



# INDEPENDENT ZOO! ENTHUSIASTS SOCIETY

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## EDITORIAL

Less of an editorial and more of a 'state of the nation' address I would say. You will obviously have noticed the new look of our magazine and this represents something of a relaunch of the society after some two years of regrouping. Two aspects are particularly important. Firstly it quickly became apparent that I needed assistance even under the old protocol. The cavalry finally arrived in the shape of Sam Whitbread, fresh from obtaining his zoology degree, to pull us shouting and screaming into the computer age. This added dimension is critical. Secondly, I have always been a little concerned that the message we spread and the information we disseminate is limited to a comparatively small audience. Whilst I do not want to lose the specialist nature of our publication I have decided to 'spread our wings' a little and try to move on to another level. The vehicle for doing this will be an A4, part-colour, glossy magazine which I am hoping will be sold in zoo shops. This publication will become part of your subscription and will have two issues per year. ZOO! will also become a bi-annual publication and there may also be occasional newsletters. Subscribers to the new magazine (as yet untitled) will become members of the IZES and receive ZOO! as well. We will instigate a new bout of promotion and hopefully also launch a web-site. As a business man I enter into all this with my eyes open and I feel it is something we have to do in order to make a difference.

Even this issue of ZOO! represents something of a departure from the norm in that it is largely written by contributors other than myself. This has helped enormously and I hope that this can continue. My thanks go to everyone who sent me a contribution and therefore enabled this issue to emerge before Christmas.

Next year should see us revive the IZES outing once more and the proposed venue is the world-famous Jersey Zoo. It is hoped that we will be allowed behind-the-scenes particularly to see the reptile collection. No date has yet been allocated but it seems likely to be April. If you are interested please write to me as soon as possible.

Towards the end of every year I attend a specialist music festival in Holland and always use the opportunity to visit a zoo or two (this year Artis and Rhenen). Zoo attendances have been very large in the Netherlands this year with over two million souls at Arnhem and 1.5 million at Rotterdam. Doubtless other places did very well also. Britain has had a fair year overall but as ever this can vary enormously from zoo to zoo. At the end of the season there are two closures to report - both establishments that have been around for quite a while. Over in Derbyshire Riber Castle has closed and news of this imminent event prompted me to make my first visit. Maybe it isn't fair to judge a place when in its death throes but I must admit that it is the kind of 'larch-pole and chicken-wire' zoo that I can't get excited over. Poor labelling, fibre-glass dinosaurs, lots of mud - I'm sorry if I offend someone but it doesn't seem like much of a loss to me. The best thing about it is the view (which will still be there of course) and, coincidentally, Todmorden has an almost identical Victorian castellated house over-looking it. More important was the closure of Rode Tropical Bird Gardens, possibly the largest avian collection in the UK. Those collections which are privately operated have particular problems with regards to their long-term future and it is sad to see a life's work fall apart when the owners are not around. Donald Risdon contributed much and I am sure he would not have wished it all consigned to history quite so

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quickly. Needless to say I hope that all livestock found a suitable home and I'm sure that the UK zoo community did as much as it was capable of.

I received a very positive reaction to my article on Texan zoos in the last issue of ZOO! and people that have also visited these places thought that my reporting to be accurate and fair. One amazing place was not covered because it is purely private and that was Buddy Jordan's zoological park outside of San Antonio. Massive herds of Sable Antelope, Chamois, Nile Lechwe, Addax, Giraffe and many more ungulates plus some primates and other small mammals, all superbly laid out around Buddy's soon-to-be-completed mansion. Mr Jordan comes from the strong tradition of hunting in Texas but please do not mistake this establishment for a hunting ranch; I merely mention this to illustrate that this tradition can result in beneficial circumstances. Hunting is abhorrent to me but if it results in wild places being preserved and animal populations being increased then I think we must examine each particular case individually and realistically.

If you also remember my account of the wonderful Dallas World Aquarium you might recall that it was there that I observed my first Three-toed Sloth. The species on show was *Bradypus tridactylus*, the so-called Pale-throated Sloth, yet two other off-display specimens turn out to be *Bradypus variegatus*, the Brown-throated Sloth. Together with the Hoffman's Two-toed Sloth, that makes three species of sloth in one collection. I would also like to place on record my thanks to that walking repository of zoo knowledge Marvin Jones for fixing the whole Texas trip, particularly Buddy Jordan's Park of which I was previously quite ignorant. Marvin is known by so many people in the US zoo community to the extent that a trip with him takes on an extra dimension that is quite special.

Finally I am sad to report the death of member Dr. Martin Bourne recently. I had the pleasure of visiting Dr Bourne's collection on the northern outskirts of Manchester on a few occasions and a remarkable place it was too. Occupying some 5 acres, recent times had seen a trend towards lemurs of which there was a magnificent collection of no less than 17 species and subspecies. That is not to underestimate the other animals such as Markhor, Lesser Malay Chevrotain, Pudu, Brush-tailed Porcupine, Zorilla, Palm Civet, Binturong and many others. Most notable was the birth of a Brazilian Tapir two years ago. A cordial welcome was always extended including tea sitting against an impressive library of zoological works. Dr Bourne always commented very favourably on this particular publication and we can ill afford to lose such enthusiasts. I am pleased to say that his wife, Dr Eva Bourne, intends to continue the valuable work being undertaken here.

## Rome Zoo, June 2000

By Sam Whitbread

Having read much about this zoo, both anti-zoo biased and realistic, recently in the zoo press, I thought I would see for myself, as a neutral (well, not quite neutral then!) observer, what state the collection is really in.

Famously, the Giardino Zoologico Di Roma is one of the several zoos partially designed by Carl Hagenbeck in 1911.

At one time the gardens contained a considerable diversity of species but the recent changes in the staffing at management level, and the subsequent alterations thus brought about, dictated that over 1/3 of the species held have been rehomed in other collections or otherwise disposed of.

So what does the animal collection consist of? Well, as one might expect, the commoner species (those which are becoming increasingly rare in captivity, certainly in Britain) predominate. Of course there are many of the 'charismatic mega-fauna' here, or 'ABC zoo animals' if you prefer, as this collections aims were, until the recent changes, scientifically and recreationally driven, rather than conservation being the zoos primary function. I would not be surprised if the zoos mission statement has been reviewed with the recent overhaul.

From the main entrance gate (see Enthusiast's Choice), one is faced with the elephant house, a huge crumbling structure. Until relatively recently there were both species of Elephants, both of Hippopotamus and both Indian and Black Rhinoceros in here. Now, the public are no longer allowed inside, huge cracks criss-cross the exterior of the building and there are even patches of brickwork showing through where the concrete-work has fallen away. Animal-wise, there is a single African Elephant, three Asians and a pair of Common Hippopotamuses. In all fairness, I believe the house would have been quite cramped in the past. The paddocks once used for the Rhinos and Hippos are decidedly narrow and are now interconnected for the sole use of the Hippos. The Elephant's yards are concrete, moated and are not over-large.

In common with a surprising number of other zoos, a road bisects Rome zoo. Visitors have to pass through a tunnel to reach a smaller area of the gardens that appear to have been added to the original site (where the bulk of the collection is housed). Remaining in the main portion of the grounds, there are several animal houses open for inspection by visitors. There is an ape house, which contains Orangs, Gorillas and Chimpanzees. The cages are thickly barred and, especially in the case of the Chimpanzees (which were barely discernable), rather dark and gloomy. Despite these seemingly primitive conditions, the animals do breed; even the Gorillas have bred in the past. There are several houses for ungulates, mostly following the original design of a small central house with a series of wedge-shaped paddocks radiating out from it. At one time, evidently, there was a considerable number of species held but at present there are a few individuals of Eland, Sitatunga and Nilgai. The Cattle House, which follows the latter design also, contains both species of Bison, Banteng and, most interestingly, a couple of hybrids between the two species of Bison. In the near vicinity there are rows of small paddocks lining the border of this part of zoo, many of which have been interconnected housing a few species of deer such as Red and Axis.

Nearby there is what was once a Polar-themed area, which included Seals, Sea lions, Penguins and Polar Bears. These enclosures were designed by Hagenbeck, although no attempt was made to create the illusion that there no barriers between predator and prey species. The clearly separate enclosures now stand empty and derelict with peeling paint and a covering of leaves and litter. The only occupied enclosure here is that formerly occupied by the Polar Bears, which are no longer here. Instead, there is a nice group of five or so Brown Bears which had been relocated here whilst their old enclosure (also Hagenbeckian but in another part of the zoo) is being 'bulldozed' for a new one which is being built on the same site.

Continuing with the Hagenbeckian architecture, there is a row of his characteristic enclosures, which house the Lions (African), Tigers (Bengal) and Bears (Syrian Brown and Asiatic Black). The rest of the big-cat collection is housed in a series of glass-fronted, high-roofed cages. It was nice to be able to compare, side by side, Jaguar, with their melanistic form, and Leopard, with theirs.

Dotted around in this part of the zoo there are several other smaller exhibits. There are a couple of old-style monkey houses with mainly old-world species such as Mandrill, Japanese

Macaque, Rhesus Monkey, Hamadryas Baboon, White-Collared Mangabey and Black Lemur. The only Platyrhines noted were some White-fronted Capuchins and Black Spider Monkeys.

There is a large portion of the zoo cordoned off whilst redevelopment takes place. Undergoing changes in this area are the old Hagenbeckian bear enclosures and some artificial precipices for various wild goats and sheep. From outside of the red tape, there appeared to be only a nice herd of Mouflon remaining here.

In the second, smaller, portion of the grounds there is an unusual layout of enclosures, unfortunately largely empty. Central to it all is the best part of the whole zoo - the reptile house. Although of simple layout and design, each of the small glass fronted vivaria seemed spotlessly clean and immaculately furnished. The glass fronts were so clear that in many cases there appeared to be none at all. This cleanliness is, no doubt, maintained by the presence of a stand-off barrier a couple of feet back from the exhibits themselves. This seems to dissuade visitors from smearing the glass with grubby fingers. The inmates here, which were all perfectly visible, included several rarely seen species like Asp and Rough-scaled Sand Boa. In the centre of the reptile house is a circular pit, divided up, for various crocodilians including a very large specimen of American Crocodile.

The reptile house is surrounded completely or, in cases, partially by cages, which form concentric rings. Originally these were all aviaries with a couple of paddocks for Cheetah and Maned Wolf. Now these enclosures are largely empty, overgrown, and taped off. There were one or two Ibises and Owls in those which are still in use and even some tortoises in another.

There are some more gravelly paddocks lining the border of the zoo here. The larger ones had some Grevy's Zebra and some Kulan whilst some smaller, shadier, ones had Emu, Double-wattled Cassowary and some Kori Bustards.

Away from the public nearby is a series of cages containing Brown Capuchins - apparently held for research. There were several of the zoo's science research personnel observing them and making notes. Apart from some listed parrot aviaries here, the only other exhibit worthy of mention is another of the best parts of this zoo. This is a very large domed aviary for, in the main, large European birds. There are White Stork, Demoiselle Crane, European White Pelican and Masked Plover. This is an excellent exhibit with a perfect balance between the amount of vegetation required by the birds (for perching, nesting and cover etc.) and the amount that might hinder the public's view of the exhibits. The aviary was furnished with a shallow pond surrounded by aquatic plants and shrubbery. Indeed the cage is so large that the White Storks were able to fly around unhindered.

Over all, there was a curious mixture of good and bad exhibits. There were a remarkable number of empty cages, sometimes whole rows. Generally the enclosures were just average - some appeared 'medieval' but were really not that bad whilst others were superficially very good but were, in actual fact, very small in area and sterile (some of the old Hagenbeckian enclosures for instance). There is currently a great deal of work going on and in several places there were signs to mark the sites and inform visitors of future developments such as new enclosures for the Gorillas and the Pygmy Hippos. It seems that Mr. Richardson has taken on his new post, and its enormous responsibility for the 'reinvention' of this zoo, in both hands. Whilst it is unfortunate to have had to reduce the size of the huge collection so substantially, it was obviously necessary so as to bring the zoo into line with modern zoo practice and the trends, both policy and design, followed throughout the rest of the developed world.

## How Many *Ateles*?

### The Troublesome Taxonomy Of Spider Monkeys

By Mike Grayson

With their long tails, spider monkeys surely represent the archetypal image of a Neotropical primate. Yet despite being - on a general level - such familiar animals, the question of how many species and sub-species of spider monkeys there are is by no means a settled issue. In this article I will briefly review the traditional taxonomy, the latest opinions based on genetic investigation and look at the situation with captive populations in UK zoos.

Most textbooks published between 1950 and 1970 (and quite a few published later) would tell you authoritatively that the genus *Ateles* (see note 1 below) contained four species, which were as follows:

1. The Black-handed, or Geoffroy's, Spider Monkey (*A. geoffroyi*) - found from southern Mexico to north-west Colombia, with nine different sub-species.
2. The Brown-headed Spider Monkey (*A. fusciceps*) - from eastern Panama and the Pacific coasts of Colombia & north-west Ecuador. Two races recognised, of which only the type subspecies (from the southernmost tip of the species' range) has a brown head. The more widespread *A. fusciceps robustus* is entirely black.
3. The Black Spider Monkey (*A. paniscus*) - two geographically-isolated subspecies: *A. p. paniscus* (red-faced) from the Guianas and adjacent north-east Brazil; and *A. p. chamek* (black-faced) from south of the Amazon in eastern Peru, northern Bolivia, and Brazil east to the Tapajos River.
4. The Long-haired Spider Monkey (*A. belzebuth*) - three geographically-isolated subspecies: *A. b. hybridus* from the Magdalena valley of Colombia, southern Venezuela and north-west Brazil (north of the Amazon); and *A. b. marginatus* from Brazil south of the Amazon and east of the Tapajos River. (see note 2 below)

From about 1970, the above view began to be challenged by various researchers and from various angles - increased study of the animals in the wild, examination of their dental and cranial features, and most recently by looking at their genetic make-up. These studies did not lead to a consensus on the taxonomic question, though some common ground seemed to be reached on a couple of issues:

- that *A. geoffroyi* and *A. fusciceps* were closely related (hybrids between the two have been found to occur where their ranges meet in Panama).
- that the two 'subspecies' traditionally combined within *A. paniscus* were not, in fact, very closely related to each other

However, authorities were far from united on how many species to recognise. Some now reduced the number of recognised species to three, others increased it to six. For example, J.W. Froehlich *et al.* (American Journal of Primatology, vol.25; 1991) took a 'lumpers' position with the following suggested revision:

*Ateles geoffroyi* = including *A. fusciceps* and *A. belzebuth hybridus*

*Ateles belzebuth* = including *A. paniscus chamek*, as well as *A. belzebuth belzebuth* and *A. belzebuth marginatus*.