

zoo

december 2003

report

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

BRNO



special supplement

ZOO REPORT PROFI

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Zooreport

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo
december 2003
No. 4/03, volume V

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Distribution:

400 pcs in the English version
1,600 pcs in the Czech version

First page:

Canadian Beaver
Photograph: Michal Piškula

Last page:

Whales
Drawing: Bohumil Olšanský

UNSALEABLE

A visit to the zoo teaches us a sense of responsibility

With the advent of its fifty-year anniversary, the Brno Zoological Garden appears to be in good shape. It is visibly modernising, new exhibitions are under construction that are better suited to the needs of the animals and are also increasingly more attractive to visitors. Over the next few years, the garden would like to rebuild its entire area according to this new concept and create a broad range of animal exhibitions developed and adapted to various environments.

The zoological garden is on a positive road toward a transformation into a unique park, in which the visitor may pass through several entirely distinct habitats with typical fauna: for example, the visitor will come to know steppe and desert animals in the Kalahari exhibition complex, while in Beringia, visitors will become acquainted with arctic and sub-arctic regions.

Only those species of animals for which suitable living conditions may be created will be placed in the new exhibits. This does not mean that animals we find attractive for



RNDr. Petr Duchoň

viewing will be placed in the runs at any cost, even though they are unhappy in their cages. A visit to the zoo should be an adventurous outing into various corners of the world where we meet with healthy and stress-free animals moving about in their nearly natural habitat.

The zoological garden must be a place not merely for entertainment, but also for instruction. For young people in particular, it is critical to impart the knowledge that people are not the only living creatures on this planet. It's as if a lot of us are forgetting more and more. At the same time, every species needs living space. One of the great advantages of the Brno Zoo is sufficient free space. All that is needed is to build new runs.

Since the time when man expanded his living space throughout the entire world, including the oceans, it has become clear to us that some less adaptable species have ceased to exist in many areas. But that really is a memento...

We may learn right here, on walks through the zoological garden, to nurture a respect for nature and a sense of responsibility for the fate of other living species that have been here much longer than we have.

RNDr. Petr Duchoň (*1956)

After graduating from the Faculty of Natural Science at Masaryk University in Brno, he worked in Tesla Brno as a research technician. He broadened his education in the field of physics with post-graduate studies as a Prague technician (1989) and with a study stay at the University of Heidelberg (1992). He completed three more study stays abroad, concentrated on local administration and official management already as a staff member of a local municipality. He worked in the Institute for Instrument Technology after 1990 and in the company Delong Instruments until his selection by the Deputy Lord Mayor. From 1992 to 1994, he was also assistant mayor for the municipal section Brno-Bystrc.

Besides ODS (The Civic Democratic Party), he has not been a member of any political party. Since 1994, he has been a member of the Brno Municipal Board and the Board of the Municipal Section Brno-Bystrc, and then after 1996 as a member of the City Council of Brno. In June 1997, he assumed the function of Deputy Lord Mayor and since 1 December 1998, he has been Lord Mayor of the City of Brno. He was re-elected to the position in November 2002.

He is married and has a son and a daughter. He speaks German, English and Russian. His hobbies include downhill skiing, basketball, soccer, theatre and travel.

Petr Duchoň

Lord Mayor of the Statutory City of Brno



Photo: Miloš Budík

Young Lynx in Zoo Brno, photo from September 1954

Zoo Brno is looking to the future

At the end of 1988, the Brno Zoo completed the run for African Hantig Dogs, the last large construction in which volunteers shared in the context of so-called Action Z. After 1989, the Brno Zoo had to find money for investment by another route than it had followed in the era of the planned state economy. This apparently contributed to several years of stagnation. The early maturity of this interval has already reached fruition and the modern exhibitions of recent years - Tropical Kingdom, Tiger Cliffs and the area for Canadian wolves and beavers - have served as a bridge to the implementation of the new keeper concept.

According to it, Mniší hora should develop a set of exhibitions we could call evolutionary suspension: new runs and pavilions will illustrate the development of theory and document the impact of specific environments on the formation of various life forms. How animal life adapted to changing conditions, how they developed and changed and how they have co-existed. Evolution is conditioned by inheritance, the regularity of which was discovered in Brno in the 19th century by Jan Řehoř Mendel (Gregor Mendel). Zoo Brno can now link the new concept to its heritage and connect a face with its name. The genius loci would have liked to empower Zoo Brno: for a century, Mniší hora belonged to the Old Brno monastery, where Mendel lived and worked.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Zoo demands both thoughts about the future as well as a view to the future. At the same time, we are aware of a special matter: buildings for animals constructed in the Zoo have aged more quickly than human dwellings. The villa from the 1930s, if preserved in its original form, will always remain a pearl in the necklace of the city. But the bear run from the 1950s no longer inspires anyone today. Evidence of this is the fact that the current zoo concept was outlined already before mid-century in published reports about the opening of Zoo Brno. The daily Svobodné slovo (The Free Word) on 31 August 1953 wrote: „Spacious cages in various designs

and sizes are not located next to one another as in a menagerie, but in various locations of the park, which have been adapted as much as possible to the original habitat of the animals.“ The newspaper Lidové demokracie (People's Democracy) in reports about the opening of the zoo, among others, noted: „The Brno Zoo Park is the first such to be built on entirely new scientific foundations. It will not have anything in common with contemporary menageries, in which the exhibited animals have played the role of rarities ...“

Sunday 30 September 1953, according to the albums, was a sunny day and over forty thousand people came to the opening of the zoo. „It is very nice, we are very happy about it. This will have a great impact not just for adults, but particularly for our children,“ commented one of the first visitors to the Zoo to the daily Rovnost (Equality).

The first great stage of development has come to a close and now begins an era oriented on the transition from the presentation of interesting exotic animals to the protection of endangered species from any location. At the same time, the Zoo has decided to deepen its current activities in education, and to further train the population toward ecological thinking.

Eduard Stuchlík



Photo: Archive of Bohuš Zoubek and Eduard Stuchlík



Among visitors to Zoo Brno during its opening on 30 August 1953 was also ten-year-old Bohuš Zoubek (on the left with his father). The current chief of the Brno State Philharmonic Orchestra brought a photographic memory to zoo staff on that day and after fifty years, allowed himself to be „immortalised“ on the same spot (on the right)

Zoo Praha one year after the flood

The Prague Zoo has changed greatly over the past six years. The Magistrate of the capital city has invested incomparably more resources into it than previously. Investments are visible practically at every step. Attendance at Zoo Praha, unlike in the nineties, has increased by 200,000 people annually.

Unfortunately, the vibrant construction development was interrupted in August 2002 by flooding. Almost in the blink of an eye, we lost nearly half the zoo: damages totalled quarter of a billion crowns. For planning future development of the zoo, we had to go back nearly to square one – some exhibitions



Photo: Tereza Mrháková

Reconstructed interior of the Gorilla Pavilion

ments of a modern 21st century zoo. Thanks to the appreciation of the City of Prague, and thanks to good insurance and also to the



Photo: Petr Fejk

Indonesian Jungle Pavilion will be opened in June 2004

in the lower parts of the area could not be renovated; during the flooding some animal species proved to be an impossible evacuation problem, so they can no longer be kept in their original locations.

And so our Zoo stands at the threshold of an entirely new chapter. It would be necessary to provide it with a new concept and to cover this with a continuous flow of finances. But one year after the flooding, one may say that the tragedy has paradoxically brought unexpected opportunities - in a relatively short time, the garden has been transformed into an area suitable to the demands and require-

unbelievable wave of help from the public, we can be optimistic in Zoo Prague. I believe that within two or three years after the flooding, we will succeed not only in removing its impact but also in returning it to a still better and more qualitative state.

Currently, more intensive construction activity is taking place in our zoo than in any time in its history. Nearing completion are the reconstruction of the pavilion for giant tortoises and gorillas, nine more large exhibits are being rebuilt - the Africa at Close Quarters Pavilion (small predators, reptiles and invertebrates), the Szechwan Pavilion

(birds from the foothills of the Himalayas), the pavilion for feline predators, the penguin pavilion, the exhibition of flamingos and pelicans, the exhibition for cranes, monkey island (spider monkeys, guenons, lemurs, squirrel monkeys), two large open aviaries for wading birds, and in particular our largest project, the Indonesian Jungle Pavilion (orang-utans, monkeys, night predators, monitor lizards, birds, and fish). Also under construction are some important support facilities, which were entirely destroyed by the flooding. - a lecture hall, quarantine, keeper facilities for birds and small mammals, workshops, storage areas, maintenance garage and offices. This all should be completed over the course of the next season. At the end of it all, visitors shouldn't come across even a single reminder of last year's flooding catastrophe.

PhDr. Petr Fejk, Director of Zoo Praha



Photo: Petra Kosková

PhDr. Petr Fejk



The Domestication Group is responsible chiefly for llamas



The Terrain Zoology Group looks after birdhouses



An Asian Water Dragon in a niche of living nature is shown as a contact species

A quarter-century for Station for Young Natural Scientists

At a time when Zoo Brno is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, its Station for Young Natural Scientists has become a twenty-five year old young lady, which has raised more than three thousand children. Activities of the station founded on 19 November 1978 continue the meritorious work with children and young that Zoo Brno has devoted itself since 1952. Awareness of the vulnerability of the young generation, the formation of which could negatively impact some events and ten-

dencies in the development of human society, offers a paradise to children and youth for making valuable use of their free time. It thus provides a unique opportunity not only in the context of European but perhaps even globally.

In the period of the uncontrolled development of technical civilization, when the possibility for direct contact with live animals - with the exception of common domestic pets - is increasingly less available, the existence of the Station for Young Natural Scientists has an enormous significance for children in spending their free time. The attractive content of expert groups limits the risk of causing negative social phenomena in the noted social group and from a practical standpoint, supplements the book learning of nature young people have acquired in school as well as reinforces the positive character features developing in personalities.

The Station operates in three clubrooms in the administrative building and further develops its activities at various locations throughout the Zoo area, on excursions, trips and outings by members. Expert groups meet

once or twice a week and manage records about each meeting in daily journals. More significant activities are recorded in a chronicle, which has nearly 3000 pages.

The workload of the station depends on the age range of the base members, which has children from eight to eighteen and even adults - station keepers and friends of the zoo. The goal is to acquire conservation skills: the expert focus incorporates the areas from practical and applied fields of biology, through breeding and veterinarian technology through creative arts. During theoretical exercises, participants watch a videotape depicting the habitat in which animals live in the wild. Practically all the groups prepare for a contest, which predominantly confirms the knowledge and skill of the members in an entertaining format.

In 2003, twenty expert groups operated; thirteen so-called active partners, designated interested parties over eighteen. Life in the Station is unusually diverse. Members of the group Terrain Zoology, for example, manufacture, place and rebuilt birdhouses in the Zoo area and monitor nesting. The



Photo: SNP Archive

Members of the Special Zoology Group with a Chinchilla



Children from the Station undertake pony rides into the Zoo garden

Entomological Group, among others, controls the decreasing numbers of apple moths in the vicinity of underbrush. Groups for terraristics and natural science tend a small corner of living nature in one of the clubrooms, keeping fish, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. The group P. A. N. investigates fauna in nature, the group *Rarae Animae* is engaged in the impacts of decreasing species diversity, girls from the domestic groups primarily look after a herd of Llamas, annually enriching the public with a program of events. During the year, the activities of the Partners – unfortunately not all its members – share in activities of the Station, either already taking place in the area of the zoo, or outside it. An editorial board also works in the Station, annually publishing the Report of the Station for Young Natural Scientists.

They share in the majority of events for the public organized by Zoo Brno, not just the already mentioned „Llama Girls“. Members from other groups help prepare, for example, the Spring and Autumn Zoo Cup or the Christmas Eve Animal Feeding and jointly they are engaged in picking fruit in the gar-

den orchards, collecting nuts for forest replanting on Mniší hora and assisting keepers during their work in the children's zoo and elsewhere.

Tours serve for coming to know other zoos. In recent years, young natural scientists visited exhibitions, for example, in zoos in Ostrava, Liberec, Ústí nad Labem, Prague, Bratislava and in Vienna. In the context of their year-round programs, some groups visit museums and exhibits focused on natural science themes.

The team of leaders for the expert groups consisted of thirteen people in 2003. Like in previous years, they were a mix of trainers from the station and other enthusiasts willing to devote their free time to children without any honorarium – their work is genuinely voluntary. Every year, the annual report about the activities of the Station usually has many densely written pages, but this is not a gauge. This concerns the fact that the station has achieved its mission – to develop the personal characters of members of the young generation. So far it has succeeded. Former members, now grown, have brought



Photo: Eduard Stachlik

A Degu in one of the vivaria, a niche of the living nature

their children to the station, so that they can continue in the footsteps of their parents. It is wonderful to know that the work of voluntary leaders has not been for naught.

Emil Štiss



Kristina Sochová, 14 years old, Brno

On the beauty of tigers and their protection

The variety and beauty with which some animals abound has inspired aesthetes of all kinds. It is admirable how so many figure in the spontaneous paintings of children, the images of primitive tribe members and in the painting syntheses of great artists. The hunting prowess, the capability of capturing deer, their sharp eyes that nothing can escape, have been composed in song. In their artistic efforts, today's children also often depict these animals. For the most part, it

serves in fables to draw attention to human relations. For the youngest generation, however, this begins to assert itself - particularly when children are urged to this - the current topic: protection of endangered species. More than four hundred children applied for this contest, declared by Zoo Brno for the European campaign for the protection of tigers in the wild. These days, in two locations in Zoo Brno, we can see exhibited images of tigers or text with poems or stories about them.

„Fur with dark stripes melds with the vegetation / the tiger is hidden not merely by the brush but also by the grass. // Teeth as sharp as knives / make short work of a gazelle, leaving only drops of blood. // Zoos and reservations are prisons for tigers, / but today the one way for them to survive,” wrote fourteen-year old Barbora Englová of Klobouky u Brna. She demonstrated not only a knowledge of the structure of the body and the life of tigers, but she also taught us about how endangered they are.

The children's contest on the theme of the Tiger, into which both creative and literary works were accepted, received entries

from 433 contestants. The jury found that all the work is of comparable quality, and therefore it chose 33 selected works as winners, of which 11 consisted of stories or poems and 22 were conducted in various creative techniques. The contest results were announced on 4 October, at the International Day of Animals. The winning drawings, paintings, collages, poems and stories are exhibited in the gallery of the restaurant U Tygra (At the Tiger) and other creative works merit as decorations in the pavilion of exotic birds and will still last until next year when the Tiger campaign begins again.

In addition to 34 pupils of south Moravian elementary schools, individual children, interested parties from the House of Children and Youth in Žďár nad Sázavou and wards of the Diagnostic Institute for Youth in Brno participated in the contest. Zoo Brno declared this artistic event in March of this year as an accompanying event to the Tiger Campaign, organised by the European



Jakub Jaša, 13 years old, Elementary School in Břeclav, Komenský Street

Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA). The campaign began in 2002 and will last until September 2004 with the goal of collecting half a million Euros for financing projects for the protection of tigers in the wild. Zoo Brno contributed 1500 Euros to this sum for the purchase of key chains with the symbol of a tiger's eye. Visitors could obtain it in the souvenir shop U Tygra (At the Tiger). The campaign has its own educational part, about which, of course also belongs the children's contest.

Lubica Hrdinová,
Eduard Stuchlík



Pavel Kudláček, 7 years old, Voděradý Elementary School

A Rhinoceros Iguana was born on Mniší hora

The group of Rhinoceros Iguanas (*Cyclura cornuta*), a male and three females, was acquired by Zoo Brno in the transfer last summer when helping the flooded Prague Zoo. One female died, but it seems that the remaining animals are living well on Mniší hora. Both females laid eight eggs at the end of this year, of which one living offspring hatched on 19 October. Although the number is not spectacular, considering the endangered level of this species, this addition is definitely worth noting. Zoo Brno is now the only Czech zoo that keeps this species. The native habitat of Rhinoceros Iguanas is the island of Hispaniola (on which there are two states: the Dominican Republic and Haiti) and smaller islands in its vicinity. One of the largest lizards, it grows to a length of 1.5 m and reaches a weight of 9 kg. It can live to



Photo: Eduard Stuchlik



Rhinoceros Iguana, offspring on the left, adult individual on the right

be 50 years old. Only several thousand individual can be found in the wild.

Male Vasa Parrots and Kea already have mates

During a tour of the Exotic Birds Pavilion recently, several visitors to Zoo Brno noticed that the zoo kept only males in the aviary for New Zealand parrots Kea (*Nestor notabilis*)

and the parrots of the species Great Vasa (*Coracopsis vasa*), originally from Madagascar. We explained that it is not so easy to establish a pair for such rare birds. Years ago, when we were given the opportunity to acquire the abovementioned specimens from Zoo Stuttgart, we elected the possibility to exhibit only males, rather than not to display such a species. Since this September, we no longer need to explain anything - the five-year old kea already has a mate, aged one and a half years, and a two-year old female has been added to the two also approximately five-year old males of the Great Vasa species. These parrots have not yet been kept in any zoo in the Czech Republic and successful breeding of these species has not been very frequent abroad either.



Photo: Eduard Stuchlik

Vasa Parrot female (in the middle) will have to select a life partner from two males



Photo: Eduard Stuchlik

This is not a duel, but friendly banter. The male Kea soon makes friends with his new mate

Publicity and teaching staff descend on Brno

On 10 October, 24 publicity and education staff from Czech and Slovak zoos descended on Zoo Brno. Their two-week annual meeting included expert reports on agenda, with subsequent discussion, a visit to ecological centre of Rozmarynek, as well as a recreational event, such as a tour of Veveří Castle. Individual zoos do not compete anyway; they mutually exchange experience leading to improvements in the quality of work of the participants and to bringing Czech and Slovak zoos to more closely approximating the zoos of Western Europe.

(red)



Discus

Photo: Michal Piškala



Red Parrot

Photo: Michal Piškala

Freshwater world in the centre of the big city

The main subject of interest for the Permanent Aquarium Exhibition in Brno on Radnická street is freshwater fish. In sixty tanks, in addition to the three saltwater tanks in the exhibition, visitors may view representatives of approximately eighty species of fish, whose habitat is the freshwater realm, including one tank with Red-eared Slider and several aquaria in the sales section.

The inhabitants of the abovementioned freshwater aquariums have their own original habitat in watercourses and lakes practically around the world, but there are fish here that are no longer seen in nature. Development of aquarium enthusiasm for distant regions is

documented by a breeders' attraction; a group of cichlasoma called Red Parrots (*Cichlasoma* sp.). This concerns a form artificially bred in breeding pens for Southeast Asia by crossing four species of cichlasoma and genetic modifications. The resulting offspring are distinguished from the original species by a mammoth head and an unnaturally curved spine. These individuals are incapable of further interbreeding; their offspring are acquired by impregnating a female Red Parrot with a male of the species *Cichlasoma citrinellum*.

For the most part, Europeans consider the described breeding method unethical and cruel; in Asia, however, thus "created" fish are highly prized. Evidence of this fact are both their high prices, as well as the fact that breeders of these Red Parrots continue to

cross them in a similar way so that they achieve greater proportions and more diverse colouring, culminating in the currently popular form the „Flower-Horn“. This fully suits Asian trends, when attractive looking fish of greater proportions are placed independently in more modestly equipped tanks and they fulfil the function of domestic pet.

Another certainly impossible to overlook species visible in the aquarium exhibitions is the Giant Pangasius (*Pangasius sanitwongsei*). This fish lives in the waters of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia with a body shape reminiscent of a shark and it grows to a length of around 300 cm, but in captivity only to 100 cm. Giant Pangasius is marked by great ferocity - it is capable of devouring fish as large as itself.

By no means are the abovementioned species the only ones of interest and worth a look in the Permanent Aquarium Exhibition. African Cichlids of the *Tropheus*, *Labeotropheus*, *Labidochromis*, *Melanochromis* or *Cyprichromis* families, Discus (*Symphysodon discus*) or the stately Walking Catfish (*Clarias batrachus*) - these are only a few of the inhabitants of global waters, whose diversity approximates the diversity of the visitors to the Permanent Aquarium Exhibition. To them the exhibition is not merely a source of entertainment and learning, but possibly also an inspiration for home aquariums, either for those who already have some experience or for those aquarium enthusiasts just getting started.

Jan Špaček



Giant Pangasius

Photo: Michal Piškala

The method for serving food is just as important as its composition

In the array of factors affecting the physical condition, health and well being of animals in zoos, one of the most important is the use and method of serving feed. There are many nutritional specialists who do not allow keepers even the smallest error in the testing and evolution of a certified nutrition schedule. At one end of the ladder of nutritional complexity are the simple feeder species, who "don't make a fuss" in how they accept their feed. Although zoos have already existed for more than one hundred years, many even support the experience of keepers as well as truly groundbreaking activities in seeking substitutes for original food sources.

For example, it is very difficult to serve predators live feed. At the same time, for carnivores, blood itself is important: it is a source of mineral substances, which are not contained in the meat of butchered animals, offered to carnivorous animals in the zoo as

the chief source of nutrition. It is then necessary to inject this feed with mineral and vitamin preparations, the utility of which for the organism is sometimes hotly debated by zookeepers.

In addition to the composition of feed, the method of serving the feed has a decisive impact on the health status and condition of the animals. If we want to keep animals as close to nature as we can, the model that modern zoos strive to attain, we have to realize that feeding by hand is entirely unacceptable. On the other hand, it is necessary to attempt to create conditions for animals close to nature. If an herbivorous species, such as a llama or giraffe, survive by browsing leaves in the upper layers of vegetation, we have to place the substitute for the original feed source at an adequate height. Species surviving on a selection of fruits and seeds or by grazing grass we then prepare an order for soil, best in more locations or over a greater area.

Overfeeding is also one of the complaints of zoos. As a result of long-term excess of feed, many animals become obese,



Photo: Eduard Suchlik

The Markhor originates from the mountains of Pakistan, where it grazes on grass and browses on shrub leaves. The transition to Central European plant species is no problem for it



Photo: Eduard Suchlik

Llamas get their feed at the right height

resulting in high fat content, degeneration and disruption of the function of internal organs, primarily the liver and kidneys, and in the worst cases to entirely avoidable demise. It is possible to prevent this by timely diets, alternating feed dose components and by observing changes in the behaviour of animals, particularly when taking feed.

The quality of the components comprising the feed is also critical. Most frequently, mould and its by-product - mycotoxins, render feed useless. These can damage primarily the liver and pose a serious threat to the entire organism.

It is possible to much influence correct nutrition. If we care for animals properly, they will reward us with their health, long-life and perhaps even offspring. And eventually, perhaps we will reward ourselves - with the sense of a job well done.

Ing. František Slavič



Whales