

species would be significantly improved overnight. If you're reading this review you should have a copy in your library, farm office or in the lambing shed.

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References

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Winter AC and Hill CW (2003) *Manual of Lambing Techniques*. The Crowood Press: Marlborough, Wiltshire, UK

Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West

E Baratay and E Hardouin-Fugier (2004). Published by Reaktion Books Ltd, 79 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3JU, UK. 400 pp. Paperback (ISBN 1 86189 208 X). Price £19.95.

Many books about zoos have been written over the centuries but particularly in the past couple of decades. Animals are of perpetual interest to human beings and that interest is growing exponentially — about as fast as we are being educated about the exponential decline in species and populations. So it is surprising, if not startling, to read in *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* the myriad reasons why people are attracted by animals in captivity, not including the fact that species and populations are declining or, for that matter, that people possess more environmental and welfare consciousness. Conservation is mentioned, but only just. For a book which describes its purpose as “to reveal the perceptions and ambitions (of people) that gradually transformed them (zoos)”, this is unforgivable. Animal welfare in zoos is covered historically, but the immense work creditable to veterinary doctors in zoos is not described sufficiently.

Conservation is defined in the book as zoos' attempts to become “increasingly perfect imitations of nature” as “zoos...endeavoured to become wildlife conservatories.” The word ‘conservatory’ suggests something a rich man might have in his garden or on his estate, without any hint of the quantum leaps of zoos right into the wild, where zoos of all sizes through their associations or on their own, contribute masses of money, expertise and support for wild habitats and their denizens in a dynamic manner. The subsection which is apparently supposed to sum up conservation does so, making a great beginning with the title ‘Noah’s Impossible Ark’; again, a total misunderstanding of the evolution of consciousness of the drivers or activators of current zoo thinking at all levels. There are many mistakes in this chapter, such as the erroneous statement that the IUCN concerned itself with “legislation and the acquisition of reserves...” and that its programme for captive breeding (CBSG) was led by a zoo director (US Seal, excuse me!).

The world's zoo associations' conservation efforts have been described as their “own plans” for survival of endangered species, and we read that “zoo chiefs presented plans

for preservation” with “their role so prominent that wildlife conservation has been essentially...seen in terms of captivity.” The various zoo association members who run scientific conservation programmes would be interested to learn that “they make it a rule that the more a species is endangered in the short term, the larger a captive population should be and the faster it should be removed from the wild.” This is only the tip of a mammoth iceberg of errors. This is very careless writing and more damning in its way than the worst diatribe by animal rights folks. It is the last few pages in the textual part of the book, and an embarrassment to the authors.

In regard to welfare, a potentially interesting but perplexing section (‘A Public Quest’) relates the attitudes of the general public and of protection societies in the mid-1940s in Europe, particularly France. It states that “Enthusiasm for zoos also found expression in wildlife magazines which proliferated in Europe after 1945”, describing the journal's tone as evolving toward becoming “more naturalistic” and presenting the zoo as a “haven of peace and plenty”! It goes on to say that “protective associations shared this approach” and that its stand on zoos evolved from “indifferent” to “more favourable”. The Society for the Protection of Animals (SPA) inspected zoos for living conditions, including transport practices (in 1931), and although SPA was satisfied with Vincennes (1934), it did not question the principle of captivity. The authors also report that between 1880 and 1925 there was tension between society members from the aristocracy and those of the middle class, with the middle class taking the “upper hand” and focusing on homeless dogs and vivisection instead of the “noble” horse and its trials. At the same time an anthropomorphic and individualised understanding of animals was adopted and also applied to zoos. It is not very easy for the reader to follow the historical jumping around (which gets much worse as this chapter progresses) or the rationale behind the points which are attempted or, for that matter, the points themselves.

By the 1960s (a big leap from the immediate previous historical reference, which was 1880–1900) visitors “made pointed remarks about the size of the cage” but still did not question the propriety of the zoo itself. The authors belabour this point so frequently that the reader is tempted toward the impression that this work is primarily a biased search for the exact point in which the “zoo” as a concept came under attack, instead of an academic exercise eg the historical treatise on zoos which it purports to be.

Another hurdle to the flow of dialogue and also a strained point is the leap between Europe and America, which is expressed as if there were a united and growing dissatisfaction in the two regions, each feeding somehow on the other, which was not the case or at least it was not proven to be the case by this volume.

Nevertheless, these facts and many others, such as Ted Reed's criticism of children's zoos and the inducement of

reproduction to produce baby animals for sale to them, or P Batten's revelations on animal mortality, are valuable. One often wishes, however, that the authors had simply listed various events and their protagonists chronologically and let the reader draw his own conclusions, because those of the writers seem to come haphazardly, rather than as logical deductions of historical facts.

The first of five sections or chapters deals with zoos of the 16th–18th centuries. The zoos of the 19th century make up the second chapter and the 20th century, the third. The fourth is a long and luscious collection of photos and art from zoos, many of which I had not seen before. As a photographic and artistic record of various anomalies and classic structures and memorabilia the book is a treasure. It is worth perusing only for these as well as for isolated facts and tidbits of information. The half page which is devoted to "Artists and the Zoo" could have been expanded and one

hopes that perhaps this would be the title of another book, which might be more endearing with an objective less ambitious and more easily achieved.

Happily, *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* is well referenced with its many arcane facts and fictions; one wishes for a more detailed index, however.

The book was first published in French in 1998 as *Zoos: Histoire des jardins zoologiques en occident (XVIe–XXe siècle)*, translated by Oliver Welsh and published in English in 2002. It is possible that the unevenness of flow and miscellany of questionable conclusions can be attributed to a bad translation, than to the reputable authors. Eric Baratay lectures in history at the Université Jean-Moulin, Lyon and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier is the author of many books and Art History Professor at the Université Jean-Moulin, Lyon.

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