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ZOO report

the magazine for friends of the Brno Zoo

BRNO



special supplement
ZOO REPORT PROFI



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Radiated Tortoise
Drawing: Jan Bodeček

UNSALEABLE

PhDr. Richard Svoboda (*1964)

The present Brno Mayor was born in Zlín where he took his A-levels at grammar school in 1982. In 1987 he passed the Faculty of Arts of the present Masaryk University (doctor's degree in 1988). He worked in the press and electronic media as an editor and journalist. After November 1989 he worked as a research worker at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (later Czech Academy of Sciences). He published several papers on Czech studies and dictionary works in books and magazines. Since 1997 he is a member of ODS, before that he was without political affiliation. In 1998 he was elected to the Council of the Brno-Královo Pole city district. After two years of acting in the Council he became a Vice-Mayor responsible for property, housing, social and school issues. Since 2000 he is a member of the Council of the South-Moravian region. In 2002 he was elected Deputy Mayor of Brno, responsible for the economic development of the City, housing and property issues. On 12 October 2004 he replaced RNDr. Petr Duchoň, who was elected European Parliament member, in the position of Brno Mayor. He lives in the City district of Brno-Královo Pole. In his free time he practises recreation tennis and reads books. His son Mathias attends grammar school.

Brno Zoo Ranks among the Most Attractive Places in the City

The zoological garden at the Monk's Hill ranks among the most attractive places in the City especially as regards children. The number of visitors has been continuously increasing during the last years. Zoo founders who created the first runs fifty-one years ago would probably not recognize it.

Requirements for breeding animals in captivity have been increasing during the decades as have the demands of zoo visitors; now it is obvious that present visitors ask for more than just a look at the animals in plain, bare cages or concrete runs. Visitors want

the animals to live permanently in the most pleasant and natural environment possible; they want to know that the animals are not under stress and that they do not suffer at the zoo. I believe that I am not the only one who wants to feel that we have not taken away freedom and dignity of the zoo-kept animals.

Those who have children are the ones who realize above all what a favourite and valuable place a nice zoo is in the middle of the City. However, the zoo is also regularly visited by couples in love, grandparents with grandchildren or young zoology fans. All these people certainly realize how much the zoo still needs to be improved and perhaps



Photo: Miroslav Rendianský

An air view of Tiger Rocks. Pavilions and runs on Kraví hora (Monk Hill) are surrounded by a full-grown deciduous woods



PhDr. Richard Svoboda

they may understand my observation that the zoo is one of many Brno institutions that would need more funds.

I believe that a visit to the zoo will be as intensive an experience for today's generation, hooked on virtual Hobbit and Jurassic park worlds, as it used to be for me. My childhood experiences are connected to the Lešná Zoo near Zlín but I am sure the Brno Zoo is an equally advantageous place for all pre-school children at the zoo, which is situated far away from the bus terminal in the Zlín quarter of Vršava, used to be for me. I am sure that the present lofty efforts exercised by people working at the Brno Zoo best guarantee that the zoo will be a more and more attractive destination of Brno citizens and a more and more pleasant dwelling for all its animal inhabitants.

Richard Svoboda
Brno Mayor



Photo: Eduard Srnčlik

Grevy's zebras

Animal Integration Into a Group Is Not Always Easy

Quite recently, Brno Zoo employees have brought several animals to Monk's Hill that have not yet integrated socially. An animal's integration into a pack, pride, herd, flock, or school in the wild is usually difficult to achieve. Conflicts cannot always be prevented while integrating an individual into a group, even when breeding wild animals in captivity.

A pack of wolves in the wild is dominated by a parent pair; their offspring of various ages is divided into two independent hierarchical lines according to sex. In June, when a Canadian wolf (*Canis lupus occidentalis*) from Germany's Nuremberg Zoo joined two females that had lived together in Brno for a long time, the older female attacked and hurt the younger, subordinate one. We separated the attacked female and, after her wounds heal, we would like to let her join the others again.

At the end of September a female ostrich (*Struthio camelus*) originating from Tanzania was brought from the Netherlands. Ostriches are polygamous and several

females can lay eggs in one nest. At first, the new female ostrich was alone in the pen. Then we let her into a closed area in order to meet "from behind the fence" other animals sharing the run with the ostriches. For about a week we let the female into the run alone, and then the following day she entered together with a male. Their meeting took place quietly and thus in the days that followed we let in the other female, and then a part of the other permanent inhabitants of the run as well: the Chapman zebras and the giraffes. Unfortunately, days with low night temperatures followed and we had to put the animals in separate pens overnight. A meeting with the last species, the gnu, was thus postponed. Furthermore, the male started rutting again and injured the new female upon attempting to mate; the new female had to be separated again. After recovery, the female was put in the small run again and she waited for better weather to be able to join the other animals again.

Another newcomer is a female Grevy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*); the mare was brought from Poland's Poznan Zoo. As regards these zebras, there are strong relationships

between the mother and her young; the stallions usually live alone. The Polish mare was kept in a zebra pen in an independent cage for two days; on the third day it was let into an empty run. After approximately one hour and a half, when the animal calmed down, a stallion was let in. An "icebreaker" chase was soon over, the stallion tried to mate and he accepted the mare. In the afternoon, the second mare was let in. The situation in the zebra group seems normal.

The last new animal so far is a male Ruffed Lemur (*Varecia variegata*) that was brought from the Ostrava Zoo in October to be placed in our male's pen. The Ruffed Lemur lives in southeastern Madagascar in pairs and on Nosy Mangabe island in groups that fight with one another - however, relationships within groups are stable. After the male was transported, it was left in a transport cage near the resident male overnight. The animals could see each other and showed great interest in each other. The following day the transport cage with the new male was placed right into the pen. After the initial interest subsided, the males were allowed to meet directly. The first slapping round started in a minute; however, no one was seriously hurt. The males keep a reserved distance and it is becoming clear that they are going to get on well.

Ing. František Slavič



Photo: Eduard Srnčlik

A head of female of red-necked ostrich



Photo: Lenka Handková

Southern Two-Toed Sloth ranks among the new animals of Zoo Bratislava.

Zoo Bratislava Has Coped with the Construction of the Railway

The Bratislava Zoo has been opened to the public for 44 years. A number of harsh interferences, which liquidated a considerable part of the exhibits without any compensation, took place during this period. The Zoo has overcome all of this: it was closed till this May and a record number of visitors came in the summer.

The hardest interference to Zoo premises was the construction of an urban sewer and the D-2 motorway slip road, which was under way from 1987 to 1993. Almost two thirds of the existing exhibits - including the visitor entrance - had to be liquidated in a few days. The Bratislava Zoo did not have time to recover from the sudden attack and as early as 1995 it was decided to construct the D-2 motorway Bratislava, Lamačská cesta-Staré Grunty through zoo

premises. The construction started in March 2003, causing a liquidation of the entrance building and an increased movement of heavy machinery accompanied the construction works. Consequently, the zoo was closed to the public from December 2003 to June 2004.

The complicated situation demanded the processing of a new zoo development concept, which was approved by the Council of Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, in 2003. The construction of a new feline house started in 2004 in accordance with this concept. Although this year the Bratislava Zoo was open to the public only since June, it was visited by a record number of guests - 202 thousand visitors came to the zoo during the three summer months. The zoo is accessed through a new entrance area and besides an exhibit of kept animals, the visitors may visit a dinopark, a unique exhibit of moving models of Mesozoic animals that probably inhabited our planet 65 to 200 million years ago.

The following animals have been bred this year: Syncerus Caffer, European Bison, Common Eland, Swamp Deer, Bactrian Camel, Indian Crested Porcupine, Sika Deer, capybaras. Since the construction of the railway is still under way and influences zoo life, the animal species collection was extended only a little: the zoo gained a Southern



Photo: Martin Klug

White Rhinoceros mated in July for the first time.

Two-Toed Sloth, a Bengal Cat and Siberian Weasels. Special attention is still paid to the White Rhinoceros that had been completely examined by a team of veterinary surgeons from IZW Berlin (Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research) this May. The rhinos mated in July for the first time.

Despite the continuous negative interferences, we have achieved important successes as regards keeping and breeding animals and we were honoured by an international prize for the preservation of Oryx dammah, an endangered species. I believe that the team of zoo workers will successfully continue the construction of the new modern breeding facilities as well as improve services rendered to visitors.

Ing. Miloslava Šavelová

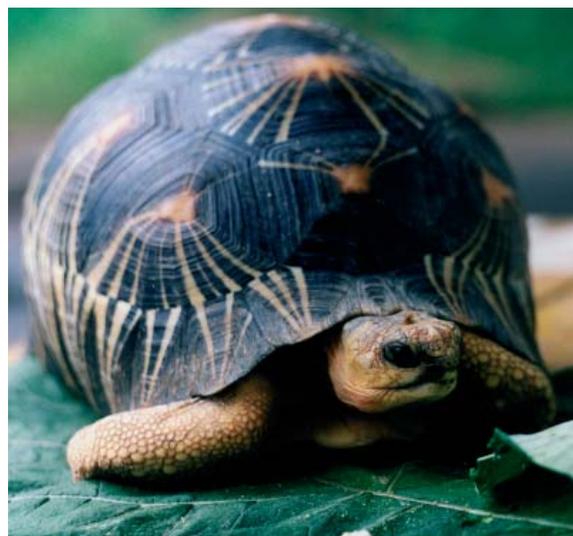


Photo: František Zajíac

Dinopark opened this May.



Egyptian Tortoise



Radiated Tortoise

Turtles and Tortoises at the Brno Zoo

On planet Earth, there are more than 250 turtle and tortoise species living in the sea, in rivers, freshwater lakes, or ashore. The public is generally not aware of the relatively high number of species; zoo exhibits usually contain only a few dozen turtle and tortoise species of the order Testudines (Chelonia). The Brno Zoo maintains 16 turtle and tortoise species at present.

The most recent contribution to the Brno collection is a gift from the Vienna Zoo this summer: six Common Spider Tortoises (*Pyxis arachnoides*) and a female Radiated Tortoise (*Geochelone radiata*), which was soon paired with a male from the Pilsen Zoo. Both species come from Madagascar, an island shrouded in mystery until recently. Both Common Spider Tortoises and Radiated Tortoises rank among



A newly born Egyptian Tortoise and a hatchling breaking through the shell

the most beautiful tortoises. However, they are becoming extinct in their home territory – much like many other tortoise species in the whole world. Common Spider Tortoises and Radiated Tortoises appear sporadically only in south and southeastern Madagascar, in the so-called thorny bush, an area covered mostly by plants of the *Didieraceae* family and other succulents.

The Common Spider Tortoise grows up to 15 cm in length at maximum; it is one of the

smallest tortoises. Its breeding in captivity is at its very beginning: data by the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) shows that, besides six Brno individuals, there are only 32 animals in four collections in Europe. As regards the Radiated Tortoise, which can grow up to 50 cm, EAZA has established a European Studbook. There are approximately 200 tortoises of this species in 21 groups in Europe at present. Both the Common Spider Tortoise and the Radiated Tortoise are recorded in the IUCN-Red List, the Vulnerable category, and Annex I to the CITES I convention. Although the Madagascar Executive forbade the trapping of Radiated Tortoises several years ago, its population has been decimated in many areas. A government decree makes it impossible to export these tortoises but it totally ignores the capture of the tortoises for culinary purposes by the locals – the beautiful Radiated Tortoises



Common Spider Tortoise



One of the seven rescued Malaysian Giant Tortoises



Photo: Michal Balcar

Marginated Tortoise incubation

are still considered a famous delicacy by island inhabitants; the Madagascar people still fill their pots with these tortoises.

One of the biggest turtles, Malaysian Giant Turtles (*Orlitia borneensis*) of the Emydidae family, up to one meter long, has been presented to zoo visitors for the first time in a newly modified exhibit at the Brno Zoo. Typical representatives of the freshwater turtles came to Brno in spring 2002 after a distressful journey. Before being detained by customs in Hong Kong, the turtles were live contraband, travelling from Macao on the lower deck of a smuggling ship where they were crammed together with approximately 10,000 other turtles of eleven species into several layers of closed crates. They were to fill the black hole of demand for delicious turtle meat in the markets of Southeastern Asia. After the rescue operation of the zoological gardens, the ten animals that came to Brno suffered from serious suppurating carapace wounds, some had small hooks stuck in their throats, probably used by smugglers to hang the turtles before transport; the hooks were rusty. The pitiful condition of the reptiles was accompanied by stress and dehydration. After providing daily attentive care, the breeders, in cooperation with the zoo's veterinary surgeon, succeeded in rescuing seven turtles.

The Brno Zoo ranks among the most successful European institutions striving to propa-



Marginated Tortoise mating

gate turtles and tortoises. The greatest success of the last decade is probably the propagation of three tortoise species of the Testudinidae family. Four hatchlings of the species Herman's Tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*), the most famous European tortoise, were born in 1995. Nevertheless, the breeding of the biggest tortoises of the old continent, Marginated Tortoises (*Testudo marginata*), is far more important. Fifty-five were born in Brno from 1995 to 1999. Not only other zoos but also advanced private breeders manage to breed the two above-named species. Nevertheless, the propagation of a third species, Egyptian Tortoise (*Testudo kleinmanni*), is still one of the world's rarities. Five hatchlings were born at the Brno Zoo during 1995 to 1997. At the beginning of the 1990s, this tortoise was propagated only at the renowned Jersey Zoo and then at the London Zoo. Long-term repeated breeding has been unknown until the present.

The Brno Zoo has maintained 52 turtle and tortoise species during its more than 50 years of existence. A thick book could be written about their lives and I hope that one day I will be able to accomplish this goal. People who see turtles and tortoises as a souvenir from their journeys or as a live toy would probably not read it. I want to write the book for those who know that ancient turtles and tortoises lived on our planet long before man appeared and that they deserve our respect and protection.

Michal Balcar



Photo: Michal Balcar

Marginated Tortoise



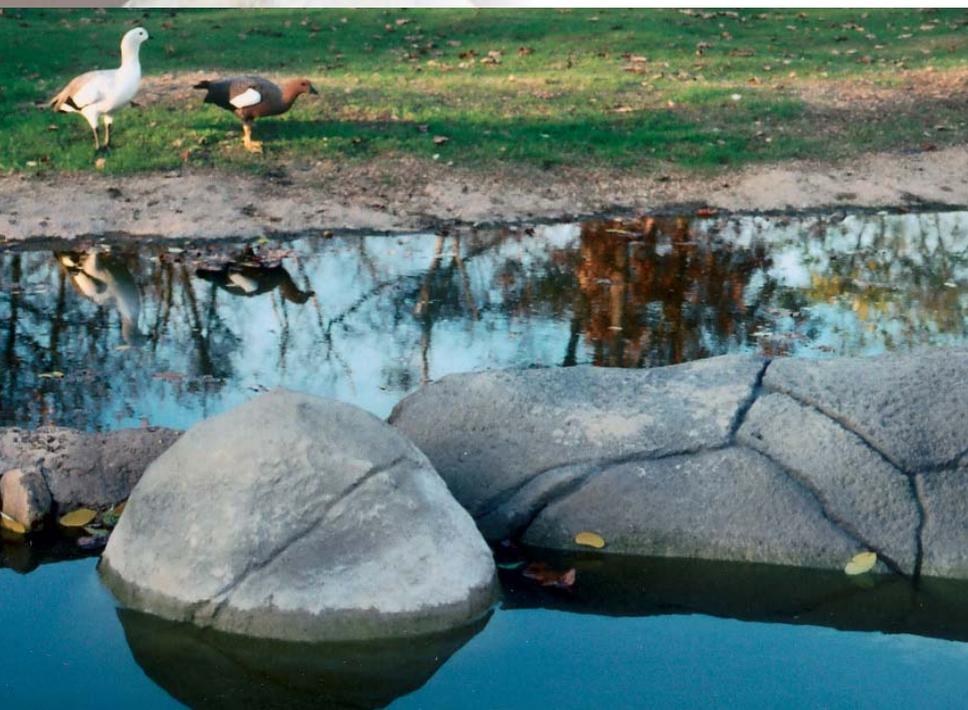
Photo: Michal Balcar

Black-Breasted Leaf Turtle



Photo: Michal Balcar

Herman's Tortoise



Upland Geese...



... Great Rheas ...



... capybaras and Patagonian hares share the South American run

Further Steps to a Lattice-Free Zoo

Brno Zoo's modification of the South American run, carried out in autumn, was a further step in accomplishing a zoo free of lattices. Compared with the unobstructed view along the perimeter of the new Canadian Wolf Run, the South American adaptation is just a small part, though it is not unimportant.

The South American run is adjacent to the area in front of the Tropical Kingdom house; it is a lively area with a prairie dog run and neighbouring outdoor meerkat, bush monkey and chameleon runs. The area was closed by a high lattice in one place and visitors could watch capybaras, Patagonian

hares, Great Rheas and Upland Geese in a common run through the lattice. At present, people are separated from the animals by a shallow moat instead of the lattice. Water falls over through forced circulation from the moat to a new reservoir serving the animals; besides the original small pond, the capybaras now have a pond approximately ten meters long and three meters wide. The lattice was partly replaced by a barrier of artificial stones inset with a glass panel so that people may watch life at the bank and on the level of the pond in detail.

At the last annual meeting of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) in Sweden, Brno Zoo workers presented their project to take part in preserving the tapir. In a professional group for tapir and hippopotamus breeding they discussed the possibility of gaining this perissodactyl, so far never kept in Brno, with Franc Haelewyn from France's Ville de Lille Zoo, a coordinator for tapir breeding. The area in which tapirs are kept has already been prepared: it is the modified South American run where tapirs will be able to swim together with capybaras in the new water reservoir. We are sure they will put up with the rest of the animals of the run, too. Nevertheless, it is necessary to

construct winter quarters with a swimming pool for the tropical tapirs yet.

At the EAZA conference, Brno zoologists also discussed the possibility of placing brown bears from the Brno Zoo to other facilities - the original intention to move the bears to a game preserve nearby Barcelona, Spain, failed, unfortunately, due to a failure of a German-Dutch transport company. After the brown bears are moved away, the Brno Zoo is going to reconstruct and extend their run so that polar bears may be placed there. In this way, the polar bears would gain more suitable space. The brown bears will return to a new large exhibit that is to be constructed at a different place on Monk's Hill.

Besides magnanimous runs and technically perfect houses, old buildings on their last legs exist in all zoos, including the richest ones. Opinions on creating exhibits change and so animal facilities get old quickly. Legacies of the past cannot be usually considered a monument in a zoo nor is it possible to remove them immediately... Lattices are gradually disappearing from the Brno Zoo and we are doing our best so that one day they will be completely removed...

Jan Kamenik

Photo: Eduard Svoblik

Photo: Eduard Svoblik

Photo: Eduard Svoblik



Photo: Eduard Suchlik

Four-horn sheep

Have Domestic Animals Attracted Visitors?

In July, 41,785 people visited the Brno Zoo; last July the zoo was visited by 28,114 guests. The increased number of visitors that continued in the following months was probably caused by the new wolf run, which opened in June. Nevertheless, domestic animals gained popularity, too, being situated since summer on the way from the restaurant to the Exotic Bird pavilion, an area where an exhibit had long been lacking. The enclosure with a bull-calf of European bison and brown and white goats especially attracts visitors due to the four-horn sheep (*Ovis aries*).

Pour Féliciter 2005

Zoo Report editorial staff wishes its readers a peaceful and relaxed Christmas and a successful beginning of the New Year. We wish you good health, happiness and contentment.



Photo: Michal Piskula

Young Siberian Ibex approximately one week after birth

The Ibexes Have Also Had Four Young

Three ungulate species – lamas, Barbary sheep and Siberian Ibexes – have had each four young at the Brno Zoo this year. We have informed you of the lamas and Barbary sheep before and we are happy to inform you of a similar joyful event as regards the Ibexes. We have reared them regularly for several decades; the current herd is composed of several generations. Therefore we are going to move some of the fifteen animals to other zoos and the breeding is to be enlivened by an import of genetically distant animals. However, their planned arrival from Ukraine's Nikolayev Zoo has been held up by administrative barriers after the admission of the Czech Republic into the European Union. Taxonomists disagree on the number of Ibex species; however, there are at least nine species, most of them are protected. For example two species of Ibexes live in Caucasus, West Causasian Tur and Dagestan Tur, in Pyrenees lives Spanish Ibex, in Alps Alpine Ibex, in Ethiopia Walia Ibex and in Israel, Sudan and Erithrea Nubian Ibex. The mountains of southern Siberia and northern Mongolia are home to Siberian Ibexes; in Altai the herds live up to 3,000 meters above sea level. Strict protection of wild populations has been retracted; population numbers are not alarming. However, zoos very rarely keep this species.



Photo: Eduard Suchlik

half-a-year-old youth (in the forefront) starts to show its horns



Photo: Michal Piskula

Meerkats with a pup

Even a Little Meerkat Can Bite You

A pup has finally been born in a group of six meerkats. The young one spent its first three weeks under the earth, which is common for these small South African civet beasts of prey; it surfaced at the end of August. Before that, the last time the meerkats bore young was in 2001. These lovely creatures have been bred by the Brno Zoo since 1998 and the run is often crowded by people. Although there is a sign at the exhibit stating that the animal can be dangerous, visitors sometimes succumb to temptation and try to pet the meerkat. Then the zoologist on duty has one more thing to worry about – he has to bandage a bitten finger of the visitor...

(ed.)



Photo: Eduard Suchlik

Siberian Ibex male

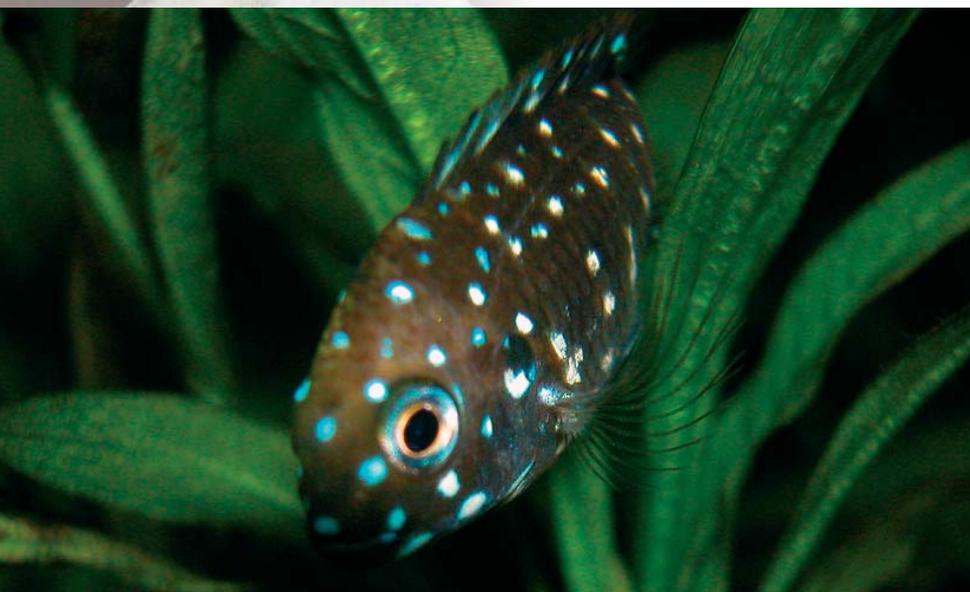


Photo: Michal Piškula

Tropheus Cichlid's young are black with clear white dots on their whole bodies. The young one in the photograph was approximately 2 cm long

Tropheus Cichlid Rearing

Although the principal mission of the Permanent Aquarium Exposition of Brno is to acquaint visitors with the most interesting fish species, zoo employees also strive to rear fish. This year's rearing was largely successful as regards several species of a numerous and popular cichlid order of the African cichlid group.

The natural Cichlid area is delimited by the African tropical ponds, Malawi and Tanganyika, with the Cichlids living on rocky banks, i.e. in water rich in minerals. Therefore they need water of higher hardness (around pH 8) in captivity, too. Another condition to be met in order to achieve successful rearing is an efficient water filtration since these active fish eat a great amount of food and consequently contaminate the reservoir to a greater extent. The aquarium must be large enough; the Cichlids live in shoals and if there are few of them, their innate inter-species aggression can reveal itself. When furnishing the reservoir, we have to bear in mind to provide not only a free space for swimming but also a sufficiently rugged stone decoration with a number of hiding places; this will help the males to create their own territories and prevent them from attacking one another.

The Cichlids are omnivorous but a substantial part of the natural menu of some species is composed of algae, torn off from stone surfaces. That is why a sufficient supply of vegetable components is important when feeding Cichlids. Tropheus Cichlid (*Tropheus duboisi*) is substantially herbivore and we have succeeded in rearing its offspring this year.

Upon spawning the female collects fertilized roe in its mouth so that the roe do not touch the bottom at all. The roe is quite big and not more than ten in number. The female keeps those in its guttural pouch until they hatch. This period, lasting more than a month, is exhausting for the female

since she can receive only a small amount of food. The privilege to keep growing roe in the mouth is not reserved only for the females; the males adopt this role in some species.

The newly hatched fish stay in the parent's mouth at the beginning; then they gradually flow out more and more often. If we do not move them to a rearing reservoir, they can be eaten by other fish. The following process proved efficient as regards females with spawn in their mouth: the young ones are driven out of the female's mouth with a stream of water from a hypodermic syringe and the female can return to the common aquarium. This process must not be hurried up; after hatching, the little fish take a long time to get out of the habit of being in the oral cavity of the parent. It is necessary that their yolk pouch, the content of which is their food for several days, be digested before moving them to the rearing reservoir, where they can be fed flake food, which they accept quite willingly.

Tropheus Cichlid's young ones are black with clear white dots on their whole bodies. During growing up the black colour on their heads gets a bluish tint, the dots disappear and a prominent vertical yellow stripe appears, distinctive for an adult Cichlid. Fish with these colours are ready to stand the test in the shoal among the others and to have their own offspring.

Jan Špaček



Photo: Michal Piškula

A vertical yellow stripe behind the head is distinctive of an adult Cichlid; white dots have disappeared



Photo: Eduard Stuchlik

Laughing Kookaburra

Beginnings of the Australian Exhibit

Species composition of the Exotic Bird House, which is to be reconstructed, along with its surroundings, to a large Australian Exposition, is now being modified to achieve this purpose. The existing Australian species kept at the Brno Zoo, such as the feathertail glider, Bennet's wallaby, the long-nosed rat kangaroo and rabbit parrots or various parrots, were joined by Laughing Kookaburras, parrots of different colours and Northwestern Carpet Pythons during August, September and October.

Eighty-six Kookaburra species live in the temperate and tropical zones. Laughing Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*) is the biggest one; the Brno Zoo gained a pair of these birds from Chomutov colleagues this August. The Laughing Kookaburra, called Laughing Jackass due to its voice, lives in the woods, parks and gardens of Eastern Australia and feeds mostly on insects and reptiles. With its massive bill it is able to kill a meter-long snake. It grows to be up to 45 cm long, with a length of a wing up to 24 cm. It weighs approximately 0.5 kg.

Since the middle of September, Brno Zoo visitors could admire a new parrot species, namely Eclectus Parrot (*Eclectus roratus*). Cape York, a North Australian peninsula, and New Guinea are its home. These parrots live in rainforests and monsoon forests; the most beautiful moment to watch them is when they fly in big flocks of up to 80 birds

over treetops to a place of nocturnal rest. However, during the day, when they seek food, they stay in pairs or small groups. Like the most of parrots, Eclectus Parrots are strictly herbivore and feed on seeds, fruit, flowers, blossoms and leaves. In the zoo, we feed them lettuce, for instance. They grow to be up to 35 cm long, up to 450 g in weight with a wingspan of up to 70 cm and they can live to be 50 years. The Eclectus Parrots have developed the most prominent sexual dimorphism within the order. The female's feathers are mostly red and blue while the male's are almost all green. So far, the visitors can see two females at the Brno Zoo.

The reptile collection at the Brno Zoo was increased by several gifts and acquisitions from the Vienna Zoo in October. Besides other animals, these gifts and acquisitions include Northwestern Carpet Pythons (*Morelia spilotes variegata*) origi-

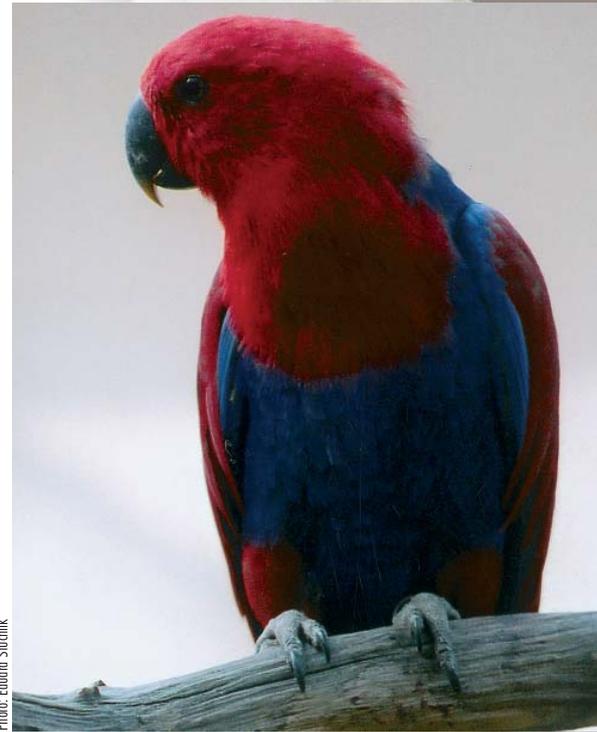


Photo: Eduard Stuchlik

Eclectus Parrot

nally from Australia. The pythons grow up to be up to 4 meters long and they are of a gentle nature; in Australia they are kept by families to guard against mice and brown rats. These pythons are now placed in one Reptile House exhibit in the Brno Zoo but they are to be moved to the Exotic Bird House before the end of the year. One half of the house will be reserved for Australian fauna, creating thus a starter exhibit devoted to the fauna of the smallest continent.

Eduard Stuchlik



Photo: Michal Piskula

Northwestern Carpet Python



Radiated Tortoise