



November Newsletter



Zoo Experts from Holland and Australia worked in Yerevan Zoo



From September 16th to 22nd three members of the international Yerevan Zoo Master Plan Group were on a working visit in Yerevan. The landscape designer Thijs de Zeeuw and the reptile and fish expert Warren Spencer both work for ARTIS Royal Zoo Amsterdam. The architect and zoo planner David Hancocks is the author of several books and a Zoo director emeritus, who worked for and in Zoos for more than 30 years. He is also the founder of David Hancocks' Design Office in Melbourne, and has serviced a number of Zoos in the USA, Asia and Australia.



During their stay the experts focused on different issues. Warren Spencer, who was visiting Yerevan Zoo for the first time, examined the reptile house and developed a list of measures to improve the conditions for reptile and fish keeping in Yerevan Zoo. His suggestions include the composition of food as well as breeding regulations and

ideas for the presentation of the animals. Warren Spencer was very impressed by Yerevan Zoo's new turtle enclosure and the recent breeding success.

Thijs der Zeeuw and David Hancocks developed the architectural and botanical plans for a new Hyena enclosure and a huge enclosure for bears. Moreover, they joined the famous botanist Prof. Eleonora Gabrielyan on a visit to the nursery of Armenia Tree Project (ATP) in Karin village to choose the most appropriate plants for the new enclosures. At its Karin Nursery in particular ATP grows locally endangered trees and shrubs listed in the Armenian Red Book. As the new master-plan for the zoo focuses not only on South Caucasian animal species, but also on local plants, the cooperation with ATP is very valuable. It should also be mentioned that all trees and shrubs for the enclosure are kindly given by ATP to Yerevan Zoo as a donation.

Thijs der Zeeuw and David Hancocks who already visited Yerevan Zoo several times were pleased to see that many of the ideas of the master-plan group have already been integrated into the daily procedures. David Hancocks in particular appreciated the progress in the animal enrichment program. David, who is a tireless advocate for animal welfare and a strong promoter of the idea that Zoos should keep animals in enclosures, which not only resemble nature, but also trigger natural behavior, summarized his impressions: "I feel very encouraged to proceed after seeing the considerable improvements that the Zoo management made in improving the conditions for several animals, in particular for the bears in their existing and very inadequate enclosure. Their perpetual stereotypic behavior has almost entirely vanished, and I am confident that in their very large new areas they will start to behave even more naturally."

Construction of a new Hyena Enclosure started in Yerevan Zoo



Currently for visitors of Yerevan Zoo the way leading up to the enclosure of the white tiger is blocked by a blue plastic plane. The placement of this "curtain", which also hinders the visitors view of what is going on behind it, has been necessary due to security. Since the first week of October heavy construction machinery is being used at the location, where soon a new hyena enclosure will be opened.



The Zoo has one spotted hyena and the animal is very popular among many Zoo visitors, as it obviously enjoys contact with people. In nature hyenas are quite shy and avoid encounters with humans. Actually the unnatural behaviour of the hyena in Yerevan Zoo is caused by the poor conditions under which it is kept. Its cramped cage is dark, the floor is mere concrete and the whole location does not offer any opportunity for the animal to display natural behaviour. In the wild, hyenas live in territorial clans of related individuals, sometimes up to 80 members. So Yerevan Zoo's lonely hyena developed in its absolute inadequate cage behavioral patterns, which experts identify as hospitalism.

But very soon the situation for the hyena will change completely. The animal will enjoy an open air enclosure of 690 square meters, offering an environment shaped after its natural needs. The landscape design of the enclosure with rocks, sandy patches, bushes and grassland imitates a savannah, the typical African habitat of spotted hyenas. As the spotted hyena is not adapted to the winter temperatures in Yerevan, the enclosure also offers a heated den for the animal.

The new hyena exhibit can only be realized due to the generous private donation of Astrid Clifford, who served as HSBC Director in Yerevan for several years until she returned to the UK recently. In the future the new enclosure will not only become the home of the spotted hyena, but will also house some striped hyenas. This species once also occurred in Armenia, but the last scientific record of a striped hyena in the country dates back to 1925. The major cause of the species' extirpation from Armenia was the almost complete conversion of suitable hyena habitat into cropland. Striped hyenas can be considered a South-Caucasian species. Though the animal is most probably extinct in Armenia, there are still some small populations in Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkey. Thus, presenting striped hyenas will be another step forward in Yerevan Zoo's overall objective to focus on South-Caucasian species and to offer its visitors the chance to explore the rich regional biodiversity.

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Yerevan Zoo Director participated in the annual EAZA conference



As Yerevan Zoo has recently become a candidacy member of the European Association for Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), Zoo Director Ruben Khachatryan joined his colleagues from all over Europe during the annual conference of the organization. 600 delegates met from September 25th to 29th in Innsbruck, Austria in order to exchange their experiences how modern Zoos can contribute to animal welfare, public environmental education and nature conservation.

The conference was hosted by the Alpenzoo Innsbruck, which is famous for its display of the regional Alpine flora and fauna in huge enclosures shaped after natural habitats. This approach, which emphasizes regional biodiversity instead of "exotic" species is also pursued by the new Yerevan Zoo management headed by Ruben Khachatryan.

"Matthias Martys, the director of the Innsbruck Alpenzoo and I have discussed several ideas for cooperation. Our two Zoos are an excellent match as Yerevan Zoo - like the Alpenzoo- has a strong focus on animal species, which occur in the mountainous regions, for example the Ibex, Bearded Vulture, and Eagle. Surely, we can learn a lot from Innsbruck Zoo, especially as the Zoo is running a very successful reintroduction program for Bearded Vultures. A similar program will soon start also in Yerevan Zoo," Ruben Khachatryan explains.

The annual EAZA Conference is also a platform to exchange the working experiences of the so-called EAZA Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs). Each TAG is a group of high profile experts who focus on a specific group of animals, such as eagles, bears, cats, etc. As an EAZA Candidacy Member Yerevan Zoo has now access to the immense knowledge, skills and experience in the TAGs and can find experts, who are ready to give advice and support.

The conference in Innsbruck also proved that European Zoos are becoming more and more active in nature conservation, species reintroduction and field research. Thus, EAZA and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) are currently linking EAZA's TAGs and the IUCN Specialist Groups in order to strengthen their joint role as advocates for endangered species all over the world.

Summarizing this development, Yerevan Zoo Director Ruben Khachatryan noted: "The major partner in the transformation process of Yerevan Zoo is the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC), which is also an active IUCN member. So as an EAZA candidacy member Yerevan Zoo can profit from EAZA's key competences in animal welfare and public education, and combine it through FPWC with IUCN's proficiencies in biodiversity conservation. As the founder and former director of FPWC I have always seen wildlife conservation as a priority, and to my understanding modern Zoos have to serve this aim. By harnessing FPWC's connection to IUCN and Yerevan Zoo's candidacy membership in EAZA, we have the unique opportunity to transform the Zoo into a regional hub for species conservation, animal welfare and public environmental education".



ZOO Magazine



Armenia's amazing flora and fauna can also be discovered through a new magazine now. From October onwards Yerevan Zoo publishes the bimonthly "Zoo" Magazine. The magazine - the first edition is available since October 21st - is designed for young nature and animal lovers of ages 6 to 14. The magazine aims to instill children with attention, love, and care towards the world around them. It will teach them to explore, recognize, and identify nature and animals, as well as to care for the environment and to keep it clean. The magazine's little readers will regularly receive information about the Zoo's inhabitants, the adventures of Ekolo (one of the characters of the magazine), and the relationship between the animal adopters and the Zoo animals. The Magazine will also offer a range of games and contests. Furthermore, you can find the hand-crafts by the Zoo's eco-club members, read original fairytales and funny stories also

created by children. The first edition of the Zoo Magazine is currently only available in the Zoo shop, but in future it can also be obtained at newsstands throughout Yerevan.