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MARVIN L. JONES

International Zoo News, 10(4)

March 1971

*Zoological Attractions*  
**in Southern California**

**March 1971**

One of the largest concentrations of zoological exhibits on earth is to be found in the Los Angeles-San Diego area of southern California. It was my pleasure to spend a week in this part of the United States in mid-March of this year, and visited the majority of zoological exhibits located there at this time. I would like now to share with you my impressions of them, some of which are relatively unknown not only in the USA but also overseas.

**The Los Angeles Zoo**

Certainly one of the most under-rated zoos in America today, the new Los Angeles Zoo not only has a superb collection, but has a very good record in breeding of the rare and endangered species, as well as the more commonplace zoo species. Planting has grown lushly throughout the zoo site hiding many of the exhibits, and adding to the overall beauty of the grounds. The animal collection ranks as one of the top ten in America today numerically, but times are changing and one no longer can rate a zoo just by the sheer numbers it shows, but how well these are exhibited and managed, and in this regard Los Angeles does very well indeed. Once again this spring the Crimson-rumped Toucanets have raised young, by no means a commonzoo event. The female Harpy Eagle is devotedly sitting on what is hoped is a fertile egg.

There should be several baby Arabian Oryx this summer, and on the day of my visit, a Blesbok was born. The colony of Springbok has grown so well that the herd has been divided in two, and almost all of the antelope species have raised young in the past year, including the Scimitar-horned Oryxes, one of the endangered species. The baby Siamang is ably protected by its mother in the larger group of these simians on display, father, mother, and several aunts, making a grand show when they begin to call in the early afternoon.

For an unrivaled attraction there are the five Maned Wolves born at the zoo some months ago, all romping together in a large barless outdoor enclosure, not too far from their parents. Off exhibit are last year's two female Snow Leopards, snarling, spitting, and most beautiful. There are two Bornean Orang Utans being raised by hand, from the zoo's prolific pair. There must be no less than 20 Jungle Cats on exhibit and another dozen or so off exhibit, almost all born in the zoo. Among the other rare exhibits I noted that unusual very darkly marked race of the Black-crested Mangabey found only around the city of Kinshasa in the Congo, Opendbosch's Mangabey, one of only a handful ever exhibited in captivity. The group of Lowland Gorillas is rapidly growing, and have all the appearances of young adults.

The pair of Woolly or Mountain Tapir are doing well, although it must be reported that the older female (which had a calf some weeks ago, that did not survive) was recently lost, as was Nepali the female Indian Rhinoceros formerly at Hagenbeck's Zoo in Hamburg. Even the best of zoos have their heartaches as well as their joys, and Los Angeles is no exception. The Reptile house boasts of one of the best, if not THE best, collections in America or the world of the boas and pythons as well as Australian snakes. All of the more common zoo species are on exhibit in addition to such gems as the D'Albertis Python, Olive Python, Australian and New Guinea Taipans. In the aviary I was especially attracted by the four great Grey Tinamous (*T. major*), several Laminated-billed Mountain Toucan, Whispering Ibis from tropical America and a rare zoo exhibit, Tarric Hornbills just one of many fine representatives of this grotesque group of birds.

Not to be missed were the many excellent birds of prey, such as Long-crested Hawk Eagle, the rarely seen Guianan Crested Eagle which looks much like its close cousin the Harpy, and of course even though not on exhibit that prize of all, the California Condor, the only one of its kind in captivity. Before ending this brief account of one of America's great collections I should mention that it was a surprise to note that the Pacaranas (*Dinomys branickii*) have been found to enjoy climbing up the tree limbs placed in their cage, and indeed it did look odd to see such a large and cumbersome beast agilely moving about in that manner. Los Angeles recently instituted a tour that certainly must be one of the few of its kind in the world, but after becoming a member with one group, and seeing the great interest it brought, I would hope other zoos might follow suit, and this is a "behind the scenes tour of the Reptile house". Three days each week from noon to 2.30 pm groups of 20 people of all ages are conducted on a half-hour trip behind the cages, by a keeper and member of the Zoo Docent Council (members of the Zoological Society). Explanations are given about shedding skin, the visitors are allowed to touch living reptiles, told about the poisonous species in the immediate area, and given a chance to see what goes on behind the cages.

I found not only were the visitors fascinated but the keepers enjoyed it as well. Needless to say it allowed them to tell the visitor something about the work of the keeper, and housekeeping was spotless. There have been no problems to date, and in fact the idea may be introduced in other portions of the zoo later on. While it would be nice to give a more specific listing of what the zoo has, this would take too much space. A visit by you the reader of this article, will be better than any catalogue, and Los Angeles is very much worth a visit.

#### Busch Gardens

On Sunday the 14th of March I visited perhaps more zoological exhibits in one day than I have before. In the morning for a few hours a final look at the Los Angeles Zoo, then an all too brief (but complete) visit to this avian paradise located in the San Fernando Valley area, and concluding with a visit to the next two named spots as well. Busch Gardens, like its counterpart in Tampa, Florida, specializes in the exhibition of various species of birds, but primarily waterfowl and psittacines. The entire park here was man-made, even including the large rocky gorge, which looks like a miniature grand canyon. One can walk about on large paths, or take a tour by boat. The central lake

is quite large and contains a very good selection of rare anserines, such as Whistling, Trumpeter, Whooping, Black-necked and Black Swans, handsome Ruddy Ducks, Australian and Paradise Shelducks, Brazilian Teal, Cape Teal, Andean Geese, about eight or so Red-breasted Geese, and a large variety of native North American forms. Found on small islands that one passes with the boat tour (but which still can be seen from the pathways) are about a dozen Scarlet Ibis, Cuvier's Toucan, Hyacinthine Macaws, and Horned Screamer. There are three large groups of Flamingo, one contained no less than 65 Ruddy or American Flamingo and another about 20 Chilean. In more formal cage exhibits one finds Ross's Touracos, several Cockatoo species and six Great Palm Cockatoo, Golden-naped Macaw (which were hatched at the Florida park). White-breasted Sea Eagle, Edward's Lorikeet, Chattering Lory, and Kookaburras. In a very well done and artfully shown air-conditioned exhibit are King and Rockhopper Penguin and in a companion exhibit three North American River Otter. There is a daily bird show, featuring Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and Macaws, and of course scattered about the grounds (but never on chained perches) are various groups of macaws, Scarlets, Red and Blues, etc.

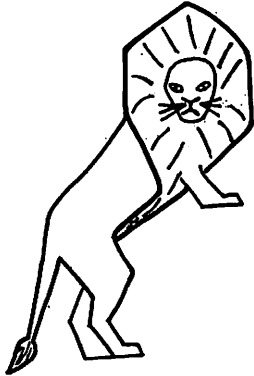
While there is no admission fee to Busch Gardens, there is a fee for parking and the boat ride is \$ 1.00 for adults and 50 cents for children. Naturally one of the main attractions is always free, and that is an unlimited quantity of cold Busch beers.

#### California Alligator Farm

Located just opposite the entrance to the immensely popular Knott's Berry Farm (one of the many attractions on the south California tourist circuit) is a zoological collection that I found to be one of the best I had seen of its kind anywhere, and spotless is the word for how it is maintained. Operated by Genny Ernst, the Alligator Farm was a tremendous surprise for me. Like many I had visions of large pens of alligators and not much else, I found one of the best private reptile collections in the world, well housed, excellently labelled, and in first class condition. I recommend it without reservation to anyone visiting in this region. The highlight of course are the many American Alligators, certainly not less than one thousand of all ages are on display, many have been here for decades. In addition there are several hundred Caimans, collected by Mr Ernst personally some years ago, and all of large size. Of the 23 species of crocodylians in the world, 17 are to be found here including a Chinese Alligator, Indian and False Gavial, 4 West African Dwarf Crocodile, Black Caiman, a pair of Cuban Crocodile that this year attempted to make a nest, many really huge Nile Crocodiles (which were hatched here in the early sixties), one monster is about 14 feet in length. There are also Mindoro Crocodile, several Morelets, Salt Water and American Crocodile.

But perhaps the greatest surprise is the large snake collection and an even greater rarity, a Tuatara. This particular example, which was the largest I have ever seen in captivity has been here since 1969.

It is kept in a large air-conditioned cage and appeared in good health. A previously exhibited specimen lived here from 1960 to 1968. In addition to a very extensive series of native non-poisonous snakes such as the colorful King Snakes and Gopher Snakes of California I noted (and this time I would like to expand on my listing technique in this article, to show the variety and quality



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of this superb collection) Amethystine and Kinghorn's Amethystine Python, Green Tree Python, Timor Python, Dumeril's Boa, Madagascan Hog-nosed Snake, Ceylon Python, a 16 foot specimen of Papuan Olive Python, Australia Olive Python, Madagascan Boa, a very large and well formed Banded Monitor (*V. salvator*), Israeli Saw-scaled Viper, Rhinoceros Viper, Black Mamba, Jameson's Mamba, Green Mamba, Death Adder, Ringhals Cobra (a very large series of fine cobras, not less than 10 species), King Cobra, Brown Snake, Tiger Snake, Mexican West Coast Rattlesnake, Bushmaster (here since 1965), Boomsnake, and a good series of North American pit vipers. In addition there are a few lizards, not the least of which is a breeding pair of Rhinoceros Iguanas, some Flamingos, and several very handsome and well marked Marimonda Spider Monkeys of a race that I have not seen before. The grounds are well cared for, and as I say it was clean. There is more than adequate parking, and it is very easy to reach.

#### Japanese Village and Deer Park

The final zoo attraction seen this warm Sunday afternoon was this first class, albeit highly commercial attraction. However, as at Disneyland such exhibits are of great value to the average zoo director and his staff in showing how quality construction and exhibition can be profitable, especially in dollar-conscious 1971. Admission here was \$ 2.90 for adults, \$ 1.80 for those 13 to 17, and \$ 0.90 for children 4 through 12. The parking lot holds about 2000 cars.

The parking lot is well paved, and marked, as well as immense in size and you pay in addition to the entrance fee, a sum of \$ 0.25 to park. Once within the exhibit there are no extra charges except for food and drink, and such things as food for the bears or sea lions, and for the deer. We arrived at the worst of all possible times to visit any attraction. Sunday afternoon at 3.30 pm, yet it was spotless everywhere. One just did not see any litter, or anyone throwing litter about. A well known zoo director who came on a weekday of the following week when it was jammed with school children noted the same clean condition. It adds to the overall attractiveness of the park. The pathways are often done as in Japan, with inlaid wood, all scrubbed clean. The lawns are carefully manicured, and just give off a first class appearance. The theme of course is Japan, so that all construction follows this pattern of thought. Souvenir stands sell primarily artifacts and items from Japan. The bears used in a trained bear act, and in a static display are what appeared to be very healthy Yezo Bears (not less than a dozen). The open pit display is unique in having gunite with a sprayed-on scenic backdrop. The pavilion in which this is located (and it is very large), is covered with fine screening, enough to admit light, but sufficient to deflect the bright rays of the sun. I thought it very ingenious and very attractive. There are a series of winding streams containing THE clearest sal water I have yet seen in any commercial establishment and used for about a dozen or so Bottle-nosed Porpoise who display in several different places. There is a large circular pool, with equally clear water, for a group of about 10 California Sea Lions. Food can be purchased for them, and a well kept sink with hot and cold running water, soap and towels is available for the visitor afterwards. There are two large arenas (each with a seating capacity of about 2,500) for porpoise shows, the aforementioned bear show, a karate show, and a sea lion show. On weekends there is a small Asian Elephant available for riding by

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children (one child at a time, 50 children per hour). The only feature that appeared out of context was a Monkey cage containing a group of Weeping and Brown Woolly Monkeys. At one end of course is the deer park, a large public feeding area (the ground is covered with green-colored shavings), holding not less than 300 Sika and Fallow Deer. Not seen by the public is an off-exhibit area with another 300 deer and the males used for breeding, only the females being allowed to mix with the public, which removes a possible source of danger. I noted that food prices were reasonable, quantities plentiful, and service excellent.

Overall this is a well done facility that zoo men should visit just to see what can be done to please the public, and done well.

## Lion Country Safari

Opened to the public on 16 June 1970 this is the first of the drive-through wild animal parks to open in California. Several more are either in the planning stage or set to open in the next three years in this part of the United States. The southern California park is under the management of the same people that have the larger Lion Country Safari in Florida. This was my first visit to one of these new theme parks, and while my overall impression here was of a large barren exhibit, this is due primarily to the fact that the land in this part of California is just not suited for exhibits of large ungulates, and there is little natural vegetation.

Virtually everything in the way of planting has to be imported and extensively irrigated. Even then the soil is just not suited for this type of operation, so that it is evident that large scale re-planting has taken place, and was being done on our visit. Unlike San Pasqual which will be covered next, Lion Country does have a large reservoir of water, two very large lakes in fact, which is a mark on the plus side of the ledger. It was found that while most of the professional zoo folks who visited came away with a less than impressive picture of the park, the general public loved it. There is the thrill of driving your own car through lions, rhinoceros, elephants, cheetahs and various antelope, contact that just cannot be matched by even the best conventional zoo, and this contact is the selling point of the new safari parks. There are a series of exhibits here, and you either drive through in your own car, or can rent one at the park. There is a kennel provided where you can leave the family dog, something that no zoo provides. The park in general is very clean. Seen on my visit were Common Waterbuck, Nyala, Reticulated Giraffe, 5 Scimitar-horned Oryx, several flocks of South African Ostrich, Cape Buffalo, Blesbok, 12 Damara Zebra (mistakenly called Chapman's by the Park Director), several Hartmann's Mountain Zebra, Grant's Zebra, Goliath Heron, African Grey Heron, 7 Eland, 9 Nile Hippopotamus, 5 Southern White Rhinoceros, 4 Addax, Gemsbok, Dromedary, Lechwe Waterbuck, Brindled Gnu, Topi, Beisa Oryx, 5 African Elephant, several hundred lions, American Flamingo, Impala, Fringe-eared Oryx, 6 Marabou, Chimpanzees, Nilgai, and some other cranes and waterfowl. In addition there are of course the large colony of South African Cheetahs, one female of which is suspected of being pregnant. This colony has been studied closely by two different investigators, and while the sex ratio does not match any wild populations, the observations made have been of some interest.

In addition to the drive-through animal exhibits there is a very large and rather

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commercial-appearing section where you can walk around, and here and there are various other exhibits, such as a Gibbon island (with Lars and Siamangs mixed) which has California Sea Lions in the water-filled moat; several small moated exhibits for Indian Elephants, young Lions and twin Nile Hippopotamuses; a contact area with pygmy goats; a series of glass fronted cages holding such an array as Squirrel Monkeys, New Guinea Scrub Wallabies, Boas and Pythons, and Cotton-top Marmosets. There are also a series of rides and extra admission features plus a small snack bar complex.

Admission to the main park is \$ 3.25 for adults and \$ 1.50 for children, far more than any conventional zoo, and attendance in general has been good.

### San Pasqual Wild Animal Park

Not too many miles south of Lion Country and within the county limits of San Diego (which incidentally is one of the largest counties in California) is the new Wild Animal Park being developed by the San Diego Zoological Society. Unlike the operation at Lion Country the terrain here is more hilly, and the scenery more appealing. It is however, farther from the main highway, and thus not quite as accessible.

It is planned to construct a larger roadway before the park is opened, for now the only access road is a narrow two-lane highway. Also unlike Lion Country there is a water problem here, and while this may be relieved in the months ahead, it is not present at this time, thus inhibiting growth of suitable ground cover in several exhibits. It shares with Lion Country the fact that it is not a USDA approved zoo, and thus cannot exhibit wild imported ungulates, but must secure its stock from conventional zoos, animals born in those zoos.

Fortunately for both parks there are quite a number of large herds of wild ungulates in other zoos with a good reproduction capability so there has been relatively few problems in stocking the parks.

Zoologically speaking there is the danger of mixing together animals from unknown origins of capture (of parents) and thus often mixing various races and creating a new zoo race. Dr James Dolan, Associate Curator of Birds for the main zoo has the responsibility of purchasing all stock for San Pasqual and has done his best to keep the various races separate. At this stage of construction, several large pens have been created to hold such things as the 18 Southern White Rhinoceros, several Dama Gazelle, Scimitar-horned Oryx, Cheetahs, Nilgai, Grant's Zebra, Sitatunga, Formosan Sika Deer, Ostriches, Secretary Birds, Pronghorn Antelope, and other species. A hospital has been constructed and now is in operation. Several keepers live on the site, and the train that will be used to carry visitors around the park is making good progress in its installation. Unlike Lion Country one will not drive through this park, but rather ride about on a train, often above the exhibits. A contact area, a snackbar, and other amenities are planned. The park is due to open in 1972. While much remains to be done, it does appear as if the animals are doing well and certainly the setting is very pleasing.

### Prentiss Park Zoo, Santa Ana

Geographically speaking we are now back north of Lion Country again in one of the average city zoos located in a medium-sized city in America. It was my first visit. There is a series of conventional wire cages, an attempt at modernity with a barless bear exhibit, and a large flight cage, divided into three sections.

The zoo is fenced in, but like most small city zoos it is free at all times. However, because of the warm climate there is no need for a conventional zoo building and all exhibits are outdoors. The park faces on to a main highway and thus is very easy to reach. There are about 75 to 100 species on show, few are really rare, most are donations from people who found that wild pets became a nuisance as they grew older. Thus one finds the usual assortment as in most zoos of this type such as local hawks and owls, a few exotic pheasants and waterfowl, and some unusual species as well. Perhaps the most interesting was the series of Capuchin monkeys. In one cage is a very large group of Hooded Capuchins, one of the dark races of *Cebus apella* numbering about 25 individuals, including a number of young. Another exhibit was of six of the Weeper *Cebus C. griseus*, rarely seen in zoos. There was a large male Stuhlmann's Monkey, several Lar Gibbon, Tayra, Rhesus Macaques, Squirrel Monkeys, California Bobcat, Woodchuck, Collared Peccary, Sika and Mule Deer, four very nice Kit Foxes, Kinkajou, Geoffroy's Spider Monkey, Guinea Baboon, Road-runner, Golden Eagle, Collie's Jay, American Flamingo, Cuvier's Toucan, Burrowing Owls, and other more normal zoo fare. The cages in general were rather clean, most exhibits were accurately labelled, and the food being given the animals appeared adequate and fresh. Naturally there was no guide book available, as is usually the case for such parks.

#### San Diego Zoo

I finished this short tour of southern California with a return once again to the largest collection of animals in North America the, San Diego Zoo.

This large collection is so well known to most readers of International Zoo News and other zoo media that to give a long article on it would be repetitive, but I would like to mention a few exhibits seen on this trip which are worthy of note. First the Przewalski Wild Horse group is doing very well, better in fact than at any zoo in North America outside Catskill Game Farm. All of the several young born here look very good, and it is nice to see a good group being developed. Two young animals were off exhibit, destined for San Pasqual. The newish Turkmenian Kulans have settled down very well and offer a good study in contrast to the Persian Onagers exhibited closely. The Scimitar-horned Oryx have reproduced successfully, and Dr Dolan who has the studbook for this species reports that the species is doing very well in captivity. The trio of Turkomen Markhor are impressive and the Grey Goral has adapted well to San Diego. The Douc Langur colony recently had another addition; all of the females in this group have now borne young. Nearby the newly acquired male Proboscis Monkey (from Frankfurt Zoo) makes a great exhibit, as do the large series of White-headed, Fulvus, and Variegated Lemurs (of both color phases). Psittacines are seen here in all their diversity of plumage and color, more than 200 kinds now, and many hatching out young. The two relatively new exhibits for birds of prey are attractive, and a reconstruction of the waterfowl ponds is now under way. Next major addition will be the installation of a small mammal exhibit at one end of the Skyfary ride, including a nocturnal section. The zoo is making progress, while maintaining the largest and most diversified vertebrate collection in America.

## INTERNATIONAL ZOO-NEWS

### AMSTERDAM - HOLLAND

The most noteworthy Artis Zoo hatching is a White-cheeked Touraco, a bird which is rarely bred in zoological collections; the young; bird is doing well and has already left the nest.

Other births and hatchings include a Spectacled Langur, some Foxes, a Malayan Tapir, two Pinche Marmosets, 3 Black-footed Penguins, a Slow Loris, Pumas and Black Panthers.

### BUFFALO - N.Y. - U.S.A.

On 7th February 1971, two male African Spotted Leopards were born and are now being hand-reared successfully.

Latest newcomers are a female Stump-tailed Macaque and a couple of Bare-throated Bellbirds (*Procnias nudicollis*), and an Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*).

### CHESTER - ENGLAND

With the recent birth of a male Giraffe (*G.camelopardalis*), there are now two young calves on exhibition; the last one was born on 19th March 1971; the other calf was born in September 1970.

Thirteen Bennett's Wallabies and one Rufous-bellied Wallaby have been observed with young in their pouches. In the Monkey House a Sooty Mangabey has been born.

Other newcomers are three female Bobwhite Quail, a Barn Owl, 1.1 Orange-headed Ground Thrushes, 1.1 Giant Blue Pittas, 1.1 Blue-winged Pittas, and 1.1 Gurney's Pittas.

(C.Z.N.)

### CHICAGO - Illinois - U.S.A.

With construction progressing on schedule and the new Seal Pool making a big splash, Lincoln Park Zoo's interest now focuses on plans for a Great Ape House; the first preliminary sketch has just been released by the Park District.

Several ape births are being anticipated by the zoo staff this spring and summer with Chimpanzee, Orang Utan and Gorilla families expecting babies.

An adult female Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur (*Cheirogaleus medius*) that entered the Lincoln Park Zoo's collection on 21st April 1970 has been in the collection over twelve months now and is doing well. The Lemur is maintained on a diet of mixed fruits and vegetable, live crickets, live American anoles, and a meat mixture, with a constant supply of mealworms.

The Lemur will accept anoles from ones hand. The animal is primarily nocturnal in its habits and rarely moves about in the daylight.

(Mark A. Rosenthal)

### COLOGNE - GERMANY

On 29th April 1971, the new building containing an Aquarium, Terrarium and Insectarium was opened to the public. The construction of this modern building started in February 1968.

Mammals bred during November 1970 include 1.0 Polar Bear, 1.0 Sitatunga, 5 Coypus (*Myocastor coypus*) and 1 Blackbuck.

(F.d.K.Z.)