

Animal Keepers' Forum



Dedicated to Professional Animal Care

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DEADLINE FOR EACH EDITION OF AKF IS THE 20th OF THE PRECEDING MONTH.

A VISIT TO SOME CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN ZOOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

Dvur Kralove Safari Park, Czechoslovakia

by

Marvin L. Jones, San Diego, Calif., USA

from notes made during a trip in the summer of 1977

On Sunday, the group left Prague at 9 a.m. for the drive to Dvur Kralove Safari Park (locally simply called a zoo). At 10:30 we arrived at the town of Hradec Kralove, which appears to be somewhat like a county seat, and had a very new and modern hotel called the Czernigov. We took a side excursion, came back to the hotel for lunch and arrived at the Dvur Kralove zoo at 2:30. We had just over two hours to see, at a fast pace, one of the most unknown and most surprising zoos of the tour.

The zoo was started about 20 years ago as a small town zoo (Dvur is a small town). Some years ago the decision was made to create a major animal park here. When one realizes that there are now many cars in Czechoslovakia, with the resultant city congestion and problems, the idea was not a bad one. It should be added that the Polish border is only 30 kilometers away.

The present park is undergoing massive improvements. A large quarantine area is still not completed, and it is bigger than any U.S. zoos. There are three large parking lots, large even by U.S. standards. A large zoo hospital, research center and education complex are under-way. The safari park itself is being planned and materials stored for it. There is unlimited room to expand since the zoo is state controlled and the state owns all of the land, anyway.

Director Dr. Wagner is doing a good job, and has a dedicated, young, and good staff. Next year, the International Veterinarian Congress on Animal Diseases Conference will be held here. (It is normally held at some city in the socialist countries.) Virtually all of the veterinarians of European zoos attend.

The group was taken about Dvur by one of the principal assistants and saw all of both the exhibit and off-exhibit facilities. The first major exhibit is one of about 40 Roan Antelope, of the langheldi subspecies in which the males are darker than the females. The San Diego zoo and the Wild Animal Park have the race cottoni, in which both sexes are the same color. There was an additional group of about 20 Roan further on. Dr. Wagner mentioned in his opening remarks that he likes to start his groups with no less than 2.6 animals, in many cases more.

Next to them are about 20 Sable in one group, all exhibited in barless paddocks (in fact, there is no railing between the moat and the visitors). There are large cinder block and brick buildings to the rear. There is a series of buildings for smaller antelopes containing South African Springbok of the normal color, and groups of all white and all black animals, each about 20 to 39 in number. There are 15 Lesser Kudu, two groups of about 12 Nile Lechwe, also common Red Lechwe, two Vaal Rhebok, quite a few Mountain Reedbusk, Bontebok, Blesbok, East African Bushbuck, and Pigmy Hippo. These appear to be purebred animals and most species are seen in small herds.

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DVUR KRALOVE SAFARI PARK, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, *continued....*

The park has large paddocks for ungulates, the center on containing about 20 Eland, 15 Brindled Gnu, more Bontetook and some Ostrich. Each of the individual pens went back about 50 to 200 feet from the pathway and were again barless. Here are the 2.6 Northern White Rhinoceros brought from Uganda in 1975, Beisa Oryx, about a dozen Hartmann Zebra (there are over 160 zebra in all), about 20 Gemsbok, about 15 Grevy Zebra, about a dozen Impala.

We then toured the land for the safari park which will be developed starting in 1978. It lead to the very extensive off-exhibit holding and quarantine facilities. Here were a number of simple males and some small groups of exhibited species plus many seen only here, such as Cape Buffalo, several Red Forest Buffalo, maneless and normal Grant Zebras in groups of about 20 each, Topi, Reedbuck, Chapman Zebra, Damara Zebra, and others. There are large exercise yards for use during the daytime and stalls for the evening as is the practice in Europe.

The groups then went back to the central core area. Here were seen the 2.5 Hunters Antelope with a female young born days before. We saw the Bongo Antelope. Two adult females were imported from Kenya a few years ago, and a male adult came from Chipperfield in England, and 5 young have since been born here. A female born in 1975 has been sent back to Chipperfield. On exhibit were the adult bull and a male born here in May 1975 (who looked almost as large as the adult), and a female born in May 1976, along with one of the import cows and a female born in August 1976. In the barn was the other import cow and a young female born 11 June 1977. The date of breeding and date of birth was noted on the stall.

We noted 4.5 Nyala, and a series of cages for breeding Blue and Yellow Macaw. In the pachyderm house are Malayan Tapir, Nile Hippos and 1.2 African Elephant. While time was limited, I did make a quick look at some of the other exhibits noting 3 Maned Wolves, 1.1 Dall Sheep (male ram good sized), Sumatran and Corbett Tigers, Lesser, Chilean, American and European Flamingo, about 8 Cheetahs, 1.1 Shortridge Leopard, about a dozen European Pelican, scores of Crowned Cranes, 8 Griffon Vulture, about 6 African Sea Eagles (vocifer), 9 Mandrill, 1.1 Matschie's Guereza, a family of Patas monkey, and about 6 deBrazza.

A very well stocked and nice appearing aquarium-reptile house combination with Green Tree Monitors, Morelets Crocodile, and what seemed to be about 60 to 70 species of herps plus the fish, and some amphibians.

As at a few other European and most American zoos, there is a good sized area where one can buy food and drink (outdoors only), and a variety of postcards and souvenirs. Dr. Wagner is in the process of writing a series of booklets on his many collecting trips to Africa, some were on sale.

It is obvious that this zoo will bear close watching as it continues to develop, and like Walsrode deserves greater visitation by Americans.

Next month Budapest.....