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ZOO report

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

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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.
Hybešova 40, 602 00 Brno
Czech Republic
tel.: +420 543 128 254
fax: +420 543 211 761
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 reader:
RNDr. Bohumil Král, CSc.

Translation:
Mgr. Ilja Kašík and Alan Kvapil

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Eduard Stuchlík

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UNSALEABLE

Alone we can do something, together we can change the world!

My first experience with Czech zoos was in Prague in 1995 during the Conference of European Zoo Educators (EZE), which is the regional branch of International Zoo Educators (IZE).

I met many Czech educators, like colleagues from Dvůr Králové, Děčín, Brno and other Czech zoos during that conference. I was impressed by their drive and the enthusiasm to bring the quality of their zoos to same level as the best zoos in the western parts of Europe. Now many zoos in Czech Republic are modernized and almost all of them are members of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). To realize the integration into the international associations in such a short time is something to be proud of.

The only way to survive is the sustainable development

As president of the International Zoo Educators I am also proud to have many Czech zoo educators as members of our organization. The WAZA gave us in 2002 the responsibility to make the nature conservation message as formulated in the new 'World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy' operational in zoos all over the world. Thanks to the IZE Central Office we can function much better as in the past. As a result there are many activities in the pipe line, like a re-newel of the web site, the EZE Conference 2005 in Beauval (France) and the big IZE Conference 2006 in Pretoria (South-Africa). The conference in Pretoria will be linked to UNESCO's enlightenment project called Decade of Education for a Sustainable Development. It follows a topical task for us: to guide the visitors of the zoo to realize that their own decisions help or, on the other side, contradict the efforts to preserve the wild nature for next generations.

Without education there is no conservation

The better people are informed about the needs to preserve the nature, the better they can rectify their behaviour and attitudes and the more can the most powerful people force the local decision makers to make positive decisions that will remove the contradictions between the human society development and the environment protection. Only a very well organized education can wake, activate and shake the conscience of mankind. And education is what zoos have to do the best they can, because education is the only right for zoos to exist. Without education there is no conservation.

Chris Peters

Take the challenge, become an IZE member!

Undoubtedly, the IZE would welcome all the Czech zoos to realize the best message about the need and kinds of nature conservation for the public. They would partly put the establishment of the sustainable future on planet Earth through. The best way to reach this is to support IZE and become an Institutional Member.

Alone we can do something, together we can change the world!

Chris Peters,
President of IZE

(For more information about IZE see www.izea.net).

Chris Peters

was born in 1952 at Hillegom, The Netherlands. He finished his high school in 1975. In 1976 he got a job at Rotterdam Zoo by starting Blijdorp's Information System (BIS). Because of his knowledge build up by BIS, he was asked to join the education department in 1982. From that moment now he is involved for 23 years in all kinds of educational activities. In 1992 he joined his first conference of the International Zoo Educators (IZE). He was so impressed and touched that he applies in 1994 for a position in the IZE Board. Democratically he was elected as the IZE Regional Representative for Europe/Middle-East/Africa (1996-2000) and as the President of IZE (2004-2006).

Chris is also involved at the Education Contact Group of the Dutch Zoo Federation, the Education and Exhibit Design Committee of the EAZA and the Education Committee of the WAZA.

Photo: Jan Špaček

Frontosa cichlid

Photo: Jan Špaček

Wattley panda discus, form Marlboro

Successful reconstruction of the fish tanks in the permanent aquarium exhibit

Many of our guests who visited the permanent aquarium exhibit on Radnicka street this spring were probably a bit disappointed - part of the exhibit was closed and to top it off the often-used nickname "world of quiet" was simply not true here. Part of the show was under reconstruction due to the desolate condition of the metal stands. These stands hold a number of the fish tanks, whose capacity is around 3500 liters. However, the complication had a positive outcome - instead of nine relatively small tanks there is now five tanks and two newly built tanks, which hold 980 and 700 liters of water. Therefore, a trend of building aquariums with a larger capacity continues, which allows the exhibition of those fish species that most of our visitors cannot afford to keep in domestic conditions. The reconstruction also allowed a transfer of some species into more suitable tanks and to enrich the exhibit by purchasing new species.

One of the successful transfers was the placement of Paroon sharks (*Pangasius sanitwongsei*) into one of the new tanks. This species, visibly similar to sharks, gained more space and are very happy in their new home. The largest of the specimens measures around 50 cm - Paroon sharks in the wild can grow up to 2 meters. Wattley panda discus found a home in the second new tank (*Symphysodon discus*). Several specimens of slightly different form, (for example, *Symphysodon discus f. marlboro*), recently expanded the collection of these considerably demanding and popular fish, whose vibrant color makes the tank much more interesting.

The original home of Wattley panda discus were modified for the freshwater stingray (*Potamotrygon reticulatus*).This type of freshwater ray, returning to the exhibit after almost a year, lives in large rivers of South American subcontinent, mostly in the basin of the Amazon, in a river system of Orinoco. The diameter of its disc-like body reaches 30-35 cm. It has a poisonous spine on the tail, which when not handled carefully can cause a painful and slow-healing wound.

Most popular with the visitors probably are predators of South America - the piranha. There is a new, bigger and better equipped tank for these little devils, in which there is currently ten young red belly piranhas (*Pygocentrus nattereri*). Currently only about 5-10 cm long young piranhas willingly receive food and are growing. When mature, they reach up to 30 cm in length. A distinguishing mark of these predators in the wild is their ferocity; when looking for food they are driven by the smell of blood. Prey can be many times bigger than the attacker, but the piranhas can kill it within a few minutes. They seem quite timid in the tank; however, during feeding they fight for every morsel and they quite often even wound each other. These wounds heal very quickly, though.

Other fish that received a new tank were the frontosa cichlid (*Cyphotilapia frontosa*). They complete the collection of African cichlids, which are represented in the exhibit by several species. "Frontosa" come from Lake Tanganyika and are considered consumer fish in their home country. They can grow up to about 35 cm in length; mostly they eat shellfish and sometimes even smaller species of cichlid. To dig the shellfish out of the bottom they use their fatty hump, which grows on their forehead between the eyes in both the male and female of the species. This hump and the distinctive blue and white color with black stripes give them a majestic look. Young frontosa cichlids will not reach sexual maturity for a long time- unlike other cichlids they start to breed after several years. However, their tank is already an appealing part of the exhibit, which after many improvements is becoming a lot more colorful and interesting.

Jan Špaček

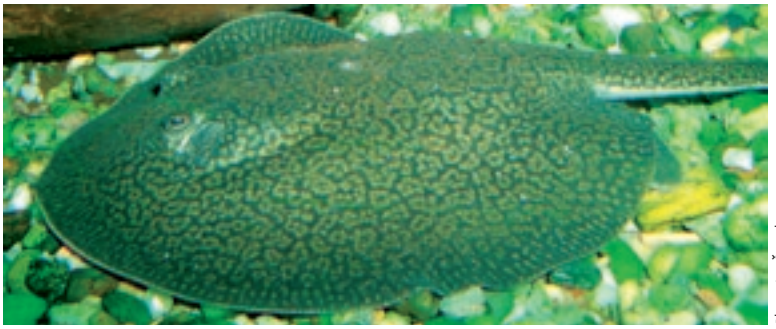

Photo: Jan Špaček

Freshwater stingray

The Stromovka in Ostrava is an ideal place for a zoo

The Ostrava Zoo, founded in 1951, originally occupied a 6 ha area in Ostrava-Kunčičky. However, in order to widen the zoo, there was a need to find a more suitable place. In 1960, the zoo moved to the delightfully natural surroundings of the forest park Stromovka in Slezská Ostrava.

Photo Ivo Frila

Female Sclater's black lemur

Most of the present 10 ha area is covered by deciduous forest, mostly composed of beeches, oaks, hornbeams, alders and willows. A noticeable landscape element is a system of four ponds, which enables the breeding of many kinds of water birds. There are several islands on the ponds, which are used as summer exhibits for lemurs and gibbons. The visitors' trail is made more attractive by several garden arrangements of impressive and dominant plant features – e.g. thickets of blooming rhododendrons captivate our guests in the spring. The zoo is preparing the first phase of herborization, which will include the opening of three botanical trails that will connect to rest stations for adults and playgrounds for children.

In the zoo, deer life, big and small cats, and apes are significant groups from the mammals; from the birds, there are anseriformes, raptors, owls and parrots. The feline collection is represented by such animals as lions, leopards or tigers; but also wild cats or lynx can be seen there. Chimpanzees dominate the Monkey's pavilion. The zoo staff highly regards the breeding group of African Diana monkeys and Indian lion-tailed macaques. Both species are highly endangered in the wild, and the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria has included them into its EEP conservation programme. The Ostrava Zoo is reproducing them successfully and thereby the zoo significantly contributes to the preservation and growth of the populations in human care. A pair of Madagascar Sclater's black lemurs, a very rare subspecies of the brown lemur, enriched the collection of the primates in 2004. The Ostrava Zoo is the only zoo in middle and Eastern Europe that breeds these lemurs. Other important kinds of mammals at the Ostrava Zoo are, e.g. giraffes, hippos, Asian black bears, kangaroos or camels, and, of course, we can't forget to mention a group of Asian elephants. The zoo celebrated the opening of its new pavilion in November 2004.

The largest reared group are the birds. Most of them reproduce regularly at the zoo. Large areas of ponds facilitate the breeding of members of the anseriformes order. For example, the Coscoroba swan, spur-winged goose or the Southern screamer may be classified as little known or rarely bred species. The zoo reached

Photo Pavel Vlček

Great grey owl

Photo Sylva Firlová

Cuban flamingo

remarkable achievements in saving owls that belong to the fauna of the Czech Republic. The breeding pairs of barn owls and little owls in Ostrava gave birth to already several tens of young ones, which the zoo tries to return to the wild with the help of other organizations. The new roomy aviaries are used for the northern kinds of owls since mid 2005. The aviaries for raptors are inhabited by Andean condors, bearded vultures or the less-known South American Falconidae raptors Crested caracara, among others. From other birds, let's mention, e.g. ostriches, rare kinds of pheasants and, of course, parrots.

The visitors learn many interesting things during the feeding demonstrations with commentary of a selected species, e.g. hippos, big beasts or giraffes. At the appointed hour, the keeper gives the listeners information and shares his experience with them right in the exhibit. The keeper's narration about animals also offers space for questions.

Stanislav Derlich

Neck of the Przewalski horse is decorated by short mane

The new exhibit of Przewalski horses

The new exhibit of the Przewalski horses was opened at the Brno Zoo on Sunday 28.8.2005 - the last time the visitors of our Zoo could see these horses was roughly 30 years ago. The new exhibit was built by our employees in the place of the former camel paddock that neighbors the Children's Zoo.

Originally a flat land with an open group of leafy trees, the enclosure by a fence of metal pipes has been radically changed. An uneven terrain reminiscent of Mongolian steppes was created around the perimeter of the widened area. The exhibit is now enclosed by a trench masked by the above-mentioned uneven terrain with plant life and, in some parts, by a wooden railing. (In the 1960s and 1970s wooden railings were replaced by metal pipes as it was supposed to be progress. Today every time part of this legacy disappears we can breathe a little easier and often use the original material - wood.) The new exhibit is complemented by two architectural elements: Mongolian yurt which is a stable for the horses and a beam well as their watering place.

Mares Rea, Petra and Linda in our new exposition

The Brno Zoo received the horses from their colleagues in Prague from their breeding station in Dobrejov u Tabora. There are three mares: eighteen year old Rea, twenty year old Petra and twenty-four year old Linda. The Brno Zoo is not planning to breed Przewalski horses because there are too many specimens living in captivity and the challenging reintroduction into the wild programs are already in full swing. This situation can however change with time and the Zoo does not rule out that in the future it will not try to breed this species. The main function of the new exhibit is cultural: the Przewalski horse is a perfect example of the purpose and importance of zoological gardens, without which the ancestor of many species of horses would be extinct.

The credit for discovering the wild Asian horse goes to Nikolai Mikhailovich Przewalski. He was a Russian cartographer in the Czar's army; he later became a general, he mapped terrain of the south-eastern edge of the expanding Russian empire; Great Britain, which at that time controlled India, showed great interest in this area. Przewalski took an interest in nature - he was known as a collector and a hunter; he had friends among St. Petersburg's scientists to whom he used to send his findings. The natives used to bring him gifts when he worked in an army outpost in Zajsan in Russian-Mongolia border lands in 1879. One time there was a killed wild horse among the gifts. Przewalski immediately realized the scientific value of this specimen and sent the skin and skull to the zoological museum in St. Petersburg. He never did

Our horses come from the exposition of Przewalski horses in Dobrejov u Tabora

A Yurt (in the background) is a stable for our Przewalski horses

Watering place in Brno's exposition is made to look like a traditional Mongolian well

see a live wild horse, which he admitted himself when he wrote: "I have never managed to see a wild horse; I only saw clouds of dust on the horizon."

In the museum they marked his find as a tarpan and only two years later when working on Przewalski's collection did the zoologist I. S. Poljakov realize that the color of fur and the shape of the skull did not correspond to the domesticated horse, the tarpan or to a donkey, and that to science it indeed was an unknown species of wild horse. This finding sent a stir throughout the scientific community. In honor of Przewalski, Poljakov named the species "Equus Przewalski". The main characteristics of the Przewalski horse which differentiate it from the domesticated horse are: short standing mane, dark or horizontally striped fur on its legs, markedly light color around the nostrils and almond-shaped eyes. Root of it's tail is covered by a short horsehair. Typical of the wild horse is also a so-called eel stripe, a dark stripe which starts at the mane and goes all the way to the tail; some domestic horses kept this characteristic.

The habitat of the Przewalski horse was at the time of its discovery fairly large: on the north it was bordered by the river Orongo and the southern foothills of Mongolian Altai, in the south by the mountain range Tan-San, in the east by the mountain range Azbogd and in the west to 86 degrees of longitude in the Gobi desert. Even in the 1940s there were herds of 100+ specimens living in southwestern Mongolia; their area was, however, slowly getting smaller and smaller. The last time this specimen was seen in the wild in Mongolia was in 1968.

Part of the Dobřejov herd with their breeder

The disappearance of the Przewalski horse from the wild alarmed workers in zoological gardens in whose care the population of wild horses was rising – today there is more than 2000. The first project for reintroduction of the Przewalski horse into Mongolia was created in 1985. It quickly failed, and the horses were transported from Western Europe zoos to two breeding stations in China. Horses were released into the wild from these stations in 1991. This happened in the Xin Jiang province in Djungar valley, which is one of the original habitats of the Przewalski horse. The following year several transports of Przewalski horses went from the Ukrainian zoo Askania Nova to two acclimatization stations in Mongolia. After that, more transports started to arrive to these stations from other zoos.

Today Przewalski horses live free in the wild in some other parts of Mongolia and China and also in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. They were also released into the wild outside of where they once lived – for example southern France, Hungary, Chernobyl region in the Ukraine.

Bc. Eduard Stuchlík

Female bison with young

Young bison

Head of a bison cow

The young bison recalls a cruel fate with a happy end

After a several-years break, a bison (*Bison bison*) was born at the Brno Zoo again. This kind of an even-toed ungulate of the Bovidae family from North America has been bred at the Zoo since the 1950s; the last break in the reproduction cycle caused the creation of a new breeding group. To the three females that were born in Brno – the older one in 1983 and the two younger ones in 2001, we added a young male (born in 2002) from the Prague Zoo. He proved his potency right from the beginning of his sexual maturity, when he fertilized one of the younger females. A young one was born on 11th June and it was a female.

A bison newborn weighs about 30 kg, adult females weigh up to 550 kg, males 900 kg or more. The bison used to live in large prairie areas from Canada to Mexico. It is a typical grass vegetation eater that is important in the preservation of the prairie ecosystems. In addition to nominotypical prairie bison (*Bison b. bison*) there exists also the wood bison (*bison b. athabascae*), a subspecies that lives in the woody regions in northern parts of its species' area. Besides grass and leaves they also consume shoots and branches of bushes and trees. The prairie bison used to migrate hundreds of kilometres for more substantial food twice a year: to the north in spring and to the south in autumn. A rumble of the hoofs and clouds of dust exposed the approaching herd from a distance. The herd consisted of hundreds of thousands of individuals. There lived an estimated 60 millions bison in pre-Columbian ages. They were everything for the American Indians: a source of food and also a material for making clothes and dwellings. White colonists started to shoot the bison not only for business, but also for fun. In the middle of the 19th century, the American government initiated a mass slaying of the bison, whose bodies were even not used. The only reason for the slaughter was to starve out the prairie Indians and then to easily obtain their land. The number of bison has fallen below 1000 specimens in about 1890 and the species almost became extinct. Finally, the American Bison Society was formed in 1905 and there is about 100 000 bison in numerous North American preserves today. There also occur migrations about 250 km from Canada to the south to the USA and back. But the subspecies wood bison is still registered in the Red List of Threatened Species as endangered.

A similar look, lifestyle and even a similar fate has fallen on a related kind of European wisent (*Bison bonasus*). Subpecies *Bison b. caucasicus* used to live in forests throughout Europe, and in Caucasia. Because of the change of the forests into cultivated land, the wisent disappeared from most of the continent in the Middle Ages and it survived only in the primeval forests of Eastern Europe. The last wild European wisent was shot by a Polish forester Szakowicz in the Bialowieza forest on 9th February 1921. At that time, in game preserves and zoos, there lived 56 European wisents that became the base of the present population. In 1923 an international company for the preservation of the European wisent was founded with its base of operations in Hamburg, a Polish offshoot of the company opened a European wisent studbook in 1932, the first one of a wild animal. The wisents were returned to the wild in 1956 – to the preserve in Bialowieza. There live about 800 wisents today and there exist other smaller wild populations. The Caucasian subspecies was not saved, the last Caucasian wisent was shot in 1927. In a part of the original area of the Caucasian wisent, a crossbreed of a wisent and a bison was introduced. The total number of European wisents, including preserves and zoos, is estimated at 3000 specimens.

What man has damaged, he has at least partly corrected in the end. If only a similar fate would befall the other animals that the zoos throughout the world are trying to save.

Jan Kameník

Fishing cats and grizzled giant squirrels arrived from Sri Lanka

Cooperation with the Colombo Zoo in Sri Lanka is paying off again; it started in 2004 with the exchange of a Chapman's zebra and a Przewalski horse for a pair of Sri Lankan leopards. This summer another two pairs of endangered Sri Lankan endemites arrived at the Brno Zoo – the grizzled giant squirrel, a local subspecies of the fishing cat. These animals or their parents came from the wild; the Colombo Zoo also functions as a rescue station for animals, and villagers often bring in young which they find in the jungle or near human habitats.

The grizzled giant squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*), one of the largest squirrels in the world, is a new species at the Brno Zoo. The Zoo decided to place them in a unsuall place, in an aviary that connects the restaurant to the souvenir shop above the restaurant. The giant grizzled squirrels will replace the smaller Prevosts squirrels.

There are four species of giant squirrels of the family Ratufa. Grizzled giant squirrels, the smallest of them have been known to science the longest; it was described in 1769. Body length is 25–35 cm, the tail can be the same length or even longer. It lives alone or in pairs in tropical or subtropical dry forests; its diet consists of soft forest fruit and berries. It is shy and spends most of the day hiding in vegetation. When it sees a predator it makes sounds similar to barking. The specimens in our Zoo are quite friendly because they were raised by humans.

The fishing cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) has belonged to our collection of small cats for many years; in 1990 seven young cats were born here on Monk's Hill. Lately, however, due to a low number of specimens in Europe the breeding has stopped. Thanks to the new specimen the Brno Zoo has an opportunity to start new breeding again.

Fishing cat

The fishing cat can weight up to 10 kg; it lives in southeastern Asia, Sumatra, Bali and Sri Lanka. The cats mostly stay in forested and lightly forested areas near bodies of water; they like wet bushes, mangroves and shallow waters. The web between the toes on their front paws does not allow them to fully retract their claws. When fishing they catch their prey with one paw from the shore or by jumping into the water. Fishing cats are good swimmers and divers, they also catch frogs, mollusks and other water animals. They are fearless and they even stand up to a larger animals. *(red)*

Grizzled giant squirrel

Common chuckvalla

Common chuckwallas don't drink water

From the Prague Zoo, the only local (and probably only European) zoo which breeds Common chuckwallas (*Sauromalus obesus*), the Brno Zoo received three young specimens. The lizards grow to about 46 cm and differ from most of their relatives by the width of their body; the skin on their sides is folded in creases. When disturbed, they hide in rock crevices, by breathing in and inflating body size, they wedge into the crevice so that it's almost impossible to get them out. They live in bushy deserts of northwestern Mexico, and southwestern USA. They are resistant to high temperatures and can even withstand up to 60 °C for a short time. They are one of those animals that do not need to drink water because they receive all they need from their food – leaves, flowers and fruit. *(red)*

Jacob sheep

Jacob lamb

Head of a Jacob sheep

A Bizarre decorative animal: Jacob sheep

Although the primary objective of zoological gardens is the protection of endangered species, sometimes we can find farm animals among their residents - we can usually find them in the children's corner. Some existing zoological gardens concentrate strictly on farm animals such as, for example, the Vyškov Zoo (Czech Republic). It is because saving the genes of endangered domestic animals is just as important to genetic diversity as saving wild endangered animals.

Generally, it has cultural significance - we gain knowledge about how humans slowly but gradually subdue nature and we realize that evolution of the human race would be impossible without animals.

One of the old breeds which was in danger of disappearing altogether is the Jacob sheep. They appeared at the Brno Zoo last summer. The pair was brought here from a breeding station in south-eastern Alps and had an offspring in May of this year. The lamb did not stay with its parents for very long; it was given to another zoo. In August we had received another two females from the same breeding station in Austria. This exhibit is very attractive to our visitors because it is the only other place beside the Children's Zoo where people can touch a live animal - they are all contact species.

Jacob sheep can have up to six horns; the females usually have only two. The color of the head is one of their characteristics: a white uneven strip starts between the horns and goes all the way to the mouth; the sides are black or brown including around the eyes. Their whole body is covered with either black or brown patches on white. Jacob sheep have a genetically fixed high immunity against disease and against bad weather; they don't need any sort of special treatment for breeding.

Origins of the Jacob sheep are not known. Its name is derived from the biblical Jacob; the Book of Genesis mentions how Jacob asked his uncle Laban for all his spotted goats and sheep as a reward for two years of service. Jacob sheep were introduced with the arrival of Arabs into northern Africa and southern Spain. When the Christians around the 15th century gained control of the Pyrenean peninsula, the Spaniards started to breed resilient Jacob sheep in ships - they were sort of live cans of meat for the Spanish navy. With the destruction of the Spanish fleet in 1558 near the English coast, several specimens probably got to shore. Due to its bizarre look, the English aristocrats started to breed Jacob sheep as a decorative park animal. They disappeared in Spain. The base for today's population of this species comes from a single herd, which lived in the 18th century on the land of one English lord.

They were also used as farm animals. Interest in Jacob sheep slowly dwindled and they came close to extinction. After 1960, a group of British scientists and breeders revitalized pureblood breeding and their numbers started to rise again. Today there are about 200 specimens living in Great Britain; larger populations are in the Netherlands and the USA. All together there are several thousand Jacob sheep living in the world today. They are mostly kept as a special interest animal. Some breeders are trying to farm them as their flesh has an interesting flavor reminiscent of wild game meat and their fine fur can be easily sheared and used for making clothes.

Bc. Eduard Stuchlík

Guyana Caiman lizard for the first time in Brno

In June, one of the largest exhibits in the Tropical Kingdom Pavilion was taken by a pair of Guyana Caiman lizards; this species has never been reared at the Brno Zoo. The less known South American lizard is very special because of its food specialization. The Guyana Caiman lizard (*Dracaena guianensis*) eats snails exclusively. It eats water snails in the wild; at the zoo it is content with the terrestrial ones. It crushes the shell by its flat back teeth. In its homeland, it dives into a river or a swamp during the hunt and it spreads sludge on the bottom: a layer of leaves, little stones and similar material. When it finds a snail, it brings it up to the bank in its maw, breaks the shell by its molars and turns over every bite by its rough tongue, so that it masterfully separates the fragments from the body of the snail. Only then does the Caiman eat it.

The Guyana Caiman lizard belongs to the biggest representatives of the *Teiidae* family. This remarkable group of lizards with its 40 families and almost 250 species has settled in almost all biotopes of the new world. The Guyana Caiman lizard is also called Crocodile teju lizard. For those who wouldn't like any of these names, we can offer them a melodious native name: "jacuruxi".

We classify two species to the *Dracaena* genus (Daudin, 1802). *Dracaena paraguayensis* (Amaral, 1950) lives in a lowland diluvial area around the river Paraguay in the Brazilian states Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. The area of the *Dracaena guianensis* (Daudin, 1802) goes from the eastern hillsides of the Andes in northern Ecuador and southwestern Peru to the Marajó islands in the Amazon River delta and Sao Luis in the Sao Marcos gulf. This lizard occurs throughout all the Amazonian basin, where it lives mostly on banks of the main large streams and its tributaries – the surroundings of these rivers are flooded half a year and changed into swamps. The Guyana Caiman lizards often lie on branches near the surface, and when they are in danger they jump into the water.

Although this lizard lives on a huge area, 10 years ago the Guyana Caiman lizard was known only from 17 localities. Insufficient knowledge of their lifestyle corresponds to the low number of observations in the wild. The Guyana Caiman lizard belongs to the oviparous species. It lays a 7 cm long egg into the nests of the tree termites. Both species are very similar morphologically and also in their lifestyle. They have a robust head and strong feet with five fingers and claws; a mighty body with scales on the dorsal part reaches the length of 120 cm. The main difference is in the coloration. Green color merging into light orange and brown on the head dominates the body of *Dracaena guianensis*. The main color of *Dracaena paraguayensis* is beige and dirty yellow with indistinctive stripes on the body and tail. The legs are black with yellow stripes.

Guyana Caiman lizard eating a snail

Head of a Guyana Caiman lizard

There is minimum information about breeding the Guyana Caiman lizard under human care. The first example of its reproduction was displayed by the American Houston Zoo already in 1970, but the eggs were laid by a female that had been brought from the wild just 11 days prior. The Prague Zoo reaches remarkable achievements in the reproduction of the Guyana Caiman lizards; it is the only zoo in the world that raises these wonderful and still mysterious lizards. The first Guyana Caiman lizards came to Prague in August 1995 and only three years later, on 20th June 1998, the first young one was born. There were six young ones last year. Two animals born in Prague were transported to the Brno Zoo in 2005 as another demonstration of the long-lasting close cooperation of both zoos in breeding endangered kinds of reptiles.

The Brno Zoo is only the third institution in Europe that breeds these treasures of the Amazonian rain forests. The biggest group of the Guyana Caiman lizards is at the Prague Zoo, where 2 males, 3 females and 4 young ones live. Another two specimens may be seen only at the Leipzig Zoo. Even such a large area as the USA, with plenty of zoos, the Guyana Caiman lizard is being bred only at seven zoos, respectively, 8 males, 8 females and 3 animals of unspecified sex.

Michal Balcar

Bisons