



Guests of Golden Apricot International Film Festival adopted Yerevan Zoo animals



For several years already Yerevan Zoo implements an Animal Adoption Program offering everybody the opportunity to adopt his favorite animal and to contribute to animal care. This year the 10th Golden Apricot International Film Festival took place with the participation of famous filmmakers, actors and artists from all over the world. And a few of these guests decided to adopt animals.

On July 10th Yerevan Zoo welcomed two very prominent guests, the Canadian-Armenian film director Atom Egoyan and his wife, actress Arsinée Khanjian. The reason for this visit dates back already three years ago when Arsinée Khanjian adopted an Armenian mouflon baby. The mother had refused to take care of her offspring and so the zoo keepers had to raise the little mouflon by hand. The actress was so much touched by this story that she without hesitation decided to adopt the baby mouflon and to choose a name for the animal. Arsinée Khanjian called the little orphaned mouflon Gandzik (little treasure) – a name she also uses to call her beloved ones. During the visit Arsinée Khanjian was glad to know that little Gandzik has grown up and lives together with his fellows in a wide open-air enclosure instead of a small cage. For Atom Egoyan, who joined his wife for the visit, the adoption of an animal in Yerevan Zoo is an attempt to be part of a national effort: "It is really wonderful for me having the opportunity to be kind to animals and to underline the high appreciating of animals in our culture. As to me it is a sign of civilization to have such a beautiful zoo," Atom Egoyan mentioned in his speech. Together with Arsinée Khanjian and Atom Egoyan another guest of Golden Apricot International Film Festival, Albert Wiederspiel from Hamburg/Germany, visited Yerevan Zoo for the first time. Together with his friend he has adopted a Barn owl via internet already for three years. He has named the bird Tevje. His first meeting with Tevje was marked with the handover of the Adoption Certificate and a factsheet with interesting information about this owl species. Albert Wiederspiel is the director of the Hamburg Film Festival and a great friend of Armenia. Thanks to Golden Apricot International Film Festival, Yerevan Zoo has now also the first adopter from Turkey - Osman Kavala, who represented during the festival a Turkish organization active in film financing, decided to adopt one of the Armenian tortoises (*Testudo graeca armeniaca*). As this tortoise species is endemic to Armenia, Osman Kavala decided to choose for the animal a real Armenian name. From now on this tortoise is called "Baron Hakob".



"Fairy Tale Hours" and book presentations are being held at Yerevan Zoo



Not far from the city center, yet out of the city's hustle and bustle there is an exquisite, green corner: this unique wonderland is called Yerevan Zoo, a home to almost all the favorite fairy tale characters of children. The animals in Yerevan Zoo remind many of the little visitors of fairy tales they have once read or been told, however the impressions become twice as memorable when the tales are delivered right at the zoo.

Twice a week Yerevan Zoo and Bookinist bookstore invite everybody for a "Fairy Tale Hour". All the tales of the event are chosen to raise kid's awareness for nature and wildlife, and to increase their kindness towards animals.

Whereas children are deluded in the zoo with Fairy tales there are other book events for adults. So Yerevan Zoo also hosted the presentation of Lilit Karapetyan's book "Monologue with Two Voices". This is the second book of the young writer and is published by Antares publishing house.

The first one of her short stories with the title "Between Sky and Asphalt" was honored with the RA Presidential Youth Award in 2011. As one of the main characters of her short stories was a pet it was no wonder that Lilit had chosen Yerevan Zoo as a place for her book presentation.

Yerevan Zoo is very suitable for organizing creative evenings and presentations that help to establish a bond between author and reader. Lilit Karapetyan's book presentation was a good example. The visitors of the book presentation enjoyed also the opportunity to get acquainted to recent works of other authors, republications of famous writers as well as to a wide variety of children's literature presented by Antares publishing house.



Volunteers from afar support Yerevan Zoo



Starting from 2011 up to July 2013 seven young people from abroad volunteered at the Yerevan Zoo. Four of them came from Germany and stayed one year. Yerevan Zoo's current German volunteer is Malte Quitsch, whose hometown is Groß Bramstedt, Niedersachsen. He will go back to his home country on August 22nd. Until then he hurries to the Zoo early in the morning to help the Zoo staff. Among his duties are to feed the animals and to clean enclosures. He likes this work and takes care of the zoo animals with love and devotion. Within one year Malte learned to speak Armenian and he admits that the Armenian hospitality is something he should take with himself to Germany: "I would have left this country long ago if I would not feel good here", he confessed and also added that he will miss his friends in Armenia. Malte decided to become an event manager after his return to Germany but he promises to come to Armenia again as a tourist to visit his friends. For four weeks our AGBU volunteer Ani Zhamkochyan worked closely with Malte in the zoo. Ani is from New York, she is Armenian though she cannot speak the language. But she has a strong "back to the roots feeling" and loves Armenia and the Armenians. "I have decided to learn to speak Armenian and I feel really sorry that I do not speak Armenian", Ani told. Both Ani and Malte are very much fond of animals, they especially like the Llamas.



Colleagues from Tbilisi Zoo pay a two-day visit to Yerevan Zoo.



For the first time the director of Tbilisi Zoo Zourab Gurielidze has paid an official two day visit to Yerevan Zoo. He was accompanied by the operational manager of Tbilisi Zoo, Tomas Goshadze, and Marjo Hoedemaker, who is the EAZA mentor for Tbilisi Zoo. Marjo Hoedemaker is a Senior Zoo Advisor and works for the Amersfoort Zoo in the

Netherlands. During the visit future joint projects were discussed. Both Zoos are Candidacy Members of the European Association for Zoo and Aquaria (EAZA). Their cooperation started in April 2013, when the Director of Yerevan Zoo Ruben Khachatryan paid an official visit to the Tbilisi Zoo. As a result of this first meeting a memorandum of understanding was signed by both zoos. According to that memorandum an animal exchange should be realized on the basis of donation between the two zoos, for example Yerevan Zoo received a Zebra, several monkeys and birds from Tbilisi. All EAZA member zoos are obliged to exchange animals without any financial interest - the major reasons are always animal welfare and breeding programs. During the discussions with the guests much attention was given to Grant, Yerevan Zoo's only elephant. Marjo Hoedemaker, who is a renowned expert with more than 40 years of experience in the management of zoo elephants, was very impressed about the ongoing renovations at the elephant house. With the support of Grand Candy Company Grant's new renovated enclosure will match to safety norms and provide all necessary facilities for the elephant's care. Marjo Hoedemaker also underlined that the general keeping conditions for Yerevan Zoo's elephant are quite good. But Grant has still problems with tusk infections and if this is not treated properly he can get seriously ill. Hence Marjo Hoedemaker agreed to inform EAZA about this issue and to take care that the best elephant veterinarians and dental specialists will come to Yerevan in autumn. But even with the best available treatments diseases among zoo animals can never be totally excluded. Even in the best European Zoos the mortality rate can sometimes reach 15% per year, whereas in Yerevan Zoo the mortality rate of animals is currently at 1,5% per year. Regarding this Marjo Hoedemaker explained: "Animals are also creatures that are born and should die. Only 1,5% of wild animals reach a one year age as they may be hurt in accidents, attacked by other animals or simply get ill. Generally one has to understand that it is very difficult to recognize a sick animal as they cannot show or express their problem. This can be only noticed from their behavior. So of course in all zoos – also in Holland - animals sometimes die from diseases or accidents but the public should really understand that this has nothing to do with neglect by the zoo staff and that the zoo staff members try their best to avoid such situations and to take good care of the animals by doing everything possible."