The Tisch Family Zoological Gardens
Annual Report 2013
The Jerusalem Zoo Celebrates 20 Years

The Tisch Family Zoological Gardens, also known as the Biblical Zoo, is ranked the number 1 tourist attraction in Israel, attracting over 750,000 visitors annually. The Zoo’s varied animal exhibits, set within its 100-acre scenic location in the Judean hills, draws people from all of Jerusalem’s diverse population groups – young and old; Jewish, Christian and Muslim; secular and religious – giving each one an up-close-and-personal encounter with animals from around the world.

The Zoo's primary goal is the conservation of endangered species, with special emphasis on those mentioned in the Bible. The Jerusalem Zoo has been recognized internationally for its successful research, as well as its breeding and reintroduction programs. Central to the Zoo's mission is the education of visitors about wildlife, conservation, and sustainability, the offering every population sector the opportunity to benefit from educational programs, volunteer experiences, and special events throughout the year.

The year 2013 marks twenty years since the Zoo moved to its present location in Jerusalem's Malha neighborhood in 1993. The official celebrations for the Zoo's 20th birthday took place throughout the year, with a series of highlighted events during the month of July for both the general public and invited guests.

The Zoo's birthday month kicked off to dramatic start with the Jerusalem Zoozaic symposium at the King David Hotel on July 1st, followed the next night by the annual Israeli Friends of the Zoo Gala Dinner with special guest star, Israeli musician Yehuda Poliker. The Jerusalem Zoo was also proud to welcome the president of Israel, Shimon Peres, who toured the Zoo in the company of Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat and Zoo director Shai Doron. As part of the 20-year commemorative events, Mr. Haig Balian, director of the Royal Artis Zoo in Amsterdam, planted a tree to symbolize the ties between the two institutions.

Visitors were then treated to a month long of special events and activities to celebrate the Zoo's 20th year. These included night and sunrise tours, plays, workshops and musical performances, a photo and video contest (one photo winner featured on the cover), and special art exhibitions at the Rapoport Noah's Ark Visitor Center.
Timeline: 1993 – 2013

1993
The Zoo opens in Netanya

1995
First baby Giraffe born at the Zoo

1998
Opening of the Bible Land Wildlife Preserve

1999
Opening of Noah’s Ark Visitor Center

2000
Opening of Penguin Exhibit

2001
Opening of Noah’s Ark Sculpture Park

2004
Opening of Australian Yard

2005
Birth of Gaby, the first Asian Elephant born as a result of artificial insemination

2006
Wildlife Breeding and Reintroduction Programs begin: Persian Fallow Deer, White Oryx, Griffon Vulture

2008
Birth of Sylvester, the Sumatran Tiger cub (endangered species)

2010
Wet Side Story Exhibit Opens

2012
The Center for Raptor Egg Incubation opens to the public

2013
The Zoo celebrates 20 years

2015
Opening of Sea Israel: The Gottsman Aquarium scheduled for mid-2015
Highlights of Israel's Number 1 Tourist Attraction

The Zoo has been ranked as the top tourist attraction in Israel a total of 5 times in the past decade, including 2012, when the visitor count reached an all-time high of 752,246.

Visitor Numbers Overview:

The Zoo was honored with a certificate of excellence from the TripAdvisor travel website. TripAdvisor ranks the Zoo as the 6th best place to visit in Jerusalem.

The Zoo released an iPhone app in 2012. The app's features include: GPS navigation map of the Zoo, event listings updated online, detailed information about animals, virtual talking guide at the main animal exhibits, the ability to share photos with the Zoo and with friends, animal picture frame and more!
2013: The Year in Summary

As 2012 drew to a close, residents of southern Israel were faced with the terror of unceasing rocket attacks. The Zoo lived up to its description as "an oasis of sanity" in the heart of Jerusalem when it hosted scores of visitors from the country's southern region seeking respite from the Gaza rocket bombardment and the resultant launching of "Operation Pillar of Defense" in November 2012.

With the start of 2013 came the heaviest snow to fall in Jerusalem in recent years. As the snow blanketed the Zoo for several days in January, visitors enjoyed the stunning photo opportunity. Unfortunately, however, another consequence was the loss of many of the facility's older trees, which collapsed under the weight of the snow.

National elections were also held in January 2013. Several thousand people turned out at the Zoo on Election Day – a public holiday nationwide – in order to enjoy the sunshine and the animals on their rare vacation day. While the general public voted for the new leaders of Israel, Zoo visitors exercised their democratic rights to choose the leadership of the animal kingdom. Votes were counted at the end of the day: the
lions won with 220 votes, the elephants came in second with 150 votes, and the kangaroos made a surprising third place with 130 votes. The Zoo is waiting for the formation of a coalition government.

The Passover holiday period, when schools are closed nationwide, was another exciting time at the Zoo. Children had the opportunity to view special performances – the Bubbles Show, Animal Theater, and Acrobatics; to “Burn the Chametz with the Elephants”; and to participate actively in the ZoOlympics.

New Animals Join the Zoo

The new Living with the Wolves exhibit was opened in July 2012. The exhibit educates visitors about the importance of balancing wildlife conservation with the needs of modern development. The conservation of these fascinating carnivores, which are native to Israel's Galilee and Golan regions, are an excellent example of coexistence issues between man and nature. The three wolves – Julie, Jason and Jane – have acclimatized well to their new home.

"Save two for the price of one" reads the sign at the new Tufted Deer exhibit. This small, miniature deer is an endangered species. It is also one a natural prey of the Sumatran Tiger in the wild and therefore saving the Tufted Deer is connected to saving the endangered Sumatran Tiger. Thus, this new exhibit demonstrates to Zoo visitors a prime example of the interdependence of species in natural ecosystems.
This past summer, the new Nile Crocodile exhibit opened with three young crocodiles. They have since been joined by another large male crocodile, 30-year-old Clarence, who came to us from the private collection of the Maurice family in Eilat. The Nile Crocodile is one of the world’s 23 species of crocodile and used to be found in Israel until about a century ago. Crocodiles are endangered and only one species continues to thrive in the wild.

Midas Tamarins, also known as Golden-handed Tamarins, have recently taken up residence in the Tropical Aviary. The new Tamarins are acclimatizing to the exhibit and it is hoped that in their new home, the tamarins – a species in which the males take care of the young – will ultimately reproduce. In addition, a number of new exotic birds have been added to the Tropical Aviary and the Marsh Aviary, including Swinhoe’s Pheasant and the Lady Pheasant.

After the death of Simon, the Zoo’s beloved male Red Panda, his exhibit was transformed into the home of the Brazilian Coatis. The Coatis, adorable small carnivores, were received with great excitement by both visitors and staff members. However, from their first day in the exhibit, they spent all their time trying to escape. After many escape attempts – all, happily, unsuccessful – the exhibit was closed for a number of months to make the necessary changes to secure their residential set-up.

Leider the Asian lion sadly passed away this year at the age of 16. After exploring every possible avenue to treat his agonizing back pain, the veterinary team concluded that the only humane option was to euthanize him. Everyone at the Zoo mourns his passing.

Education

Education is an integral part of the mandate of the Tisch Family Zoological Gardens, with more than 100,000 young people of all ages attending both formal and informal educational programs at the Zoo each year. Activities include school field trips, the zoology and ecology matriculation program, the Gifted Students program, the Zoo Teen Volunteer Patrol, the Zoomobile traveling mini-zoo, the Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) program for children and adults with special needs, workshops, seminars, and summer camps.
Highlights of 2013 include:

Both general and special education programs are provided to students in Jerusalem’s three parallel school systems: secular/religious, haredi (ultra-Orthodox), and Arabic-speaking.

Students groups during the period from January 1, 2013, through October 31, 2013, included:

- Haredi groups: 170 groups, for a total of 11,909 students, including 1,203 participating in special education programs.
- Arab groups: 198 groups, for a total of 13,841 students, including 850 attending special education programs.

The Zoo continues to run a high school science elective for gifted students. This special opportunity is open to every 11th grade high school student in the city, east and west. Seventeen students attended this year. The elective is held at the Zoo, and includes mentors qualified at the Masters and PhD level who help the students to prepare their written matriculation papers and present them to the Ministry of Education for accreditation. This special program is offered in hope of developing the next generation of wildlife advocates in Israel.

Animal-Assisted Therapy: Members of the special needs community are regular visitors and participants at the Zoo. The Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) Program offers professional treatment to Jerusalemites with a range of physical, developmental, behavioral and learning disabilities, including autism, hearing impairment, mental health issues, and ADHD. More than 70 groups of special needs children visit the Zoo on a weekly basis.

During these visits, the Zoo’s expansive landscapes and their animal inhabitants are utilized as a highly effective therapeutic resource on multiple levels.
each child is encouraged to choose an animal to work with. As they take on the role of caregiver, learning to feed, pet and clean their "own" animal, these children not only improve fine and gross motor skills, but also develop empathy, cooperation, patience, and other interpersonal skills. The human-animal bond, along with the feeling of unconditional love that an animal provides, thus models critical qualities of relationship building, reflecting the basis of AAT as an exemplification of attachment theory. In addition, taking on personal responsibility for the care of an animal helps participants learn to control urges, especially violent ones, and to focus on goal achievement. All of these therapeutic developments take place within the stable environment of the Zoo, to which the children return on a weekly basis, which in itself relieves anxiety and fosters a sense of security.

Research & Conservation

The Jerusalem Zoo plays an integral role in national and international research and conservation efforts. The Zoo is a member of both EAZA and WAZA multi-national zoological organizations.

- **EAZA**, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, represents and links 345 member institutions in 41 countries. Formed in 1992, EAZA's mission is to facilitate cooperation within the European zoo and aquarium community towards the goals of education, research and conservation.

- **WAZA**, the World Association of Zoos and Aquaria, is the unifying organization for the world zoo & aquarium community. The goal of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums is to guide, encourage and support the zoos, aquariums and like-minded organizations of the world in animal care and welfare, environmental education and global conservation.

Both organizations vet members to ensure that member zoos and aquariums meet international standards for animal care, education, and breeding of
species. Member zoos are also able to transfer and exchange animals as necessary both to safeguard the animals' personal welfare and to facilitate global biodiversity conservation goals.

The Jerusalem Zoo is host to Israel's National Center for Raptor Egg Incubation, which stands at the forefront of the battle to save Israel's endangered birds of prey. The Center is breeding several species of birds of prey that will ultimately be returned to the wild under the supervision of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. This year, 17 Red Kestrel eggs hatched, marking the first success since the Red Kestrel exhibit opened four years ago. The Center is currently incubating a single egg of the Griffon Vulture, a species that has disappeared completely from the wild in Israel and remains critically endangered worldwide. Five Egyptian Vulture eggs that hatched at the beginning of the breeding season are also now destined to be reintroduced to the wild.

After a break of about 2 years, restoration to the wild of the Persian Fallow Deer has once more resumed at Nahal Soreq. This project aims to achieve reintroduction of this beautiful species, which became extinct in Israel during the 1920s, with the ultimate goal of having the Fallow Deer become once more a common site in this green belt area of the Jerusalem region. The project has been in existence for some 6 years, but was temporarily halted due to a spate of feral dog attacks in the area, an issue that has now been resolved. The Zoo team is able to follow the progress of the Fallow Deer by means of electronic collars fitted around their necks. The collars themselves were funded by the "Race for the Fallow Deer" held recently at the Zoo.

Looking to the Future: Sea Israel
Construction is underway in the establishment of Sea Israel: the Gottesman Aquarium. This attraction will consist of 6,000 square meters of tanks that will enable visitors to enjoy spectacular views of Mediterranean and Red Sea aquatic habitats. It will be possible to get up close and personal with sharks, sea turtles, sea horses, corals, jellyfish and many other unique aquatic creatures. There will be a walk-through glass tunnel allowing visitors to experience a 180 degree view of the underwater world. Two huge exhibits will place special emphasis on the various habitats of the Mediterranean, and the exceptional treasures of the Red Sea, including a ray feeding pool (known popularly as “skates” or “sea cats”). Approximately 30 more tanks of various sizes will complete the exhibition.
The Aquarium will have state of the art breeding centers, promote wildlife reintroduction, conduct captive breeding studies and provide specialized veterinary treatment for rare specimens. The aquarium’s education center will be the training ground for the next generation of wildlife conservation in Israel and will house various activities including seminars, workshops and domestic and international research projects.

**Looking to the Future: Green Initiatives**

- Environmental sustainability is central to the Zoo's philosophy. The Zoo has pioneered environmental awareness in Israel and visitors are educated about these issues at every opportunity.

- Long-term "green" initiatives include: Organic compost for outdoor exhibits is made from animal manure and discarded plant material. Visitors are encouraged to use public transportation by receiving admission discounts. Solar panels provide 33% of the Zoo’s electrical needs. Water purification provides recycled sewage water for landscaping. The "wetlands" system is used for exhibits – water is filtered and cleaned as it flows through the vegetation, reducing the need for water replacement.

- Continuing the Zoo’s sustainable traditions, the new aquarium will utilize environmentally friendly building materials and produce a significant percentage of its electrical needs from solar panels. The building's “green” or “living” roof will be covered with vegetation to absorb rainwater, provide insulation, create a habitat for wildlife, and help lower the urban air temperature.
In preparation for the Aquarium's large green roof, the Zoo has initiated a "practice run" by installing a smaller green roof on top of the rhino's house.

The nearly half a million gallons of seawater in which the aquarium will be housed will be equipped with advanced systems to ensure the appropriate habitats for these remarkable aquatic creatures. This life support system will use a water reclamation method that recycles all exhibit water.