



January-February Newsletter



Animals are not for buying and selling: the new Yerevan Zoo policy yields first fruits



In January the Yerevan Zoo's predators section welcomed two newcomers who have become mates for the lynx and the jungle cat. The male Caucasian Lynx (*Lynx lynx dinniki*) was brought from the southern Syunik region and the female Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*) from Armavir region. Both animals were transferred to the Zoo from private zoos.

The transfer of animals from private zoos to Yerevan Zoo is part of a new initiative, whose goal is to have all animals typical of the South Caucasus region and kept by individuals, be transferred to the Yerevan Zoo. The Zoo does not pay for the animals. This is a policy to prevent all attempts of catching wild animals for further selling.

"Animals must not become a subject of selling and buying. We are following strictly this regulation," says Yerevan Zoo Director Ruben Khachatryan.

The main goal of this format of cooperation between the Yerevan Zoo and private zoos is to ensure better conditions for wild animals kept in captivity whenever it is possible.

Moreover, as a collection point for these animals, the Zoo calls to life its new management's policy – in Yerevan Zoo the animal collection should focus on the presentation and reproduction of species typical for the region, above all on endangered species.

This is also another step in the process to become a member in the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA). The Yerevan Zoo submitted a relevant application in November 2011.

Founded in 1992, EAZA's mission is to facilitate cooperation between the European zoos and aquaria community in the fields of education, research and conservation. It is the largest zoo association in the region and according to 2011 data, it had 340 member zoos in 41 countries.

"Our application to EAZA is now in the process of consideration and we expect to join this organization soon," says Ruben Khachatryan.

The membership in EAZA will provide an opportunity to acquire different species of animals for whom the Zoo will secure appropriate conditions.



Care and learning; Yerevan Zoo and Coca-Cola company will cooperate



Although the bears at Yerevan Zoo have never tasted Coca-Cola, the company producing this soft drink in Armenia has prepared a good surprise for them when they awake from the winter hibernation.

Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company Armenia is ready to join the zoo's popular Animal Adoption Program and to take care of the Brown Caucasian Bears.

The company will look after a newly born bear cub and its mother for the next 12 months thus contributing to the improvement of animal care and living conditions.

Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company is the first company which applied for the animal adoption program that has been started in May 2011. Currently 35 animals have zoo parents. However, the cooperation between the Zoo and the company will not be limited to the animal adoption program.

In another initiative Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company Armenia will support the establishment of an Eco-club for children and youth (age 10 -15) at the Yerevan Zoo's Educative Center. The Eco-club will offer environmental education and as well as lessons about wildlife and biodiversity. The goal of this initiative is to educate a generation that will treat wildlife and environment with care and responsibility. In addition to lessons, the children will participate in thematic events which will strengthen their knowledge and skills enabling them to apply them in practice.

As part of this project special attention will be paid to disabled children and children from socially insecure families. Regular courses will be organized for children from orphanages, boarding and other institutionalized schools.

"The establishment of an Eco-club is the first step of the Yerevan Zoo's Educative Center in working with children. In the course of time the Eco-club will develop into an Eco-school," says Hripsime Khachatryan, the coordinator of the zoo's educative programs.

New approach: The inhabitants of the Yerevan Zoo will enjoy warm and comfortable winter seasons



Several alternative energy generating projects designed for Yerevan Zoo and the ongoing process of connecting the zoo with the natural gas network inspire hopes that the next winters will be incomparably warmer and comfortable for the zoo's animals.

"Currently we use electrical power to warm the Zoo, which is not only expensive but also unreasonable from the viewpoint of animals' health," says Zoo Director Ruben Khachatryan.

By the beginning of this year the more than one km long natural gas pipes were already laid. Yerevan mayor Taron Margaryan and the municipality rendered assistance to the Zoo by co-financing this very important initiative.

According to estimates, shifting to a natural gas heating system will not only ease the winter cold, but will also halve the heating expenses which are about 3 million drams a month now. Connecting the entire Zoo to the natural gas network costs approx. 10 million drams.

Thanks to UNDP generous help the Zoo is heating this winter the dens the new enclosure built for big cats. There are also negotiations with Grand Candy Company underway about the heating of the elephant's house.

Zoo Director Ruben Khachatryan says, that thanks to a set of investment programs the Zoo will try this year to build bio fuel-and-solar energy based small power plants in order to have independent power generating facilities.

"In addition to being environmental our projects have also educational value. We will try to prove that the Zoo located on 40 hectares of land is sustainable and capable of operating independently," says Ruben Khachatryan.

2011: A year of changes in Yerevan Zoo



In 2011 a complete transformation process in Yerevan Zoo was initiated by the new management. After nearly 12 months it is time to summarize some of the major innovations. The most outstanding success is a notable increase of the zoo visitors. In 2009 Yerevan Zoo welcomed 135.000 people; in 2010 the zoo had 92.793 visitors. In 2011 the record of 316.153 visitors was achieved. Yerevan Zoo director Ruben Khachatryan, who took over the post in April 2011, says in view of these numbers: "The fact that so many people enjoy in their free time to visit the Zoo, is a clear sign for the deep emotional ties our citizens have with this institution. This is a high potential which should be taken into consideration in all future zoo developments".

The increase of visitor numbers was certainly the result of the new management's efforts to promote Yerevan Zoo as an attractive site in particular for families with children. The peak of these efforts was June the 1st when FPWC organized the 4th Pan-Armenian Painting Day in the zoo. The event attracted 30.000 visitors among them 18.000 children who enjoyed free entrance to the zoo. The new approach in zoo promotion also included the launch of the website www.yerevanzoo.am in May 2011 as well as the installation of a fast public Wi-Fi network in the zoo with the support of VivaCell-MTS in July 2011.

To initiate a new positive relation between the citizens and the zoo an Animal Adoption Program was introduced. These programs are quite common in European zoos but for Yerevan Zoo it has been a premiere. The first adoption took place on May 26th when Levon Mkhitarian, a 7 year-old boy, became the first animal parent of a Llama. Until February 23rd 35 adopters decided to support the zoo in the frame of the adoption program. Through the program in 2011 additional funds of 2.234.500 AMD have been raised for animal welfare.



The new management brought also new partners, among these the most important is Artis Royal Zoo Amsterdam which already in 2011 supported Yerevan Zoo with 75.000 Euro worth veterinary care, medicaments, trainings and equipment. Other new partners are VivaCell-MTS, HSBC and Ashtarak Kat.

In summer 2011 the construction of a new Big Cat Enclosure started. The enclosure was planned by the world famous Zoo Designer Bernard Harrison from Singapore. After its finalization in 2012 it will offer the majestic tigers of Yerevan Zoo a 2500 square meter space modelled after their natural habitat. The construction has been supported by the Yerevan Municipality with 50 Million AMD. Additional funds were raised on September 15th with the Big Cat Fundraising Dinner. During the event which was the first of its type ever organized in Armenia 7.452.750 AMD were collected for the cause.

In 2012 the most important task ahead is the elaboration and finalization of the new master plan. In November 2011 an international expert group headed by Bernard Harrison and David Hancocks (former Director of Planning for the Melbourne Zoo) already drafted a first version. With the implementation of the master plan in the upcoming years the 70 years old Yerevan Zoo will step by step comply with international standards in animal welfare, biodiversity conservation and public education. Keeping this overall objective in view the management is ready to take up the long term challenge to transform the Yerevan Zoo into a unique place and the pride of all Armenian citizens.