

# 2024 SUMMARY



PRAGUE ZOO



## **Prague Zoological Garden**

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# THE ZOO IN NUMBERS

Altogether 1,043 young of reptiles, birds and mammals of 190 species have been born or hatched during 2024, many of them truly remarkable. This fact, together with other attractions, successful promotion across the media and social networks (with a reach of up to 1.5 million on Facebook alone), and fine weather, brought almost 1.4 million visitors to the zoo.

**Total zoo area:** 58 ha  
**Total exhibit area:** 50 ha  
**Number of pavilions:** 15

**Number of exhibits:** over 150  
**Number of employees:** 249  
**Number of visitors in 2024:** 1,387,433

## NUMBER OF ANIMALS KEPT

	SPECIMENS	SPECIES
mammals	1,047	170
birds	1,798	272
reptiles	1,260	146
amphibians	566	15
fish	1,607	36
invertebrates	312	69
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,590</b>	<b>708</b>

The figures are valid as of 31 December 2024.

**Total incomes of the zoo in 2024:** CZK 672.6 million (EUR 26.7 million)

**Total expenses of the zoo in 2024:** CZK 639.7 million (EUR 25.4 million)

**Improved financial result (after tax):** CZK 32.9 million (EUR 1.3 million)



Photo: Miroslav Bobek

Mobi—the first gorilla baby to be born in the Dja Reserve of Prague Zoo

## BREEDING

**Among the most significant breeding achievements of 2024 were two lowland gorilla infants, an infant Sumatran orangutan, Prague Zoo's second Chinese pangolin pup, the first common wombat to be born in Czechia, and the world's first zoo-born Pel's fishing-owl chick. Only a few zoological gardens can boast of three ape babies in one year, and no other zoo in Europe has raised a second pangolin baby.**

Prague Zoological Garden has long maintained an exceptionally high level in both animal husbandry and breeding and scientific expertise. It is a member of WAZA (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums) and actively engaged at various levels within EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria), the largest regional zoo association. Its staff hold important positions within EAZA's committees and working groups. On the international level, Prague Zoo contributes to biodiversity conservation and the conservation of threatened species through expert participation in IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and other international organisations. Educational and academic activities are also a firm priority, with the zoo collaborating with universities, participating in academic committees, and delivering lectures.

## REPTILES, AMPHIBIANS, FISH AND INVERTEBRATES

Among reptiles, turtles form the largest group at Prague Zoo as far as the number of species bred. The most remarkable breeding success of 2024 was the hatching of five **black marsh turtles** (*Siebenrockiella crassicollis*). This species, originating from rescue operations in Hong Kong in 2001 and 2004, was last bred at our zoo in 2011. The mother of the 2024 hatchlings is the last female that hatched at that time, and the father is one of the original males seized during the rescue operations. We also value the successful breeding of two critically endangered species within the EEP (EAZA Ex situ Programme): the **Roti Island snake-necked turtle** (*Chelodina mccordi*) and the **Egyptian tortoise** (*Testudo kleinmanni*).

Of the eight lizard species that reproduced in 2024, the **steppe agama** (*Trapelus sanguinolentus*) was the most prolific, with 72 offspring. However, the most important success among lizards was the hatching of eight **toad-headed agamas** (*Phrynocephalus mystaceus*), a short-lived and exceptionally challenging species to maintain and reproduce in captivity.

A special event was the successful parental incubation of seven **green tree pythons** (*Morelia viridis*), a species first bred at Prague Zoo fifty years ago by Aldo Olexa, who was among the first to achieve this in captivity. The young were displayed in a separate space within their parents' exhibit, allowing visitors to observe both generations side by side.



Photo: Oliver Le Que

The green tree python young with their mother

Our specialisation among fish is the **rainbowfish** family (Melanotaeniidae), which are not only kept on display in the zoo, but we also systematically try to breed them. In 2024, as in the previous years, all four long-established species reproduced successfully. Additionally, we included a new species to the collection: the **Lake Kurumoi rainbowfish** (*Melanotaenia parva*) from New Guinea, which is probably extinct in the wild, surviving solely in human care.

Considerable attention was given to the invertebrate collection, especially in preparation for a major breeding and display project involving the critically endangered **Lord Howe Island stick insect** (*Dryococelus australis*), a species that was rescued from extinction at the last possible moment. In mid-August, we received 400 eggs from Bristol Zoo. Before their arrival, we had prepared breeding facilities and, in cooperation with our horticultural team, expanded the selection and care of food plants. Hatching began in October, and by the end of 2024, a total of 130 individuals had emerged.



A young Lord Howe Island stick insect shortly after hatching

Photo: Peir Hamernik

## BIRDS

Among birds, the most notable hatchlings of 2024 included the **Pel's fishing-owl** (*Scotopelia peli*) and the **buffy fish-owl** (*Bubo ketupu aagaardi*). The Pel's fishing-owl represented the world's first successful rearing of the species in a zoo. The chick was hand-reared and later reintroduced to its parents to foster a stronger species bond. The buffy fish-owl chick was also hand-reared and subsequently transferred to an aviary housing its grandmother to support socialisation—this marked the first successful breeding of the species in Europe in four years. Also worth mentioning are the three young **Ural owls** (*Strix uralensis*) reared at Prague Zoo and transferred to Austria as part of the international collaboration on the Habichtskauz Wiederansiedelung reintroduction project.



Photo: Petr Hamernik

Adult Pel's fishing-owl with juvenile—the first chick of this species reared in a zoo anywhere in the world

Another remarkable chick was a **blue crane** (*Anthropoides paradisea*) raised by foster parents—a pair of red-crowned cranes—followed by a second chick from a later clutch, which was reared by its biological parents. The previous successful rearing of this species at Prague Zoo was 34 years ago, which was also the last time a blue crane was reared in the Czech Republic.



A red-crowned crane with a blue crane chick and a dummy egg that encouraged parental care

The nesting of **little pied cormorants** (*Microcarbo melanoleucos*) was also significant, as the European population of this species in human care has seen a dramatic decline. Prague Zoo currently holds the largest colony of this species outside its native range. The seven chicks reared in 2024 offer hope for sustaining the species in breeding institutions, although no other European zoo succeeded in breeding them that year.

**Egyptian vultures** (*Neophron percnopterus*) successfully reared three chicks, joined by a fourth from Ostrava Zoo, which had been hand-reared and transferred to Prague to support its social development. A one-year-old Egyptian vulture hatched in 2023 was released into the wild in Bulgaria's Eastern Rhodopes in May, following acclimatisation. **Lesser kestrels** (*Falco naumanni*) also bred successfully; their chicks are regularly released in Bulgaria, where the species was extinct until recently.

**African openbills** (*Anastomus lamelligerus*) are rarely bred in zoos, making the successful rearing of five chicks at Prague Zoo particularly valuable. We opted for hand-rearing in the case of **milky storks** (*Mycteria cinerea*), which are rare both in human care and in the wild. As the eggs were laid in late summer, with night temperatures already low, they were moved to an incubator. Two chicks hatched, becoming the first milky storms ever successfully reared at Prague Zoo.

Another breeding highlight was the hatching of six **black-winged stilts** (*Himantopus himantopus himantopus*)—the first successful breeding at the zoo after 14 years of keeping the species.

During our season-opening ceremony, we introduced the first **Brazilian mergansers** (*Mergus octosetaceus*) ever kept in Europe. These critically endangered diving ducks had arrived from Brazil at the end of the previous year as part of a joint conservation breeding project. In spring, the birds were paired, and by the end of the year one female had laid a clutch of seven eggs and started incubating them.

A returning species to our collection was the **Fuegian steamer duck** (*Tachyeres pteneres*) from the southernmost regions of South America. Among other waterfowl, four **magpie geese** (*Anseranas semipalmata*) were successfully reared by their parents, while another four chicks hatched after the death of their father that had been wild-caught in 1997. We also celebrated five ducklings of the **Hartlaub's duck** (*Pteronetta hartlaubii*), a species rarely kept in Europe.



Photo: Miroslav Bobek

In 2024, Prague Zoo became the only zoo outside Brazil where visitors could see the critically endangered Brazilian merganser

One of the most important avian breeding achievements involved the **pink pigeon** (*Nesoenas mayeri*). The global ex-situ population of this endangered Mauritian endemic is around 80 individuals, and even the repatriated wild population on Mauritius has not grown as hoped. As a result, the species' future remains highly uncertain. Regular breeding success is currently achieved only by Jersey Zoo and Chester Zoo, making the rearing of six chicks in Prague a major accomplishment. Also noteworthy was the breeding of the **spotted imperial pigeon** (*Ducula carola carola*), a Philippine endemite. With one chick reared, we once again became the only zoo in Europe to have bred this species successfully.

Songbirds remain one of the most demanding bird groups to breed. We were delighted to raise two **crested oropendolas** (*Psarocolius decumanus*) that were hand-reared. They were the only chicks of the species hatched in Europe in the past five years. We also welcomed a single parent-raised **yellow-hooded blackbird** (*Chrysomus icterocephalus*), again as the only European institution to do so. In addition, we were pleased with four **coleto** (*Sarcops calvus*) chicks, hatched from one of the last remaining breeding pairs of this Philippine endemite in Europe.



Photo: Petr Hamemik

A crested oropendola chick

## MAMMALS

Among the highlights of the year were two **western lowland gorilla** (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*) infants. The first of them, a female named Mobi, was born on 2 January to Duni, a female originally from Spain's Cabárceno whose lineage, however, traces back to Prague. Duni's mother—and therefore Mobi's grandmother—is Moja, the first gorilla ever born in the Czech Republic. The second gorilla infant was born on 14 April to the experienced Kijivu, who is Duni's grandmother and thus Mobi's great-grandmother. The female infant was named Gaia by world-renowned primatologist Jane Goodall. With the births of Mobi and Gaia, a long-standing goal was achieved: to have two gorilla infants in the group, able to grow up and play together.



Photo: Petr Hamerlik

Mobi and Gaia, the western lowland gorilla infants born in Prague Zoo's Dja Reserve, ranked among the most popular additions of 2024

Another great ape birth came from the **Sumatran orangutan** (*Pongo abelii*). On 2 May, Diri—a female born at Prague Zoo—gave birth to her first offspring. Despite being a first-time mother, Diri proved attentive and cared excellently for her son, who was named Harapan.



Photo: Olivier Le Que

Harapan, the young male Sumatran orangutan, is the first offspring of Diri, a female also born at Prague Zoo

The family group of **silvery gibbons** (*Hylobates moloch*) welcomed their fourth baby. We also celebrated our first successful breeding of **Goodman's mouse lemur** (*Microcebus lehilahytsara*), a tiny nocturnal primate. All three breeding pairs reproduced, resulting in a total of five offspring.

A true sensation was the repeated breeding of **Chinese pangolins** (*Manis pentadactyla*). The second pup—again a female—was born on 1 July and named Connie. Unlike her older sibling Šiška, Connie experienced difficulties during weaning, struggling to transition from her mother's milk to adult pangolin diet. Remarkably, her condition improved after her formula was enriched with *Camponotus nicobarensis* ants, kindly provided by Vienna Zoo.



Photo: Miroslav Bobek

The second pangolin pup ever reared in a European zoo: a female named Connie

The most significant marsupial birth was undoubtedly that of a female **Tasmanian common wombat** (*Vombatus ursinus tasmaniensis*)—the very first wombat born in the Czech Republic. Strictly speaking, she was born in autumn 2023, but first peeked out of the pouch in spring 2024. She was named Mersey in June. Towards the end of the year, we also completed the import of two male and two female **Tasmanian devils** (*Sarcophilus harrisii*) as part of the Tasmanian Devil Ambassador Program.



Photo: Oliver Le Que

Common wombat female, Winkleigh, with her daughter, Mersey—the very first wombat born in the Czech Republic

Among the most notable births in smaller mammals were the **black and rufous sengi** (*Rhynchocyon petersi*) twins—the first successful breeding of this species in the Czech Republic—followed by a female from a subsequent litter. We had been attempting to breed giant sengis (*Rhynchocyon* sp.) for 15 years.

As expected, the three **capybara** (*Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris*) pups born on 7 July—two females and one male—attracted great attention from visitors. All three thrived and will be ready for transfer to other institutions in 2025.



Photo: Petr Hamernik

Black and rufous sengi young

A number of young were also successfully reared among small carnivorans. For the first time in fifty years, a female **Geoffroy's cat** (*Leopardus geoffroyi*) gave birth to twins. The **Amur leopard cats** (*Prionailurus bengalensis euptilurus*) had quadruplets, and a female **jaguarundi** (*Herpailurus yagouaroundi*) reared a single male cub—the only recorded birth of this species in a zoo worldwide in 2024. **Tayras** (*Eira barbara*) once again raised twins—one of very few breeding pairs in the world to do so. The Feline and Reptile House welcomed a new species: the **fossa** (*Cryptoprocta ferox*), the largest carnivoran native to Madagascar. There was also an exchange of individuals among **polar bears** (*Ursus maritimus*): the male Tom departed for Almaty Zoo in Kazakhstan on recommendation of the species' EEP coordinator, while two male siblings, Aleut and Gregor, arrived in Prague from Warsaw Zoo.



Photo: Mirceașu Bobek

The cat-like Malagasy fossas were among the new arrivals to the Feline and Reptile House in 2024

We recorded our third **Chinese goral** (*Naemorhedus griseus*) birth since resuming the breeding programme in 2019. The young male was successfully raised, making Prague Zoo one of only two institutions in Europe to breed this rarely kept species. The **West Caucasian tur** (*Capra caucasica*) herd raised four young, and six **Himalayan tahrs** (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) were reared, all of them born virtually over the course of a single weekend.



Photo: Olivier Le Que

Young Chinese goral—a male born in July 2024—at the age of 4.5 months

Among antelopes, the most significant development was the relocation of our **sable antelope** (*Hippotragus niger*) herd to the African Savanna exhibit, where they now live alongside giraffes. This move freed up a separate enclosure for the sensitive **Mhorr gazelles** (*Nanger dama mhorri*) and a pair of **Kirk's dik-diks** (*Madoqua kirkii*) as a companion species. Both the gazelles and the dik-diks adapted quickly to the new space, which seems to suit them very well. Among the **West African sitatungas** (*Tragelaphus spekii gratus*), we welcomed four calves—the first since the breeding group was relocated to the enclosure in the Water World complex in the lower part of the zoo premises, which had previously been home only to a bachelor group.

We also welcomed our 86<sup>th</sup> **Nubian giraffe** (*Giraffa camelopardalis camelopardalis*): Johanka, the final offspring of the male Johan, who passed away the previous year at an advanced age.



Photo: Petr Hamemik

The last offspring of the male Johan—Johanka, a female Nubian giraffe

## EX SITU PROGRAMMES AND STUDBOOKS

During 2024, Prague Zoo coordinated ex situ programmes, kept studbooks, and monitored the breeding of a total of 26 animal species. A list of these species is provided below.

EAZA Ex situ Programmes (EEP):	European Studbooks (ESB):	Monitored-by-designated-person Programme (EAZA MON-P):
<b>Aldabra giant tortoise</b> ( <i>Aldabrachelys gigantea</i> )	<b>Cuban boa</b> ( <i>Chilabothrus angulifer</i> )	<b>Mindanao lorikeet</b> ( <i>Trichoglossus johnstoniae</i> )
<b>Southeast Asian box turtle complex</b> ( <i>Cuora amboinensis</i> s. l.)	<b>Giant Asian pond turtle</b> ( <i>Heosemys grandis</i> )	<b>Pesquet's parrot</b> ( <i>Psittichas fulgidus</i> )
<b>Malaysian giant turtle</b> ( <i>Orlitia borneensis</i> )	<b>Gharial</b> ( <i>Gavialis gangeticus</i> )	<b>Yellow-billed amazon</b> ( <i>Amazona collaria</i> )
<b>Batagur complex</b>	<b>Cuban crocodile</b> ( <i>Crocodylus rhombifer</i> )	<b>Southern galago</b> ( <i>Galago moholi</i> )
<b>Bornean earless monitor lizard</b> ( <i>Lanthanotus borneensis</i> )	<b>Cabot's tragopan</b> ( <i>Tragopan caboti</i> )	<b>Chacoan mara</b> ( <i>Dolichotis salinicola</i> )
<b>Vietnam pheasant</b> ( <i>Lophura edwardsi</i> )	<b>Northern Luzon cloud rat</b> ( <i>Phloeomys pallidus</i> )	<b>Cuban hutia</b> ( <i>Capromys pilorides</i> )
<b>Egyptian vulture</b> ( <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> )	<b>Southern Luzon cloud rat</b> ( <i>Phloeomys cumingi</i> )	<b>Leopard cat complex</b> ( <i>Prionailurus bengalensis</i> s. l.)
<b>Rufous hornbill</b> ( <i>Buceros hydrocorax</i> s. l.)		
<b>Northern galago</b> ( <i>Galago senegalensis</i> )	<b>International Studbooks (ISB):</b>	
<b>Reeves' muntjac</b> ( <i>Muntiacus reevesi</i> )	<b>Przewalski's horse</b> ( <i>Equus przewalskii</i> )	
<b>Beisa oryx</b> ( <i>Oryx beisa</i> )	The longest-maintained studbook kept by Prague Zoo. In July, it was released in electronic form, including all historical records. By the end of 2024, it contained historical data on 9,162 horses (4,357 stallions, 4,477 mares, and 328 individuals of undetermined sex), making it the third largest studbook among mammals.	
<b>Przewalski's horse</b> ( <i>Equus przewalskii</i> )		

# IN SITU CONSERVATION PROJECTS

During 2024, in situ conservation activities focused primarily on developing the flagship Return of the Wild Horses project—specifically on preparing and carrying out the first transport of Przewalski’s horses to Kazakhstan and laying the groundwork for their future reintroduction to eastern Mongolia. Conservation efforts also continued in Cameroon, the Congo, Australia, and other locations.

## RETURN OF THE WILD HORSES

A historic milestone of 2024 was the transport of seven Przewalski’s horses (*Equus przewalskii*) from Prague and Berlin to central Kazakhstan, where they were to be released into the wild—thus returning the species to the Kazakhstan’s natural landscape for the first time in several centuries. The transport itself, organised by Prague Zoo, was preceded in late February and early March 2024 by the signing of a cooperation agreement between Prague Zoo and the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of



Photo: Anna Bernátková

The world’s first transport of Przewalski’s horses to central Kazakhstan took place in June 2024

Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation with the project's key foreign partners. Before the transport could take place, severe flooding in the planned reintroduction area had to be addressed, as it had destroyed much of the reintroduction centre, including acclimatisation enclosures and the access road. Thanks to funding secured from corporate donors and the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all necessary repairs were fully financed and the transport went ahead as scheduled.

In cooperation with the Czech Air Force and Germany's Tierpark Berlin, three horses (a stallion and two mares) from the breeding and acclimatisation centre in Dolní Dobřejov were flown in a military CASA aircraft from Prague-Kbely Airport, while another four mares travelled aboard a military transport plane from Berlin in June 2024. Upon landing in Arkalyk, Kazakhstan, the horses continued their journey overland in transport crates loaded onto lorry beds. They were released into acclimatisation enclosures at the Alibi Reintroduction Centre in Kazakhstan's Golden Steppe (Altyn Dala) on 4 and 6 June 2024—and mating attempts were observed shortly thereafter.

In 2024, progress was also made in the planned reintroduction of Przewalski's horses to the Valley of Monasteries (Sumiin khooloi) in eastern Mongolia. On the occasion of the opening of Prague Zoo's new Gobi exhibit, a delegation from Mongolia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism (now the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change), including the then Minister, visited the zoo in March 2024 and signed a key Memorandum of Cooperation. Later, in September, representatives of the zoo signed a cooperation agreement in Mongolia with the Strictly Protected Area of Numrug, in which the Valley of Monasteries is located.



Photo: Oliver Le Que

Director of Prague Zoo Miroslav Bobek (right) and then Minister of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia, H.E. Mr Bat-Erdene Bat-Ulzii (left), at the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation, paving the way for further efforts to return the Przewalski's horse to eastern Mongolia and much more



Photo: David Broda

As one of the measures to protect wild camels in Mongolia, part of the camel population was relocated to a new breeding centre, the construction of which was funded by Prague Zoo

In Mongolia, Prague Zoo also participated in the relocation of critically endangered wild camels from the original breeding centre at Zakhyn Us to a newly established facility at Toli Bulag. Both centres, situated within the natural range of the wild camel in the buffer zone of the Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area, are operated by the UK-based non-profit Wild Camel Protection Foundation with financial support from Prague Zoo. As part of the September transfer to the new breeding centre at Toli Bulag—whose construction was largely funded by Prague Zoo through its collection account We Help Them to Survive—seven wild camels were successfully relocated.

## WANDERING BUS

Prague Zoo's project focused on environmental education and the protection of gorillas and other rainforest species of the Congo Basin continued to attract strong interest from Cameroonian children, teachers and parents throughout 2024. A total of 16 journeys of the Wandering Bus took place, and thanks to close cooperation with local communities, we succeeded in publishing a locally tailored educational book in two language versions—French and the Badwe'e dialect of the Koonzime language—entitled *The Little Gorilla: A Journey Through the Cameroonian Rainforest*. In the final months of 2024, the *Gorilla Fairytales* were also revised and published in both French and Badwe'e. In addition, broader activities resumed in



September 2024 with the start of the new school year, as part of the environmental education programme conducted in the Badwe'e dialect. The programme was successfully expanded to 11 schools in and around the town of Somalomo.

Together with our partner organisation Ape Action Africa—which, among other things, operates a primate sanctuary in Mefou (an important stop on the Wandering Bus route)—we continued working on plans for the construction of an education centre with accommodation facilities. The aim is to improve outreach and raise awareness of environmental protection and local wildlife. In 2024, we secured a CZK 500,000 contribution (nearly EUR 20,000) from Komerční banka (Société Générale group) for the construction. Later in the year, with the assistance of Prague Zoo, Ape Action Africa was awarded a further CZK 500,000 grant from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its Small Local Projects scheme.

Alongside our activities in Cameroon, we resumed efforts to establish cooperation with organisations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after a hiatus of over a year caused by the deteriorating political and security situation. In spring and summer 2024, our focus was primarily on the local radio station, Gorilla FM. Together, we compiled a list of technical equipment required to extend the station's broadcasting reach both within Kahuzi-Biega National Park and beyond its borders. Over the summer, we also launched a collaboration with students from a local school, who will help translate *Gorilla Fairytales* into Swahili. A detailed translation plan was drawn up, which will serve as the basis for the radio broadcast of an audio version of *Gorilla Fairytales* in this language.

## PROTECTION OF AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE

In 2024, support for projects aimed at protecting threatened animal species in Australia continued. These included:

- The translocation and protection of the **mountain pygmy-possum** (*Burrhamys parvus*) in New South Wales, led by the Australian Ecosystems Foundation. Additional funding was agreed on for the Secret Creek Sanctuary breeding centre as part of this project.
- The reintroduction of the **Lord Howe Island stick insect** (*Dryococelus australis*). In this context, collaboration with Zoos Victoria on genetic research into the Lord Howe Island stick insect was resumed at the end of the year.
- Protection of the **southern brush-tailed rock-wallaby** (*Petrogale penicillata*) against invasive predators in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Mt Rose, and Mt Rothwell.
- Breeding of **southern corroboree frogs** (*Pseudophryne corroboree*) at Zoos Victoria, with the aim of strengthening the wild population.



Photo: Olivier Le Que

The Czech Ambassador to Australia, H.E. Jana Tyrer (pictured during her visit to Prague Zoo in August 2024), has supported activities aimed at protecting wild wombats

Cooperation was established with the non-profit organisation Wombat Rescue, which focuses on rescuing, treating, and rehabilitating sick, injured, or orphaned **common wombats** (*Vombatus ursinus*), subsequently releasing them back into the wild. Prague Zoo covered the costs of constructing a specialised enclosure required for the soft release method of reintroducing rehabilitated wombats into their natural habitat. A key milestone was the establishment of a partnership with, and securing political support from, H.E. Jana Tyrer, the Czech Republic's Ambassador to Australia, who visited Prague Zoo in August 2024.

## OTHER IN SITU PROJECTS ABROAD

- At the end of 2024, veterinary supplies were purchased to support the conservation of the **white-bellied heron** (*Ardea insignis*) in Bhutan, where Prague Zoo has long provided material assistance and veterinary consultancy.
- The protection of the critically endangered population of **Egyptian vultures** (*Neophron percnopterus*) in the Balkans is one of the projects funded through Prague Zoo's "8 crowns from admission" initiative. The Bulgarian organisation Green Balkans, with whom Prague Zoo cooperates, carried out several public awareness programmes and field trips for vulture monitoring and feeding site maintenance using these funds. Unfortunately, in 2024 their rehabilitation and breeding centre suffered flooding in its incubation facilities. Prague Zoo responded by donating funds from the public collection We Help Them to Survive, which were used to restore the damaged areas.
- Prague Zoo continues to provide long-term support for the in situ conservation of the **Brazilian merganser** (*Mergus octosetaceus*) through its Brazilian partner Natureza do Futuro, which specialises in this species. Thanks to contributions from the "8 crowns from admission" initiative, radio transmitters were purchased and subsequently used to monitor the offspring of wild birds.
- Prague Zoo also supports the reintroduction of the **Vietnam pheasant** (*Lophura edwardsi*) in Vietnam and the conservation of the **gharial** (*Gavialis gangeticus*) in India.

## IN SITU PROJECTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In 2024, the project for research and conservation of the critically endangered **crucian carp** (*Carassius carassius*) continued successfully. Prague Zoo began the gradual reconstruction of fish tanks to enable their use for carp distribution during the fish catching season.

A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed with the Prague City Forests, under which additional ponds will be gradually made available for the rescue programme. Furthermore, during the year, stock was introduced to several locations in the Central and South Bohemian Regions. In total, genetically tested fish are now present in more than 20 ponds.

As part of the **European ground squirrel** (*Spermophilus citellus*) conservation, the long-planned relocation of ground squirrels from beneath the Sklenářka building within the zoo grounds to a large cage within the Przewalski's horse enclosure at Divčí hrady in Prague took place over the summer. Thirty animals were released on site. For the coming years, we plan to keep the ground squirrels exclusively in the cage, with any new offspring potentially being used for release into the wild as part of the national action plan.

Conservation of **dice snakes** (*Natrix tessellata*) and **European green lizards** (*Lacerta viridis*) progressed successfully in 2024. The reptile curator organised training for staff of the Nuclear Research Institute in Řež focused on coexistence with the critically endangered dice snakes, whose protection in the Vltava river basin north of Prague is a key focus of Prague Zoo. Further cooperation with the institute has been agreed.

Prague Zoo also supports the conservation of the **eastern baton blue butterfly** (*Pseudophilotes vicrama*) in the Czech Republic and a number of other projects.



Photo: Petr Hamemik

Young crucian carps

# CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

A major milestone in 2024 was the completion and opening of the new Gobi exhibit, showcasing the Przewalski's horse and other species of Mongolian fauna. Indian crested porcupines have received a new exhibit, and construction work also extended to the Water World exhibit compound, where a new facility for capuchin monkeys was built.



Photo: Tereza Mrhalikova

Przewalski's horses in the new Gobi exhibit

## GOBI

The Gobi exhibit focuses primarily on the **Przewalski's horse** (*Equus przewalskii*), which are showcased in an environment designed to evoke its native habitat—the Central Asian steppes and semi-deserts. This is reflected in the sparse vegetation, the terraced terrain of the enclosure featuring rocky outcrops and boulders, and the coarse sandy and stony substrate, which is ideal for even hoof wear. The facility for Przewalski's horses comprises, in addition to the stables and off-exhibit facilities, two enclosures—a main display enclosure covering 1,970 m<sup>2</sup> intended for the herd, and a smaller holding enclosure of 1,015 m<sup>2</sup>, used for isolating the stallion or newly arrived horses after transport.

The terraced slope of the enclosure, mimicking the undulating terrain of the Dzungarian Gobi, flows seamlessly into the surrounding hills. Artificial rock formations faithfully replicate a specific Mongolian site—the world-famous Flaming Cliffs—renowned for their distinctive scenery and dinosaur fossils, replicas of which visitors can view here. Also featured is a traditional Mongolian ovoos, a sacred stone cairn.

Adjoining this impressive outdoor space is a small pavilion embedded in the terrain and fully planted with vegetation. Inside are terrariums housing smaller desert animals. Mammals include the **Mongolian gerbil** (*Meriones unguiculatus*), the **long-eared hedgehog** (*Hemiechinus auritus*), **Roborovski desert hamster** (*Phodopus roborovskii*), and the **steppe lemming** (*Lagurus lagurus*), a species new to Prague Zoo. The pavilion also contains two reptile exhibits and three smaller insectaria with invertebrates. The smaller reptile exhibit is an ambitious attempt to present the secretive burrowing **Tartar sand boa** (*Eryx tataricus*), thought to be the inspiration for the mythical Mongolian death worm. The larger reptile exhibit showcases the most characteristic Mongolian reptiles—racerunners (*Eremias*) and toadhead agamas (*Phrynocephalus*), specifically the **Gobi racerunner** (*Eremias przewalskii*), **Przewalski's toadhead agama** (*Phrynocephalus przewalskii*), and the **Mongolian sunwatcher toadhead agama** (*Phrynocephalus helioscopus varius*). The generously sized terrarium is designed to meet the needs of these particularly demanding small lizards. Among the two invertebrate exhibits in the Gobi pavilion, the more eye-catching display features **Chinese golden scorpions** (*Olivierus martensii*). One case shows the yellowish scorpions under normal light, but visitors' attention is immediately drawn to the second one, where the same species glows with a mysterious neon colour under ultraviolet light. In contrast, the **Chinese medicinal cockroaches** (*Eupolyphaga sinensis*) remain almost permanently buried and are very inconspicuous.



Photo: Miroslav Bobek

Tartar sand boa



Photo: Petr Hamernik

The pavilion in the Gobi exhibit houses not only terrariums with desert animals but also a small museum showcasing the Return of the Wild Horses to Mongolia

A significant part of the pavilion's interior was dedicated to presenting the story of the last wild horse and efforts to save and reintroduce it into the wild. This resulted in a small museum where visitors can see, among other things, accurate models of the military CASA aircraft and vehicles used by Prague Zoo since 2011 to transport Przewalski's horses to the Gobi B region.

The atmosphere of the exhibit complex is enhanced by other elements referencing Mongolia. These include a **yurt** used as an exhibition space and a **stone with petroglyphs** (carvings of various ages) replicated from a specific find made in Mongolia by Prague Zoo's director, Miroslav Bobek. The entire new complex is completed by two outdoor enclosures for the unmistakable **Pallas's cats** (*Otocolobus manul*), whose breeding we have revived after nearly 15 years.

## **PORCUPINE EXHIBIT**

In May 2024, we opened a new exhibit for **Indian crested porcupines** (*Hystrix indica*) in the lower part of the zoo grounds, between the Giant Tortoise House and the Salamander House, giving them a permanent home after several relocations. In the centre of the enclosure is an elevated platform where keepers place food, allowing visitors to observe these spiky rodents at eye level. The exhibit also features a view into an indoor area simulating an underground burrow, with tree roots extending down from the ceiling. By the end of the year, the exhibit housed three adult females and three offspring that were born there.

## **CAPUCHIN MONKEY EXHIBIT**

In the Water World and Monkey Islands compound, on the site of the former guereza exhibit, a new housing facility for capuchin monkeys was constructed during 2024. It has a total usable area of 92.5 m<sup>2</sup> and comprises two exhibits, a holding box, and keeper facilities. The building is adjoined by a spacious roofed enclosure of 57 m<sup>2</sup>, which will serve as winter quarters should the water moat surrounding the main open enclosure freeze over. Construction was completed by the end of 2024, and the capuchins are expected to move in the following year. Meanwhile, negotiations were launched in 2024 with the aim of importing the first individuals of the **blond capuchin** (*Sapajus flavius*) from South America. These would form the foundation of a new European ex situ population, as the species is not kept in European zoos. Until their arrival, the exhibit will be occupied by a group of **yellow-breasted capuchins** (*Sapajus xanthosternos*).

## **EUROPEAN BISON ENCLOSURE IN PRAGUE'S DOLNÍ POČERNICE DISTRICT**

In 2024, the main construction phase of the **Bison in Prague** project was completed. Its primary goal is to establish a large open-range enclosure to expand the breeding programme for the European bison—the continent's largest hoofed mammal. At the same time, the initiative contributes to habitat restoration and biodiversity enhancement. Experience shows that grazing, trampling, wallowing and dust bathing by these animals naturally promote grassland diversification, favouring flowering plants, shrubs and trees. As a result, the site is expected to see the return of native wildlife species—from insects to vertebrates. The main enclosure covers nearly 12 hectares (precisely 118,224 m<sup>2</sup>). The operational facilities include a building with a built-up area of 74 m<sup>2</sup>, an adjoining holding pen of 462 m<sup>2</sup>, and two veterinary yards with a combined area of 52 m<sup>2</sup>. The arrival of the first bison is planned for 2025.

# PUBLIC

One of the main goals of modern zoos is to encourage a positive attitude towards nature among the public. To help achieve this, the zoo offers a range of educational and entertaining activities for visitors, maintains a comprehensive information system, and publishes various materials. Prague Zoo is the most visited zoo in the Czech Republic, and its nearly 1.4 million visitors per year represent an opportunity to influence a significant part of the public.



The ceremonial opening of the Gobi exhibit was attended by the President of the Czech Republic and the Minister of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia

## PROGRAMME EVENTS

Throughout the year, Prague Zoo held a number of regular, well-established events, as well as several one-off occasions linked to significant births or the opening of new exhibits. On 10 February, the **naming ceremony of a baby gorilla** drew enormous public interest. The name for the granddaughter of the famous Moja was chosen with the help of children

from the Dja Biosphere Reserve in Cameroon, while the final decision was made by the Czech public, who selected the name Mobi. The baby gorilla also received warm wishes from popular YouTuber Kovy.

The first quarter culminated on 23 March with the opening of the zoo's 93<sup>rd</sup> season, featuring the **inauguration of the new Gobi exhibit complex**. The event was attended by the President of the Czech Republic, H.E. Mr Petr Pavel, as well as the Minister of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia, H.E. Mr Bat-Erdene Bat-Ulzii. The programme also included the presentation of the critically endangered Brazilian merganser—a duck species that, outside of Brazil, can only be seen at Prague Zoo.

In May, the world-renowned primatologist and conservationist **Dr Jane Goodall** made her third visit to Prague Zoo. Public interest was enormous, and even at the age of ninety, Dr Goodall demonstrated incredible charisma, tirelessness, and a sense of humour. The main points of her programme at Prague Zoo were the **naming of a female gorilla baby**, born in April, for whom she chose the name Gaia, and the presentation of the Czech translation of her book *Pangolina*, which is intended for children and deals with pangolins. Her lecture, held under the auspices of Prague Zoo, then took place in the auditorium of the Czech University of Life Sciences on 10 May, but the capacity of the large hall was not even close to sufficient for the number of people interested.



Photo: Oliver Le Que

The renowned conservationist and primatologist Dr Jane Goodall visited Prague Zoo in May and named the younger of the two gorilla infants, choosing the name Gaia for her

In June, several noteworthy events took place. On Sunday the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the **naming ceremony of an orangutan** infant was held in the presence of British Ambassador Matt Field, Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Lipavský, and Deputy Mayor of Prague Jana Komrsková. From approximately 2,000 name suggestions submitted by the public, the keepers ultimately chose the name Harapan for the young male. On Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup>, the **oldest elephant** in the Prague herd, Gulab, celebrated her 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. The **first wombat** born in the Czech Republic received its name on Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup>: the little female was named Mersey, with actor Ondřej Sokol—a supporter of Prague’s wombats—serving as her godfather. Additionally, the fourth **Foster Parents’ Meeting** was held in June, during which special programmes were organised for foster families visiting Prague Zoo.



Photo: Petr Hamerník

Actor Ondřej Sokol (right) and Prague Zoo Director Miroslav Bobek at the naming ceremony of the first Czech-born wombat

Between July and September, ten guided tours were held of the **Poison Dart Frogs** exhibition, which opened on 6 July and featured several dozen species of live poison dart frogs. During the summer holidays, visitors could also enjoy a range of traditional events, such as the **Weekend of Insect-eating Animals**. On Sunday, 28 July, the naming ceremony of the second Prague **baby pangolin** took place; the young female was named Connie, a name proposed and selected by readers of iDNES.cz. Over the summer, the naming ceremony of a **young giraffe** also took place; her name, Johanka, was officially revealed on Saturday, 10 August, by former national team basketball players Ivana Burgrová, Ilona Večeřová, and Karolína Cahová.

To combat the extreme heat, a summer holiday project called **Zoo under Ice** was carried out, offering refreshing relief throughout various parts of the zoo during the hottest days. The Bidfood Company supplied Prague Zoo with between 7.5 and 12 tonnes of ice on eight occasions, which was primarily placed in the enclosures of selected animal species and partly in visitor areas. As a result, Prague Zoo became one of the coolest places in the Czech Republic—at least in some parts of its grounds.



Photo: Miroslav Bobek

An icy cool-down during the Zoo under Ice event was especially enjoyed by the polar bear brothers Aleut and Gregor

For the third consecutive season, the **Spejbl and Hurvínek Theatre**—a beloved Czech puppet theatre—performed at the zoo at the end of summer, this time with the play *Hurvínek & the Uninvited Guest*. Both performances were completely sold out, promising further collaboration in the coming year.

The highlight of the third quarter was the **celebration of Prague Zoo's 93<sup>rd</sup> anniversary**, held on 28 September. The event had a 1950s theme to mark the fact that it was in 1959 that Prague Zoo was entrusted with keeping the International Studbook for the Przewalski's horse, which thus celebrated its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024. The main point of the morning programme was the book launch of *Breakfast with Her Excellency* by Prague Zoo Director Miroslav Bobek. The afternoon programme was opened by the ambassadors of Kazakhstan, Bakyt Dyussenbayev, and Mongolia, Gansukh Khashkhan Damdin—representatives of the two countries to which Prague Zoo has transported Przewalski's horses

as part of the Return of the Wild Horses project. The celebration, which honoured Prague Zoo's successes in saving the Przewalski's horse, was also attended by long-time zoo supporter and Olympian David Svoboda, who previously became godfather to the mare Querida, one of the horses transported to Mongolia.

In October, the visitor programme reflected the autumn theme. **Pumpkin Feast**, held throughout the autumn school holidays at the end of October and beginning of November around selected animal species, attracted many visitors of all ages.

The end of the year was marked by traditional Christmas-themed events and the annual **sponsors' meeting**, held on 7 December. As usual, the gathering included the presentation of the Big, Small, and Wild Richard Awards, the opening of the *Photographing at Prague Zoo* exhibition showcasing the winning photos from the namesake photography contest, and an accompanying programme featuring a special fur seal training session.

**Animal enrichment workshops** were held in January, April, and July for pre-registered participants. Prague Zoo also organised the traditional **Turtle Keepers' Day** four times during the year, featuring lectures, discussions, and meetings that offer visitors insights into the zoological and husbandry aspects of this endangered animal group. **Commented feeding sessions** and talks were held year-round—on weekends and holidays outside the main season, and daily at over twenty locations during the summer months. Exhibitions enriched the visitor experience throughout the year; a total of eleven exhibitions were held in the usual venues (Gočár's Houses Gallery, the yurt by the Przewalski's horse enclosure, and the Education Centre terrace) as well as in the Dja Reserve.



Photo: Petr Hamernik

The popular commented feeding sessions and animal talks take place year-round at various locations throughout the zoo

## EDUCATION AND WORK WITH CHILDREN

For schools, Prague Zoo offers not **only guided** tours and **educational programmes** but also **teacher packs** for independent work. These are mainly used during the main school season (April to June), when the capacity for guided tours and educational programmes is fully booked. In 2024, a total of 716 groups with 16,249 pupils took advantage of Prague Zoo's educational offerings.

From 2 October 2023 to 30 April 2024, the competition **Become a Forest Guard** was held for children's groups, organised in cooperation with Remobil, z. s. The competing groups collected old mobile phones and tablets for recycling to help lowland gorillas and other endangered species from Central Africa. Over 5,000 devices were collected in 2024 as part of the competition.

Prague Zoo runs **Zoo Club** and **Zoo Group** for children and youth aged 8 to 18. These sessions take place every weekday and are designed to systematically educate participants in zoology, ecology, and related disciplines under the guidance of experienced instructors.

The popular **summer suburban camps** were held over nine weeks throughout the summer holidays, with a total of 410 children participating across two age groups. Campers not only thoroughly explored the zoo grounds but also had the opportunity to try out some of the keepers' activities and get a behind-the-scenes look at the operation of a modern zoo.



Photo: Oliver Le Que

New educational programme for schools: *The Secrets of the Gobi*

## SERVICES AND EXPERIENCES

Since July 2024, Prague Zoo has offered a unique interactive experience in collaboration with C2K Entertainment—a **Virtual Reality** booth located in the lower part of the zoo grounds. Here, visitors can enjoy educational films with a natural science theme through a truly immersive VR experience, using motion seats and special goggles—allowing them to observe mountain gorillas in the Rwandan rainforest or travel alongside vast herds of wildebeest across the Serengeti.

On Sunday 13 October, Prague Zoo officially launched its new **mobile application**, designed to simplify visits to the zoo and provide visitors with complete comfort—from purchasing entrance tickets and navigating the grounds using an interactive map, to accessing detailed profiles of the zoo’s animals, receiving timely notifications about feeding times, and discovering suggested routes around the zoo. The app, available for both Android and iOS devices, was developed by students from the Czech IT Academy in cooperation with Komerční banka (Société Générale group). It represents the first project of its kind among Czech zoological gardens, notable also due to the fact that it was created entirely from scratch, not based on any template.



The Prague Zoo mobile app quickly earned a user rating of 4.9 out of 5 after its launch

At the end of the year, Prague Zoo was enlivened by giant lanterns in the shapes of African animals and fantastical plants, created by the company Garden of Lights. This type of installation had never before been seen in a Czech zoo. In addition to its financial benefits, the **Zoo of Light** attracted considerable attention from both the public and the media. The spectacular display opened in November and was scheduled to run until mid-February 2025.

## PUBLICATIONS

Prague Zoo publishes **Trojský koník**, its quarterly magazine, which offers updates on zoo activities, behind-the-scenes insights, animal profiles, reports on conservation projects, interviews, and much more. An integral part of each issue is *Trojský koníček*, a children's supplement featuring fun tasks and activities. In 2024, *Trojský koník* covered topics such as the two young gorillas born at the zoo, the newly opened Gobi exhibit and its inhabitants, Jane Goodall's visit to Prague, the first-ever Return of the Wild Horses to Kazakhstan, and adolescence in the animal kingdom. *Trojský koníček* introduced younger readers to the world of horses, donkeys and zebras, took them on a journey around the globe, explored various forms of parental care among animals, and included a calendar with board games for the whole year. For staff members, Prague Zoo also publishes **Tamtamy** magazine, which is issued twice a year.





A new edition of *Gorilla Fairytales* was published in 2024 in both French and the Badwe'e dialect. That same year, Prague Zoo also prepared a Czech translation of Jane Goodall's book *Pangolina* and released several brochures—including a *Return of the Wild Horses 2024* press kit in Czech, English, and Russian; the bilingual Czech-English brochure *Poison Dart Frogs 3*; and the *Little Gorilla* educational brochure in both French and Badwe'e. Our range of printed materials continues to include perennial favourites such as colouring books, desk and wall calendars, and postcards—all accompanied by educational texts to offer not only entertainment and visual appeal, but also learning opportunities.

In connection with the opening of the new Gobi exhibit, a comprehensive **information system** was also developed, providing insights into selected features of the region as well as the animal species that inhabit it. Dedicated sections were added to the zoo's website as part of this initiative. A new series of four panels was created for the fur seal exhibit; a panel on the Indian festival of lights, Diwali, was added to the Elephant Valley; and the Feline and Reptile House received a set of updated panels. All panels throughout Prague Zoo are prepared bilingually, in both Czech and English.



## MERCHANDISE AND SOUVENIRS

Prague Zoo is continually expanding its range of own-brand merchandise to meet the demand from visitors who come to see their favourite animal and look for its depiction on items to take home. Among the bestsellers are textiles—T-shirts featuring animals from Prague Zoo, sweatshirts, baseball caps, tote bags and the like. The zoo's range, however, is far broader, including magnets, jigsaw puzzles, picture pairs games, water bottles, lunch boxes, and of course the ever-popular postcards and calendars. In 2024, we added a number of new items to the range, such as tourist stamp cards, notebooks, pens, commemorative medals, mirrors, nail files and mugs.

All Prague Zoo merchandise can be purchased not only in any of the ten shops located within the grounds, but also online via the zoo's e-shop, with the option of home delivery or collection from the pick-up point at the zoo exit. A novelty in 2024 was the installation of the ZooBox next to the e-shop pick-up point, offering even greater flexibility for collecting orders. Thanks to its specially lit interior, items can be collected here 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Many of the souvenirs introduced in 2024 were inspired by the zoo's new additions and significant events.



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