female started to take care of its off-spring exemplary on the other day. The small male was named Vašek. Then we did not know it will become an upholder of our breed of these beautiful animals. Vašek prospered well, we did not know about any health problem with him or his mother. It behaved with a lot of love to the off-spring and strictly drove the father away. It was unbelievable how fast the caribou young grew up. As early as a month after its birth it tastes hay and leaves from so called browsing – fresh branches regularly delivered to the Zoo from the nearby forests. The female nursed

it for six months. Unfortunately, the breeding male died in August 2005. The autopsy finding showed it had a tumour on the adrenal gland.

In November of the same year we transferred a nine-year old male from the Chomutov Zoopark. It began to suffer from diarrhoea about one month after its arrival to Brno and quickly died. It died for an inflammation of small intestine in January 2006. We increased the numbers of the herd to seven pieces after further imports in December 2005. But we did not manage to keep all animals alive. The statistics of the accepted and died animals clearly shows that breeding of caribou in captivity is very difficult and demanding.

Therefore, two young caribou of this year caused us really a big joy. On Saturday, May 17, the female Dáša delivered a small male and on Sunday, May 18, the female Mája delivered a small female. The birth proceeded without problems at both the females. We separated the females with their off-springs from the other members of the group for a week so that the newborn animals could better resist the currently unfavourable weather and a deeper relationship was created between mothers and their young. Mája was delivering for the first time and as an inexperienced mother it could not stand still when nursing first hours after the delivery – we did not notice the young to suck. But on the other day it actively ran around the paddock and repeated went to its mother to suck milk. Dáša breeds its second young and manages the role of the mother without any problems.

At present there are eight caribou in the Brno Zoo: In addition to two young caribou of this year, they are Vašek, the male, and five females – Dáša, Mája, Xena, Pepina and Pražanda. We try to offer them as varied food as possible. The summer portion consists of sliced carrots and apples (0.5kg/piece/day), herbal hay and green fodder. They get special caribou granules twice a day (0.6kg/piece/day). The browsing, caribou may eat to their heart's content (as we say in the Zoo: ad libitum), mostly contain willow, alder tree, birch, oak and maple. The menu is supplemented by herbs, e.g. blueberry shrubs, raspberry bushes, camomile and yarrow.

Lubomír Gala,

The keeper at the Antler Animals Section



Young South American squirrel monkey

### **Female Fifi carries a Small Squirrel Monkey on Its Back**

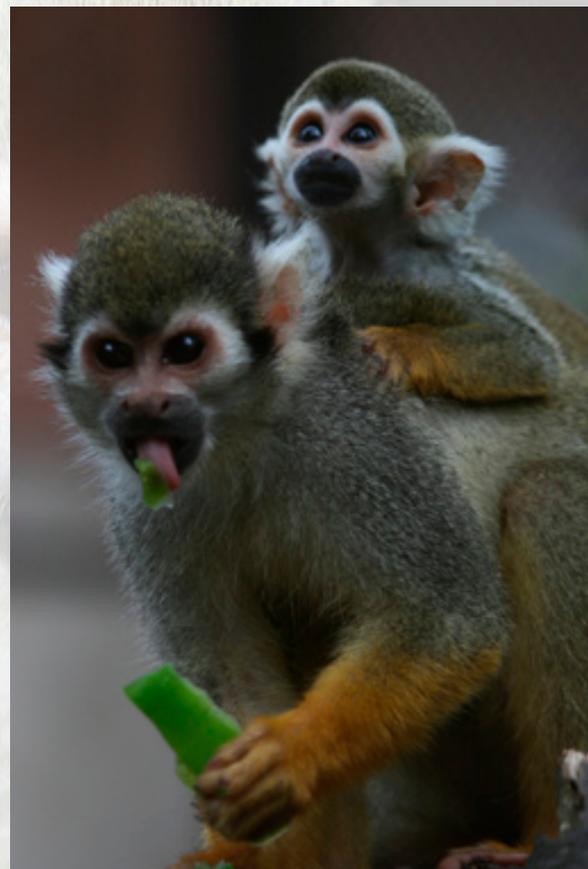
The pavilion of exotic birds in the Brno Zoo Brno especially serves for various fledglings, but also to several species of mammals. Nowadays, visitors will be most attracted with a newly reconstructed exposition of squirrel monkeys (*Saimiri sciureus*), small monkeys from the cebit monkey family. Since 7 May female Fifinka has been happily running there with a small squirrel monkey on its back and enjoys privileges a nursing mother receives within the hierarchically arranged society. Its young offspring is the third squirrel monkey born in the group the Brno Zoo has bred since 2002. The group is currently formed by two males and three females.

Fifinka comes from the Olomouc Zoo and it appeared among our squirrel monkeys in November last year. Its inclusion in the group was quite smooth. The older female Lucka let it sit at its favourite place on the branch under the heating unit close to it, in figurative meaning, it took it under its wings. Lucy's son Andy sometimes objected when Fifi enthusiastically headed for the bowl with flour worms and "jumped the queue", but male Rex controlled the situation: it impregnated Fifinka, included to the group and a rounding tummy was seen soon, where new life was growing. However, Andy caused a problem. The physically matured, but less understanding male monkey, which mentally

remained a child, sometimes did not like Rex's sexual activities. It imitated Rex as if it wanted to become the leading male instead of it. We were afraid Andy could disturb a spontaneous process of delivery and harm the young, therefore we temporarily separated it from the group. It is the reason why there is one squirrel monkey less running over the exposition. Andy will come back when the new arrival reaches the necessary level of movement coordination at the age of approximately 6 months.

Squirrel monkeys reproduce well in captivity. If the group is sufficiently large, maturing goes smoothly, younger individuals quickly learn from the older ones and relationships among them are peaceful. When we have to separate an individual from the group, the other squirrel monkeys protect the friend, clamour and cry, they sometimes even bite the breeder. After some time they get calm, accept the new situation and return to the proved way of life after several days.

Squirrel monkeys spend the biggest part of the day looking for food. They are full of beans, constantly run and jump from a branch to a branch. They pick up fruit and seeds, hunt insects - no fly or beetle escapes from them. The most favourable food of our squirrel monkeys is flour worms. Expressions of the social hierarchy can be seen also during consuming this food. Once an impatient individual starts jumping the queue at the bowl, it is immediately punished.



Female Fifi with her young one

Squirrel monkeys grow up to the length of about 30 cm and weigh from 0.6 to 1.4 kg. In average, they live to the not very high age of seven years. They are often affected by parasites and little resistant against flu. They badly sustain low temperatures and lack of fresh air. Despite, they can live to be 20 in optimum breeding conditions.

In the countryside of the northern part of South America, which is their home, squirrel monkeys live in multi-male/multi-female groups. When a stranger squirrel monkey tries to include itself in the group, it has to silently sustain prompts of copulation on its head or chest. Disobedient older young squirrel monkeys are punished similarly. The behaviour of squirrel monkeys shows many other specific features, such as the known rolling on the back which is probably associated with dominancy. The ethology of this species, although their breeding in captivity is not rare at all, has hidden some unexplained secrets.

*Lubica Hrdinová,*

Breeder in the Pavilion of Exotic Birds

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