

clearly smaller and the shell thicker and stronger than that of the other egg. In order to avoid endangering both birds, we were not able to intervene, so the trapped chick was lost. The other one hatched without any problems and developed well.

All the new chicks grew up well and have reached the size of the adult birds. All in all, the 2007 breeding season has been very successful and we hope to continue this success in the future.

Gisela Bihler

Riverbanks Zoo, Columbia, South Carolins, U.S.A.

A female black-footed kitten was born at the zoo on 23 February. There are currently 28 black-footed cats in 13 AZA-accredited zoos, 16 of which were born at Riverbanks. The birth is the first for the parents: Hiari, the female, is an offspring of the pair that successfully produced 15 kittens here, and Alex, the male, was captive-born in South Africa and came to Riverbanks in 2000.

Within the year, the kitten will be sent to another accredited zoo to further enhance the SSP population. Having contributed approximately 64 percent of the current captive population, Riverbanks will continue to breed the pair in hopes of producing more offspring.

Connect (Association of Zoos and Aquariums), August 2007

Sana'a Zoo, Yemen

A visitors' report by Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin

What is the purpose of a zoo, and more importantly, this zoo in Yemen's capital? For the Yemeni people, entertainment is the prime reason for its huge and growing popularity. This in turn makes it perfect for education in order to increase conservation awareness in Yemen. The zoo, meanwhile, also wishes to improve

its breeding, and also research work in conjunction with Sana'a University. Visitors to the zoo have increased from 400,000 in 2003 to 560,000 in 2006. The primary reason is the green grass now growing in many areas of the zoo; this attracts visitors, being a rare sight in Yemen's rocky desert landscape. Yemenis love to picnic with their friends and families. A slope has been terraced with grass for this purpose. There are also now two large playgrounds surrounded by grass areas, flowers and small hedges. Facilities for visitors have improved; for example there is a new café. However, more lavatories are needed.

The animals provide great pleasure to visitors, who will stay at the zoo the whole day in a city lacking recreational areas and leisure facilities. While there were some newly built cages waiting to be filled at the time of our visit in early 2007, we were disappointed to see the reptile house looking rather shabby and uncared for, compared with the past. Maintenance of what already exists is essential.

Education should be an important component at the zoo [see *IZN* 54 (2), 118–119]. Some efforts have recently started. Although no education centre has yet been built, as was in the original plans, staff at the Embassy of the Netherlands wish to develop an area of the zoo where people can learn about animals and their importance to the environment. Visitors would also be able to have more contact with small animals in this area; one of the most popular exhibits is the baboons' enclosure, where people can now feed them nuts through a chute.

Vets from the Sharjah Wildlife Breeding Centre have also assisted recently by providing information boards for some of the animals, as well as helping with veterinary care. Gradually, all the cages should have these informative boards with distribution maps to teach Yemenis and foreigners alike more about the indigenous animals of the country. Yemen has some of the richest fauna and flora of the region, a fact that needs to be



This billboard at Sana'a Zoo's entrance draws the attention of all visitors to the plight of the rhino and Yemen's harmful and continuing trade in the horn. (Photo: Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin)

highlighted. It is also a vital migratory route for birds from Africa to Europe, and signboards explaining the birds' migration paths should be placed at the aviaries. Yemenis must be asked to protect wildlife, on land, sea and in the air, which are increasingly threatened by man.

The zoo has given us the opportunity to educate the public about the plight of the rhino. Yemen still imports more rhino horn than any other country, horn from rhinos poached in eastern Africa. Although it is illegal to buy and carve new rhino horn, which is used to make into handles for the traditional dagger called a jambiya, unfortunately the trade continues; this demand must be reduced. As at Taiz Zoo [to be the subject of a forthcoming feature article by Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin – *Ed.*], we put up two

billboards and two large banners in the zoo, with funding from the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria. They show pictures of wild animals with messages to save wildlife, and also illustrations of rhinos, jambiyas, and a religious edict that the Grand Mufti had made for us in 1993 stating that it is against the will of God to kill rhinos for their horns. The rhino crisis and the edict will now receive far greater publicity. We also made signs for the zoo, such as 'The zoo is not a market to buy and sell animals', and notices on keeping the zoo clean and about animal behaviour.

Yemenis have come a long way since we reported the desperate cruelty we witnessed in the late 1990s when the only zoo in the city was a private collection of animals in tiny cages that were taunted by their keepers to amuse the public

[IZN 45 (1), 22–25]. Those days, thankfully, are over, and the animals in Sana'a Zoo are much better cared for. However, in order to improve the breeding of the four captive Arabian leopards (of which only about 200 remain in the wild in the Arabian Peninsula), more assistance and training are needed. Only one of these leopards was captive-born. There is a plan, with support from staff at the Embassy of the Netherlands, to extend the area behind the leopard cages (confusingly labelled tiger cages) which are presently too small. Lions are too numerous in crowded cages and need to be sterilized and swopped for other animals. There are also too many caracals, honey badgers, striped hyenas and jackals, and their cages are very small. On the other hand, the zoo needs a female oryx and a male gazelle. A new vet at the zoo is doing what he can to improve conditions, but would welcome greater assistance from other zoos.

The zoo is improving. The Sana'a authorities and the people of Yemen value it. But it still has a long way to go and wants all the help and assistance it can get from the international community.

[Lucy Vigne and Esmond Martin's previous reports on Sana'a Zoo were published in *IZN* 46 (7), 398–406, and 50 (6), 338–342.]

San Francisco Zoo, California, U.S.A.

On 14 June the zoo unveiled Hearst Grizzly Gulch. This \$3.7-million habitat is the new home for the Bay Area's beloved female grizzly bear siblings Kachina and Kiona, who were scheduled to be euthanized in 2004 but were rescued by the zoo. The one-acre [0.4-ha] naturalistic habitat features a sunny meadow, a 20,000-gallon [75,000-liter] pool, herb garden, mountain stream waterfall and heated rocks for the four-year-old bears to do what they do best – explore, romp, swim, fish, dig and nap.

Hearst Grizzly Gulch offers an inti-

mate perspective of the grizzly bears, providing up-close encounters with Kachina and Kiona through eye-level and underwater viewing. From eye-level, guests will see the bears' distinctive looks including their brown-colored coats, curved claws, long snout and enormous stature. Through the underwater observation point, the pair will engage visitors by playing in the pool or fishing for an afternoon snack.

The opening of the exhibit marks a milestone in the lives of the Montana-born sisters, who warmed the hearts of Bay Area residents with the bittersweet story of getting a second chance at life. The orphaned bears were originally slated to be euthanized after they were considered 'problem' animals for getting too close to developed areas and into a rancher's grain storage.

Connect (Association of Zoos and Aquariums), September 2007

Tierpark Berlin, Germany

On 20 May 2007 the 26-year-old African elephant cow Pori gave birth to her third calf. The young bull was born in the outdoor enclosure, and only a few minutes after birth he entered the pool – so it turns out that newborn elephants can already swim! The little swimmer has been given the name Kando. He had a birth weight of 117 kg and a back height of 91 cm. Pori has looked after her calf excellently. On 22 August came the park's 13th elephant offspring. The 22-year-old cow Bibi – who in 1999 produced the female calf Matibi, now at Osnabrück Zoo – gave birth to another female at 8.00 a.m., also in the outdoor enclosure. The 95-kg, 92-cm tall calf has been named Panya. Bibi once again proved to be a reliable mother. The father of both calves is the 22-year-old bull Tembo, who has proved his fertility for the seventh time. The whole herd are now living together.

Dr Bernhard Blaszkiewicz

Welsh Mountain Zoo, Colwyn Bay, U.K.

The zoo has kept Andean condors for many years. A male, Gus, arrived from Chester in 1988 and a female, Sonya, from the Zoological Society of London in 1989. For some time we had been unhappy with the old condor enclosure, and thanks to a two-year public campaign we were able to raise enough money to build a new one. A perfect location was found in one of those corners of the zoo that had been 'forgotten' about. The enclosure design was kept basic, using new telephone poles to support 5-cm² welded mesh sides, with heavy-duty 5-cm² nylon netting for the roof. This netting is very strong, is UV-stabilised and has a guaranteed 20-year life. We used the same netting on the golden eagle enclosure nine years ago, and it has proven to be very effective, even when covered with 20 cm of snow.

Incorporated into the enclosure design were two feeding areas, so that the birds can be separated for feeding and cleaning, thus cutting down on competitive aggression. (Partly because they have always been separated for the time it takes them to eat their ration of food – half an hour or so – the pair have always been very compatible.) A cave area is built into the back of the enclosure, where it is hoped the condors will nest. The birds have access to high perches and to several large tree trunks to use as perches on the ground.

The ground area of the new enclosure measures 25 m by 22 m and is all on a steep slope. The public can view it through a 1.2-m window panel from the side where the height of the enclosure is three metres: it rises to nearly 10 m at the rear.

The birds were moved in in the late summer of 2006, and after some initial reluctance they began to explore their new home. Almost immediately Gus started to pull all the expensive new plants out of the ground. The keepers called it enrichment, but the head gardener called it something else. . .

The Welsh Mountain Zoo is responsible for the Andean condor EEP and has built up a relationship with a conservation project in Ecuador. Condor Huasi ('House of the condor' in the local Indian Quichua language) is a wildlife conservation and education initiative that aims to raise awareness among children and the general public of Ecuador. It focuses on the importance of environmental and wildlife conservation in the high Andean grasslands known as Paramo, with specific emphasis on the issues concerning the survival of its 'anchor species', the condor. The zoo has made a commitment to donate US\$1,000 a year, and will be raising both awareness and cash for the programme.

The zoo had a major breakthrough last year, when for the first time a fertile egg was laid, but the chick unfortunately died just a few days before it was due to hatch. It is hoped that 2007 will be a good year for Sonya and Gus, and that improved conditions and experienced and motivated staff will lead to a successful and much-needed breeding.

Abridged and adapted from Peter Litherland in *EAZA News* No. 58 (April–June 2007)

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), U.K.

'Toad Hall' opened at WWT Slimbridge during August and has proved to be extremely popular. The exhibit comprises ten vivaria, mostly devoted to the native and introduced species of amphibians to be found in Britain (including American bullfrog and clawed toad). Three vivaria are devoted to global conservation problems affecting amphibian populations, as represented by poison-arrow frogs (chytrid fungus plus habitat destruction), axolotls (habitat destruction and over-exploitation) and marine, or cane, toads (introduced species). In addition several species are kept off-exhibit but meet the public in regular demonstrations in a purpose-built interpretive area called