

Françoise Delord has left her mark on generations of enthusiasts and helped to change the way we look at zoos. Just watching her in her 'Eden', always in awe of nature, you would notice that she could barely go for a stroll without being warmly thanked and complimented on her work – work that her children continue every day. From behind her dark glasses, Françoise Delord opened the eyes of millions of visitors to the beauty of the world.

DR BERNHARD BLASZKIEWITZ

Biologist and director of Tierpark Berlin and Zoo Berlin

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Dr Bernhard Blaszkiewitz in December 2021. A qualified biologist, Dr Blaszkiewitz served as director of Tierpark Berlin from 1991 to 2014 and of Zoo Berlin from 2007 to 2014 – making him the first joint director of the Zoo, Tierpark and Aquarium.

Life and work

Bernhard Blaszkiewitz was born in Berlin on 17 February 1954 and regularly visited Zoo Berlin as a child. While studying biology at Freie Universität Berlin from 1974 to 1978, he took up an internship as an animal keeper at the zoo. Following stints at other German zoos in Frankfurt and Gelsenkirchen, he returned to Zoo Berlin in 1984 as a curator. In 1987 he completed his doctorate at the University of Kassel before succeeding Tierpark founder Professor Heinrich Dathe as the director of Tierpark Berlin in 1991.

In 2007, Dr Blaszkiewitz also became the director of Zoo Berlin, taking over from Dr Jürgen Lange. He was closely involved with the zoo and Tierpark throughout his life and he campaigned tirelessly for Tierpark Berlin to maintain the form and size it still has today, particularly during the uncertain times that followed the fall of the Wall. In the 1990s, the Tierpark in the eastern part of the city was emerging from financial difficulties and was in dire need of modernisation. By the year 2000, Dr Blaszkiewitz had overseen the replacement of many animal stalls and facilities – some of which had only ever been provisional – with new, modern buildings. This included the construction of extensive habitats for European domestic animals, mountain animals and African ungulates. The Primate House, the Giraffe House, popular walk-through habitats like the Lemur Forest, the petting zoo and the kangaroo area were also built during his time as director, over a period of more than 20 years. In 2013, he opened the World of Birds at Zoo Berlin.

Dr Blaszkiewitz was passionate about animals in all their diversity and had extensive knowledge of many species; his personal favourites included manatees and rhinos. His wide-ranging interest in animals and the history of zoos found expression in more than 600 scientific and popular science articles, which he wrote during his 40-year career. His travels took him not only to zoological institutions around the world, but also to the animals' habitats in the wild. He particularly enjoyed his visits to Africa. Dr Blaszkiewitz was a well-known figure in the international zoo community and an active member of numerous zoological associations.

An eventful career

During his time as director, Dr Blaszkiewitz strove to



ensure greater species diversity at Zoo and Tierpark Berlin. Highlights included the successful conservation breeding of African and Asian elephants and Indian rhinoceroses. The first two koalas on German soil were loaned to Tierpark Berlin from San Diego Zoo in 1994 – the same year the first manatees arrived. However, Dr Blaszkiewitz also had to make some difficult decisions during his time as director. For example, all the great apes had to be removed from the Tierpark by the mid-90s as it was no longer possible to keep them in a welfare-focused, species-appropriate manner in the existing conditions at the time.

Other highlights of his time as director included:

- 1991: First successful breeding of white-lipped deer (*Przewalskium albirostris*) in Europe
- 1992: First successful breeding of Australian pelican (*Pelicanus conspicillatus*) anywhere in the world
- 2003: First successful breeding of martial eagle (*Polemaetus bellicosus*) anywhere in the world
- 2013: First successful breeding of Chacoan peccary (*Catagonus wagneri*) in Europe

Dedicated service to Berlin's zoos

'He was a passionate zoologist who had a decisive influence, particularly on the Tierpark, over the past decades,' says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem of his predecessor. 'It is largely thanks to his efforts that the German capital is home to two outstanding zoological institutions whose species diversity is unparalleled around the globe.' Frank Bruckmann, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Zoologischer Garten Berlin AG, adds: 'We will forever honour the memory of Dr Bernhard Blaszkiewitz. He unwaveringly forged his own path, guided by a firm set of values, and put his life at the service of Berlin's zoos. On behalf of the Supervisory Board, I would like to express our sincere condolences to his family.'