

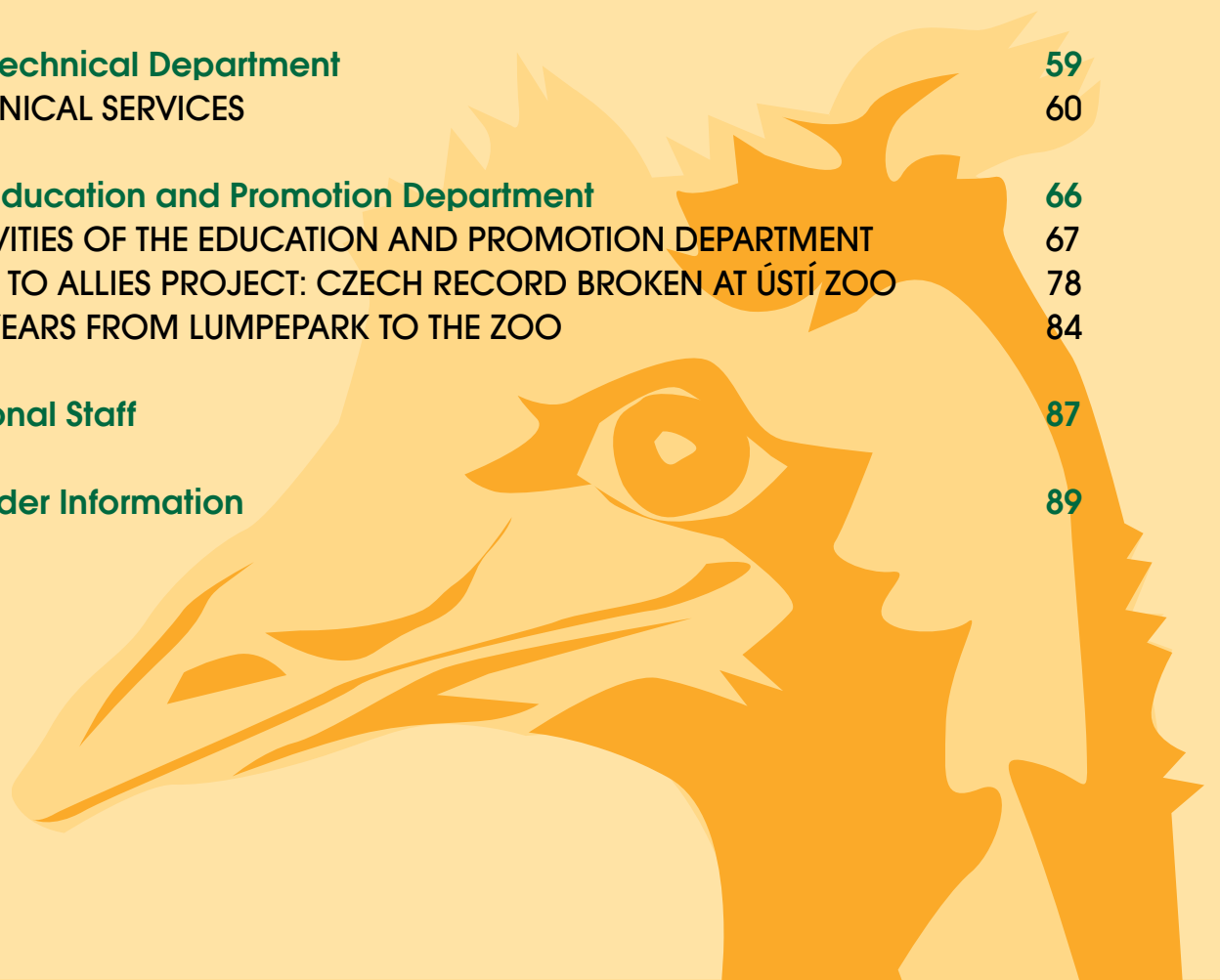


Annual Report 2008



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LAST GOODBYE TO THE RHINOS

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In March 2008, maybe the worst thing I could ever experience during my long-term work in animal husbandry happened.

Two rhinos died within a single week: first, it was the female Saša, secondly, the male Dan passed away. Even though my mind was telling me they had already come out of age and anything like this could be expected, writing such an article is very hard for me even a year after. I spent eight years with rhinos as a keeper and I have to say this was really a nice period of life. To refresh memories, I wish to make a few words on the history of rhino husbandry.

A person responsible for the majority of the southern white rhino stock in Czech zoos can be Ing. Josef Vágner, who imported 13 (4.9) animals coming from Umfolozi Reserve, the Republic of South Africa, in 1970-73. These individuals were brought in to the country namely for the Dvůr Králové Zoo's collection. The male Dan arrived on 15/10/1970 when he was four years old, and Saša followed on 23/06/1970 as a three-year-old animal. The second female held in Ústí, two-year-old Zamba, arrived on



31/05/1972. At Dvůr Králové Zoo, nine animals remained. The male Dan mated or attempted to mate several females, i.e. Faith, Tessa, Saša, and Zamba. The first calf was born to Faith in 1976; however, it died due to an inner trauma. Two years later, the same female gave birth to the first rhino raised in the Czech Republic. The same year, the female Tessa delivered a young as well. The male Dan was the sire of all the young. As the northern white rhinos were preferred, the very promising stock was cancelled in 1979-1980 and animals

translocated to other zoos.

Both females, i.e. Saša and Zamba, came to Ústí nad Labem on 19 November 1980, followed by Dan a few days later, on 4 December 1980 (*Picture 1*). The animals were of the best age when they arrived, with Dan 14, Saša 13, and Zamba 10 years old. From the very beginning, Dan's behaviour indicated he was a territorial male. In August 1981, a female Lotzi from Tierpark Berlin was added, which was very useful. Lotzi, then 14 years old, was an animal of great importance within the group; she was



always splitting the herd, thus serving as Dan's counterpart. Saša became cycling and mating occurred (**Picture 2**), always preceded by some 15 to 20 attempts of the male jumping on the female. In 1985, the female became pregnant. On 18 November 1986, a male Sagan, the first calf in Ústí Zoo was born following 502 days of pregnancy. In September 1988, Lotzi's loan was terminated, which still did not affect Saša's periodical cycling and mating by the male.

It became apparent that even a group consisting of a male and just two females is able to reproduce. The lasting inability of Saša to become gravid was the major issue. Following sharp changes in diet, a success arrived in autumn 1989. After a 510-day pregnancy period, another male called Doran was born on 13 January 1991 (**Picture 3 shows**

the male three days upon birth, still with its umbilical chord).

As soon as the young male grown up, Dan was introduced to Saša again. This time Saša became pregnant already after her second oestrus. The pregnancy period lasted 517 days; on 10 December 1993, a male Dino was born (**Picture 4 – one year old male with Saša**).

To sum up, Dan and Saša were the parents of all three calves born at Ústí Zoo (**Chart 1**).

Each of the rhinos born presented a big success for the zoo. The outstanding value of the sire, the male Dan, should be considered. The male was a father of all animals born in the Czech Republic. As a member of the stock, he was always showing distinctive territorial behaviour like spray urinating, smashing dung piles by his hind

legs following defecation, and frequent teasing of females. The above include the typical marks for an alpha male, which is the male that can mate females. The male Dan mated the female Zamba several times as well, with Zamba's oestrus evoked artificially, however, this never resulted in Zamba being pregnant.

The calves used to be weaned in different times. Sagan was weaned in month 24, while Doran in month 20 due to the forthcoming birth, and Dino in month 17 due to its departure from the zoo. On 3 May 1993, Sagan left to Spain-based Cabarceno Nature Park, where they hold a group of two females and two males. Doran now lives with one female in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where he arrived on 3 August 1996. Lastly, Dino has been held at Poznan Zoo,



Chart 1. Overview of the young rhinos born in the Czech Republic

Name	Sex	Born	Dam	Sire	Place of birth	Dam's age	Sire's age
Fali	1,0	15. 8. 1976	Faith	Dan	Dvůr Králové nad Labem	6	10
Fatty	0,1	4. 4. 1978	Faith	Dan	Dvůr Králové nad Labem	8	12
Teny	1,0	16. 12. 1978	Tessa	Dan	Dvůr Králové nad Labem	8	12
Sagan	1,0	17. 11. 1986	Saša	Dan	Dvůr Králové nad Labem	19	20
Doran	1,0	13. 1. 1991	Saša	Dan	Ústí nad Labem	24	25
Dino	1,0	10. 12. 1993	Saša	Dan	Ústí nad Labem	26	27

Poland, since 1 June 1995, also paired with a female.

The animals used to have an outdoor enclosure of 620 m² at their disposal; it was rectangle-shaped and covered with asphalt and concrete. Next to this large enclosure, there was also a concrete yard of 189 m² used for separation. In summer 1994, the entire outdoor area for rhinos was reconstructed, which enlarged the area of the greater enclosure by 543 m² to the existing 1,164 m² with the major action including replacing a part of the asphalt and concrete cover with sand and fine gravel. In addition, a solid shelter was erected in the enclosure with a protecting wall. In the lower part of the area, a mud wallow was set up and widely used by the animals (**Picture 5**). Furthermore, connecting the rhino enclosure with the grass outdoor area for the giraffes became possible. This improved the stay of the animals outdoor. In the 1998-2000 periods, a female Kathi loaned from Salzburg was



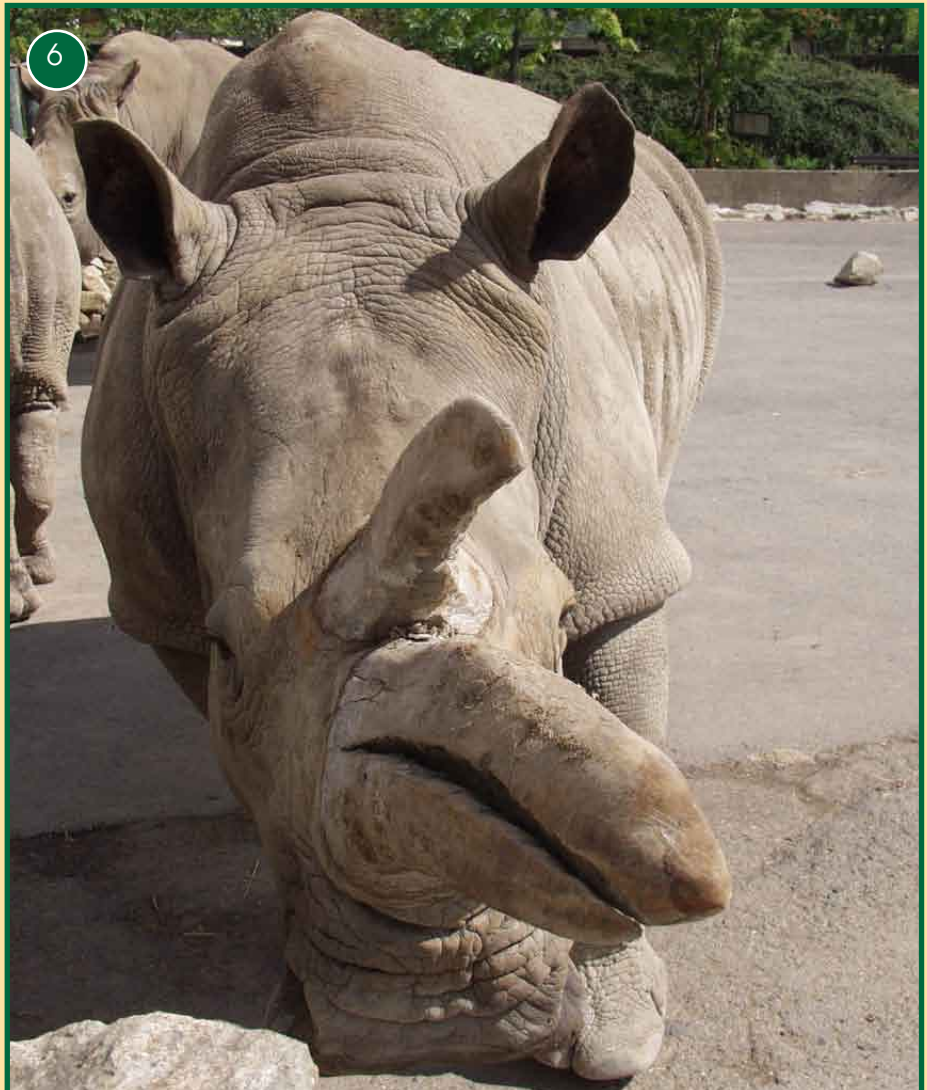
Chart 2. Overview of rhinos held at Ústí nad Labem Zoo.

Studbook No.	Name	Born	Place of birth	Arrived in UL	From	Departure	Destination
111	Dan	1966	Umfoloji	4. 12. 1980	Dvůr Králové	22. 3. 2008	Death
114	Saša	1967	Umfoloji	19. 11. 1980	Dvůr Králové	28. 3. 2008	Death úhyn
209	Zamba	1970	Umfoloji	19. 11. 1980	Dvůr Králové		
179	Lotzi	1967	Umfoloji	4. 8. 1981	Tierpark Berlin	8. 9. 1988	Tierpark Berlin
362	Kathi	1972	Hluhluwe	30. 6. 1998	Salcburk	31. 8. 2000	Salcburk
865	Sagan	18. 11. 1986	Ústí n. L.	18. 11. 1986		3. 5. 1993	Cabarceno (Spain)
970	Doran	13. 1. 1991	Ústí n. L.	13. 1. 1991		3. 8. 1996	Belo Horizonte (Brazil)
1029	Dino	10. 12. 1993	Ústí n. L.	10. 12. 1993		1. 6. 1995	Poznaň (Poland)

added to the rhinos; at that time, she was 26 years old. However, this combination did not bring any results. The oncoming period could be outlined for the rhinos as a period of quiet and routine life, without any major hassles. In 2006, Dan's sperm was collected and examined, which was associated with narcotisation of the male. The entire operation took place in cooperation with Berlin's IZW team. The tests revealed that Dan was still fertile despite the fact he was 40 years old. The collected sperm was frozen and remains available for assisted insemination.

To conclude, there have been total eight southern white rhinos held in the history of Ústí nad Labem Zoo (**Chart 2**).

It was my daily effort of a rhino keeper to make the life of the rhinos at the zoo as much diverse as possible, which included a routine cleaning of the animals using a wire brush every morning, thus improving blood circulation in the skin and removing the old skin, and cleaning the skin folds in the area of eyes, front legs, and underbelly, namely in hot summers. Such areas were attacked by flies, which always resulted in oedemas and open wounds. Caring for legs and checking feet was also an essential part of keeper's activities. Practically, there were no problems with certain kinds of veterinary treatment such as blood collection, handling wounds and affected areas, removing grits from feet and curing contact surfaces, measuring rectal temperature, and the like. The animals were used to this daily contact, which in turn related to maintaining the animals sound and healthy.



From spring to autumn, rhinos used to be showered inside the house. In summer, they were also sprinkled, but only outdoors. Different kinds of trunks and branches for playing and horn grinding were served in the outdoor enclosure. Outside their diet, the animals used to be given whole loaves of dry bread and whole fodder beets to provide enrichment. The rhinos were able to crush these items, breaking them into small pieces and eating them up with a real pleasure. In the young animals that could walk through the gaps between the posts in the fence, thus dwelling around the house, the enrichment items included raw brushes, wooden cubes, textiles, diverse balls, etc. Unfortunately, most of the balls ended up in Saša box, which

made them out of use.

Following the death of the two rhinos in March 2008, only the female Zamba was left (**Picture 6**). Despite her age, the condition of the animal is still good, which makes me hoping that she, may stroll around the enclosure a few years more.

On 19 November 2003, a female Duma, which is a daughter of Dino, was born at Poznan Zoo. This successfully nursed female was moved to French-based Safari de Peaugres on 28 June 2006, where she raised their rhino numbers to recent 1.4. I am happy to see the blood of Dan and Saša circulating in another generation. Rhinos still seem to have a chance.

Thank you, Dan and Saša.