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Two years after Opening ~ the Zoo in Columbia

by

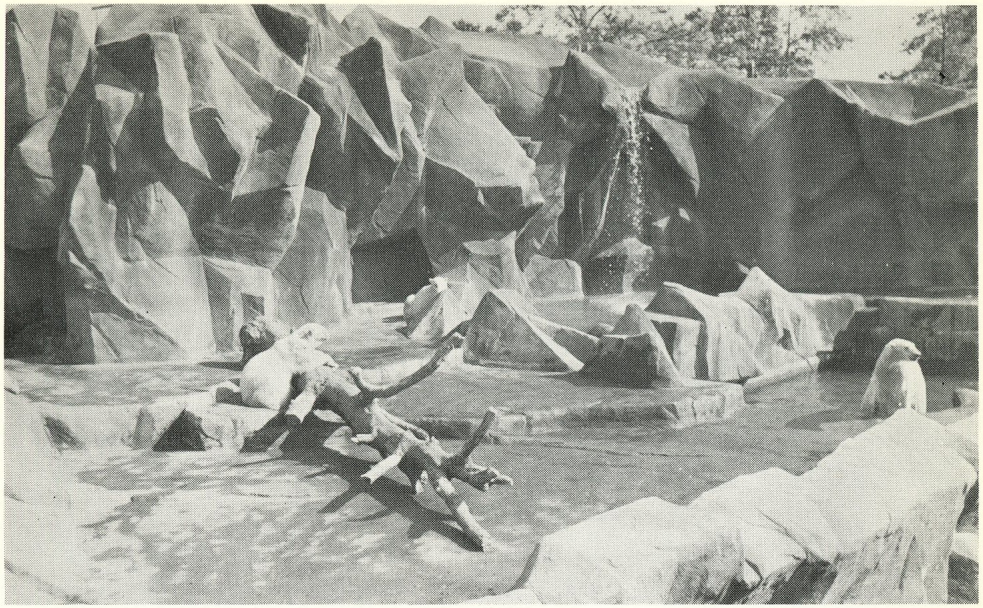
Alan H. Shoemaker

On April 25, 1974, the doors were opened to a new zoological park in Columbia, South Carolina. Although parts were still under construction at that time, the public was not overly disturbed, frequently being as interested in the techniques used in creating artificial rocks as they were with the animals themselves. It was nearly a year before all the exhibits were finished, at least for this first phase.

Initially begun in 1969 with the financial establishment by the state of a Special-Purpose District for fund raising, the total cost of the facility, primarily for capital construction, was ten million dollars. Architectural work was done by the firm of Blume, Cannon, and Ott of Columbia, and gunite (artificial rockwork) construction was by Cost, Inc., of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Although the park is commonly called Columbia Zoo in view of its proximity to the city, the formal name is Riverbanks Zoological Park. The Director is Palmer E. Krantz, III.

The exhibit philosophy for large mammals encompasses outdoor, all-year exhibits which utilize dry moat barriers to separate the public from the animals, or large predators from associated species adjacently exhibited. Smaller mammals are exhibited in sealed units, each thermostatically controlled for individual environmental comfort. Laminated glass separates the animal from the viewer, thus allowing close-up exhibition of such species as jaguars and Brown hyenas. No feeding of any species is allowed to encourage natural behaviour while minimizing abnormal postures, litter, dietary disturbances, etc.

Larger mammals chosen for exhibit are at a glance "typical" of zoological parks but at the same time in special need of protection in view of ongoing problems experienced by their wild counterparts. Some of them represent unusual sub-species or species and include lions



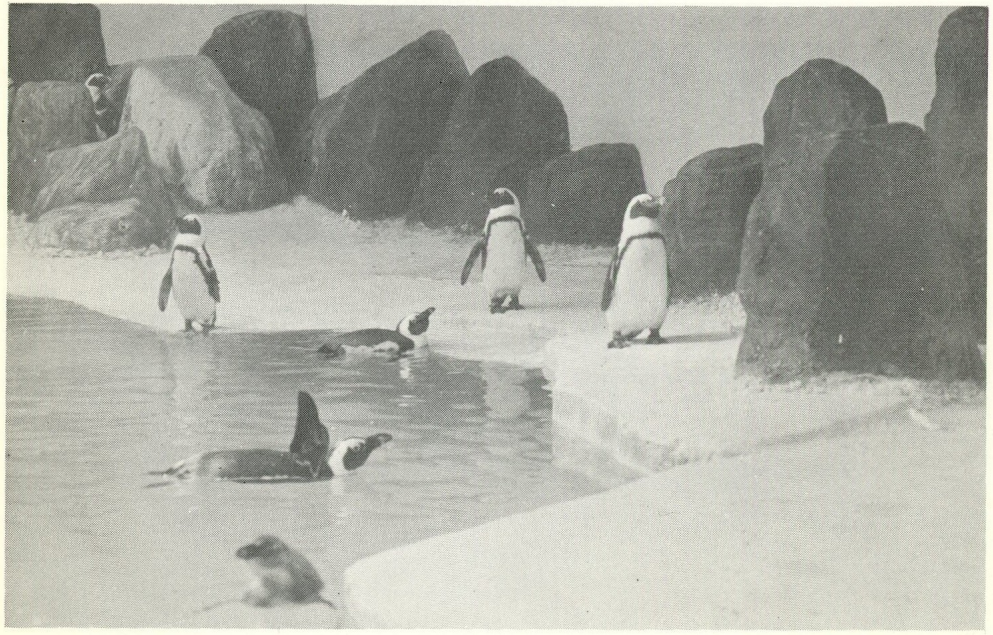
The Polar bear exhibit, coloured a dark grey, was designed to simulate polar cliff areas. The pool, approximately 4 metres deep, contains an underwater viewing room, thereby allowing viewers to observe the bears' swimming techniques.



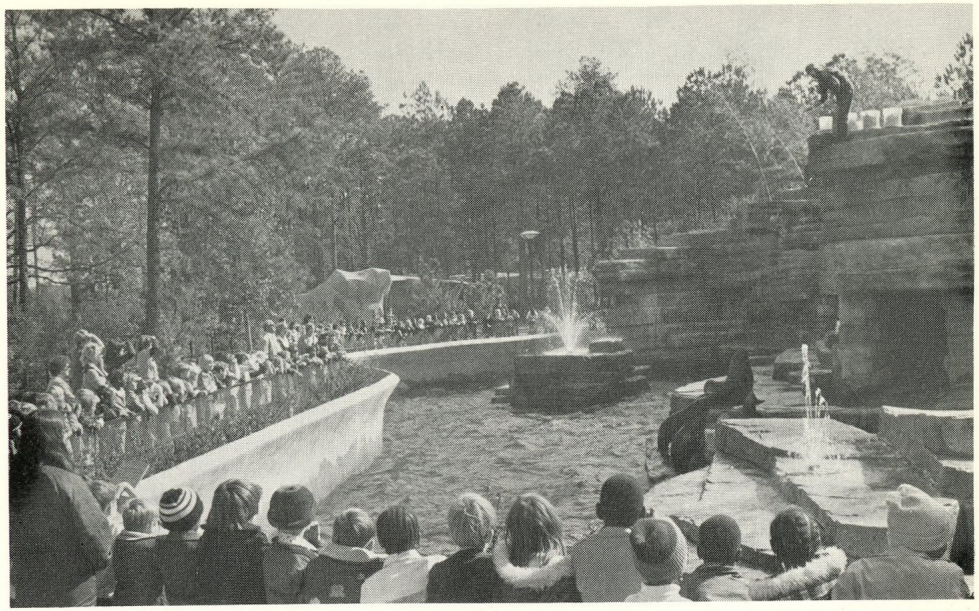
The Nile hippopotamus exhibit includes a pool two metres deep. The exhibit also contains East African Crowned cranes and a Rock hyrax colony.



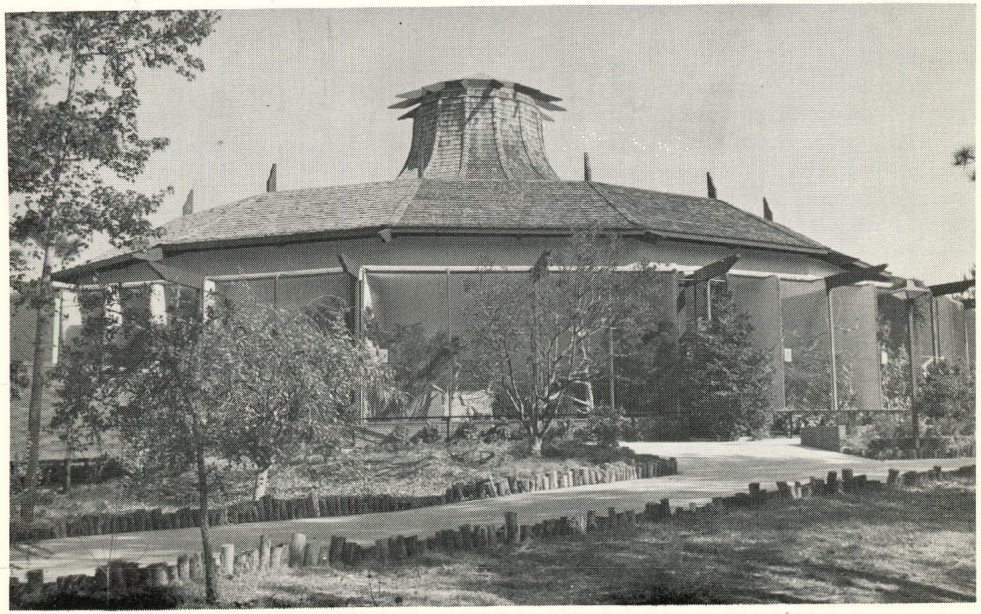
Hoofed mammals are exhibited in large yards and separated from the viewer by sloped moats.



One of the most successful exhibits in the aviary, South African penguins. Since establishment two years ago, three young have fledged.



The pinniped exhibit is one of the most popular in the park. The fountains act as an additional feature of interest for the animals while keeping them cool during the summer.



The circular aviary's exterior. *Species exhibited on the outside are hardy enough to withstand winter extremes and usually are not suitable for community exhibits: hornbills, birds of prey and psittacines.*

imported from the Kalahari Desert, Siberian tigers, Kodiak bears, Polar bears, and cheetahs. Although predators such as these are not exhibited in conjunction with natural prey species, some of them are shown with non-prey species commonly associated with them: lions and mandrills; cheetahs and Hamadryas baboons; and Polar bears and Arctic foxes. The moat width separating the public and larger predators is the same for separating the above mammal combinations.

Pinnipeds are exhibited in an elongated waisted exhibit three metres deep and with a capacity of 300,000 gallons. A gunite background and two islands allow psychological retreat from the public while providing plenty of length (38 metres) for high speed swimming. Off-exhibit quarters in the rear include two pens with shallow (0.5 metre) pools for quarantine, pregnant females, or females with newly born young. Two species are represented: South American sealions (1.4) and California sealions (1.6).

Smaller mammals include a variety of primates, marsupials, and carnivores. With all-season quarters enclosed in the front by glass, problems of winter quarters or shelter from inclement weather are avoided. Some of the more popular exhibits include Amur leopards, Black Howler monkeys, Brown hyenas, White-faced Saki monkeys and Matschie's Tree kangaroos. Although some of the species are still too young to reproduce, the Tree kangaroos, sakis, and Howler monkeys have reared young.

Hoofed species are exhibited in large yards with pools for wading, swimming or drinking as appropriate. As with other species in the park, off-exhibit quarters allow night-time security, feeding and quarantine areas, and development of a daily routine for control. Perissodactylids include Chapmann's zebra, Malay and Baird's tapir, and White rhinoceros. Although Artiodactylids presently include giraffe, Nile hippo and White-bearded gnu, this group is in the process of being enlarged.

A group of three (1.2) African elephants are included in the Park, the bull now being 8 ft. at the shoulder and still growing. Since arrival in Columbia three years ago, he has been breeding both cows at times on a daily basis. Rather young yet for conception, it is hoped that these cows will conceive in the not too distant future. At least two oestrus periods are thought to have occurred in one of the cows, and extensive intromission occurred both times.

The circular aviary, already pictured in *International Zoo News* while under construction, has over 80 various sized exhibits in it. Composed of three rings of exhibits, the outer one of which is exposed to the weather, this facility has experienced a high degree of reproductive success. Of some 145 species exhibited in the park, most of which are in this building, over 20 per cent bred in the last year. A strong attempt is now being made to pair those species as yet represented by single individuals and hopefully increase their rate of propagation while improving the collection through exchange of offspring.

In addition to the more obvious feature zoological parks play in education as provided by the animals and their exhibits, zoo staff participate in university related programmes, behavioural research and maintain international pedigree programmes for rare leopards and Brown hyenas. A cooperative external programme has been developed with the University of Georgia, thereby providing the park with full time veterinary services in addition to the four veterinarians normally associated with the park.

Like other zoological parks, construction is not finished. Plans are now ongoing for further exhibits, all being developed within the guide lines of an overall master plan. Since the park has been well received locally and across the state, new and varied exhibits will in turn help bring new experiences to the public while helping to conserve some of the rare species.

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