

# BARCELONA ZOO

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THE ZOOLOGICAL PARK OF BARCELONA



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**B**arcelona Zoo is one of the city's most popular attractions. It is situated in the Ciutadella Park, one of the biggest and oldest in Barcelona, between the old part of the city and the sea. It is amongst the most visited zoos in Europe (more than a million visitors are expected this year) and fulfills a number of tasks ranging from the entertainment of young and old alike to supporting the research being done in Catalan universities. The institution is almost a hundred years old (it was created in 1892) and has evolved considerably over this time. From the small initial nucleus, it has grown to its present thirty-four acres, and the animal collection has increased progressively to include more than 500 species and 8,000 specimens.

Outstanding in the zoo's collection are the group of gorillas that includes Snowflake, the only albino specimen in captivity, the marine mammals (dolphins, killer-whale and seals), whose shows are a magnificent public attraction, the parrot collection and a large sample of poisonous reptiles.

The policies and aims of Barcelona Zoo have varied in the course of time, the most important at the moment being the following: conservation of species in danger of becoming extinct, instruction for schoolchildren, entertainment and research.

The zoo keeps a collection of animals in the best conditions, favouring the re-

production of threatened species. We have recently started to reproduce species which had practically disappeared from Catalonia, with the idea of reintroducing them to their natural habitats and trying to re-establish them in areas where they were common in the past. Amongst these species the most important are the Purple Gallinule, the Imperial Jackdaw, the stork and the tortoise.

In the educational field, the zoo carries out projects aimed specifically at schoolchildren, using the species at its disposal. We also try to make a visit to the park an enjoyable and gratifying experience for all visitors, regardless of age.

Investigation is carried out using our own resources, unfortunately limited, so as to provide our technical team with as much information as possible. We also try to help investigators from the different university faculties (Biology, Veterinary Science, Psychology, Medicine) with detailed or long-term studies. Outstanding in this field is our institution's long tradition of study of primate behaviour. A lot of work has also been done in genetics, with different groups of monkeys, including theses and dissertations. Recently we have been attempting to fertilize female gorillas with frozen sperm from the albino gorilla Snowflake, so that in the future we can breed individuals with his unique characteristics. ■



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