

THE ROLE OF A MODERN ZOO



notes

ADELAIDE ZOO
EDUCATION SERVICE

ZOO

Why did you decide to visit the Zoo? Probably to 'see the animals'.

The concept of keeping animals in a 'zoo' is not new. Rulers in ancient Egypt, China and Rome and European royal families of the middle ages had collections of exotic animals for their amusement.

These early "zoos" existed to entertain visitors and little consideration was given to the needs of the animals, which were taken from the wild.

Modern zoos have progressed a long way from this narrow-minded view. The Mission of Zoos SA is: "We exist to save animals from extinction."

Today most modern zoos have four main objectives: Conservation, Education, Research and Recreation.

CONSERVATION: To be involved in programs which assist the survival of wild populations of animals. This is often done in partnership with other organisations.

EDUCATION: To increase the level of awareness, knowledge and understanding of visitors about animals, the environment and conservation, and to motivate behaviour change which will help the environment.

RESEARCH: To conduct and facilitate research on animals both in captivity and in the wild, with particular emphasis on threatened species.

RECREATION: To provide enjoyment and enrichment for visitors through close contact with living things.

Zoos SA is committed to managing captive populations of animals scientifically, with particular emphasis on threatened species. The highest standards of animal welfare are always used.

Environmental impact is also considered in the activities of Zoos SA and efforts are made to reduce the use of resources and energy.

The Adelaide Zoo is visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year. They all have a great opportunity to observe and learn about the diverse range of animal species inhabiting the earth.

Through well planned enclosure design, incorporating landscaping and appropriate planting, animals may be observed behaving much as they would in the wild.

The Panda Forest, South East Asian Rainforest and Australian Rainforest Walk-through Aviary are examples of modern habitat enclosures.

Observations of animals' behaviour may be supplemented by reading the signs at each enclosure. They give details about habitat, distribution, conservation status and other interesting information.

Zoo guides, Information Centre volunteers and the Keepers are other helpful sources of information.

The Adelaide Zoo Education Centre provides lessons and resources for teachers and students and also assists the public with enquiries.

Conservation is the objective around which education is based. Adelaide Zoo has approximately 60 threatened species of animal.

Animals bred in the Zoo are retained for breeding purposes, exchanged with other zoos, or where possible, re-introduced into the wild.

Detailed animal records are kept to allow the management of individual animals and species. Care must be taken with captive breeding programs to ensure the genetic diversity of species and to minimise inbreeding.

Research is the process by which vital data is collected and processed. Many staff are involved in ongoing research or study to improve animal husbandry and management.

In 2000 a new Animal Health Centre was completed at the Adelaide Zoo that allows for ongoing research. Staff also participate in local, national and international conferences, exchanges and conservation committees.

The Zoo also provides a pleasant recreation place for the visitor. Adelaide Zoo offers native and exotic species of animals in habitat displays set amongst botanical gardens. Historic, State Heritage listed buildings are also found throughout the Zoo grounds such as the Rotunda, main gates and Minchin House (originally the Director's residence).

The Royal Zoological Society of South Australia believes that people, by visiting the Zoo, will become more aware and interested in the conservation of animals and habitats. It is hoped that visitors will themselves become involved in conserving their environment.

Membership of the Society, sponsorship of animals and donations for the upgrading of enclosures and facilities are ways to become involved with the Zoo.

