City of Leipzig

Text: Andreas Sickert
Simone Neumann
Thomas Knorr

Photo: Angelika Kreutzer
Fonstarchiv

Illustration: Ludger Schröter

Layout: Angelika Kreutzer
Both females are born in 2000. The later gave birth to one calf in 2003. The elk is a solitary individual, but the mother family can stay temporarily together with other mother families.

**Gamepark Leipzig-Connewitz**

One of the most attractive recreation areas in the immediate vicinity of Leipzig is the wildlife park in the southern part of Leipzig’s floodplain forest. On an area of about 42 hectare 40 animal species are kept.

The wildlife park presents:
- species being found in the wild of Central Europe, e.g. roe deer (Capreolus capreolus), wild boar (Sus scrofa) and red deer (Cervus elaphus);
- species being found here in former times, e.g. European bison (Bison bonasus) and lynx (Lynx lynx);
- or immigrated species, e.g. raccoon (Procyon lotor), moufflon (Ovis ammon musimon) and European mink (Mustela lutreola).

The wildlife park has established facilities that present the animals in a natural setting. The ZOO Leipzig has mainly exotic species, whereas the neighbouring private farm shows domestic animals. The aim of the wildlife park is to promote the protection of species and habitats. The park provides education about the native fauna and offers the opportunity for research. Last but not least it is a very attractive recreational area.

It is not intended to keep or to promote an idyllic illusion of nature, which is widely disseminated among the visitors.

Keeping the animals under semi-natural conditions and guaranteeing species captivity as well as a natural behaviour pattern has the highest priority. Visitors are allowed to observe the animals under semi-natural conditions, and it is not intended to use the enclosures, in order to gain an excessive influence on the game and consequently giving up its natural behaviour. These guidelines exclude a non-natural design of the enclosures, a high density and a strong human contact as well as animal training.

The wildlife park participates in breeding programmes, e.g. for European bison (Bison bonasus) and European mink (Mustela lutreola). The exhibition facility and the green classroom provide additional opportunities for an efficient environmental education and information. It is mostly unknown, that the wildlife park is also used by local authorities for the deposition of confiscated game as well as for the accommodation and rehabilitation of injured animals. But it is not intended to accommodate private animals.

**History of the wildlife park**

The wildlife park was originally a little enclosure of fallow deer owned by the mill owner of “Connewitz”, who donated it in 1904 to the City of Leipzig. The enclosure was situated in the southern part of Leipzig’s floodplain forest near the “Hakenbrücke” (a bridge). In spring 1904 seven head fallow deer (Cervus dama) were released in the forest area “Der Stempel”. The population grew up to 16 individuals until February 1906. The regular floods were every time a danger for the animals and consequently the former district forester suggested a move to the present site.

On the 1st of May 1912 a shelter including a bar was opened. This bar offered milk, tea, mineral water and pastries. In 1922 a restaurant was built, which was situated near the present farmyard.

The terrace at the “Froschteich” (a pond) and the “Ribbenbunker” (an underground stock of buns) are located within the common deer park which includes Red deer (Cervus elaphus), Fallow deer (Cervus dama), and moufflon (Ovis ammon musimon).

The Second World War brought the development of the wildlife park to a stand still, and the park was totally destroyed. In 1972 the Leipzig City Council passed the resolution to establish a new wildlife park. The official start of the construction works was on the 1st of January 1974. On the 30th of April 1978 the southern part of the enclosure was finished. The completed area, in its...
Today the wildlife park is open for everybody, free of charge to get known the native fauna as well as the flora of Leipzig’s floodplain forest and surrounding regions.

**LOCATION**

Domestic animal farm

Near the entrance of the wildlife park a well maintained private farm presenting domestic animals can be found. While the wildlife park shows native animals living in the wild, the private farm presents native domestic animals, e.g., horses, goats, pigs and rabbits as well as exotic domestic animals, e.g., camels, llamas, nutrias. Visitors have to pay a small entrance fee.

It is possible to ride on ponies or camels and to organize carriage tours across the wildlife park and the adjoining floodplain forest. Additionally there is a small exhibition of historical agricultural devices. After a telephonic arrangement the owner of the farm is pleased to offer guided tours of the farm (Mr. Bauensfeld, mobile: 01 63/796-88-93).

**LOCATION**

Lynxes (Lynx lynx)

Lynxes follow the wolf (Canis lupus) and the brown bear (Ursus arctos) as the biggest native predatory mammals, and belong to the family of cats (Felidae). Lynxes are found across Europe, Northern Asia (China, Mongolia), North America (northern USA, Canada) and wide areas of the northern hemisphere. The lynx species is subdivided into six subspecies. The lynxes, which are found in Central Europe belong when the wildlife park was open in 1979. They are, by far, the oldest inhabitants of the park. In the meanwhile more than 25 descendants have been born and sold. But this pair stopped reproducing two year ago for reasons of age.

**LOCATION**

Elks (Alces alces)

The elk is the largest deer in the world. The elk ranges from northeastern Asia, east and north of Europe and North America. In Germany the elk inhabited the extensive floodplain forests between the rivers “Oder” and “Elbe” before the second millennium started. The extinction of elk in Central Europe is dated in the Middle Ages. In the eastern parts of Europe it was found in the wild until the 16th and 19th century, e.g. in the western Baltic provinces until 1830. In Saxony the last individual was registered in 1746. At the beginning of the 19th century the elk was only spread in Scandinavia, East Prussia and Poland. Its senses of smell and hearing are acute, while vision is poorly developed. Despite its size, the elk moves silently through the forest, although if frightened they can crash away at speeds up to 50 kmph. This species is an excellent swimmer and frequently wades into lakes and streams to feed on vegetation. Its impressive antlers vary in shape and size depending.
the Białowieska primeval forest (esp. Bison bonasus caucasicus). Both populations shrunk during World War I, and the Russian Revolution of 1917 and during the post-war period. A poacher killed the last wisent from the Białowieska primeval forest in 1921. Shepherds killed the three last Caucasian individuals in 1926.

Fortunately 57 individuals were kept in zoos, but only one Caucasian bull, owned by a German trader. In 1923, at the initiative of the Polish zoologist Jan Sztolcman, the "International Society for Preservation of the European Bison" was founded in order to initiate an international cooperation to prevent this species becoming extinct and to reintroduce it into the wild. Despite of some setbacks the number of wisents increased continuously. The first reintroductions into the wild were carried out in 1941/42 in the former East Prussian state hunting ground “Ehstwald”. This population survived the World War II. In 1952 the wisent was reintroduced in the polish part of the Białowieska primeval forest and later in the polish “Puszcza Borecka”. Little by little new free-ranging herds were found abroad Europe.

Today this species is saved and a relatively high number are found in the wild. In the International breed book 3,000 pureblooded individuals are registered. Leipzigs wildlife park is involved in the international breeding program. The individuals shown in the park belong to Bison bonasus bonasus subspecies. The management decided to create a mixture of enclosure in order to preserve the natural behaviour of species. The enclosure were designed with the same ecosystem although small changes to satisfy different behavioural patterns of species, and other species. Since this time wisents are kept together with red deer or sika deer.

Wisent's mating season takes place in late summer and after a gestation period of about 9 months one or two calves are born. The nursing period lasts about six months. The Wisent is the European bison, species Bison bonasus. After the last ice age the wisent was found across the complete temperate zone of Europe and Western Asia. In Europe and Middle East a second species of wild cattle was found the aurochs (Bos primigenius), who is the ancestor of the domestic cattle (Bos primigenius f. taurus) and became extinct in the Middle Ages.

**LOCATION**

**Eurasian Eagle Owl (Bubo bubo)**

The Eurasian Eagle Owl (Bubo bubo) is a species of horned owl residing in much of Europe and Asia. The horned owls are part of the larger grouping of owls known as the typical owls, Strigidae, which contains most species of owl.

The eagle owl is a very large and powerful bird and the only species of Strigidae found in Europe. Man is fascinated by the eagle owl since the antiquity, e.g. by its deep booming call and its noiseless flight. This nocturnal bird catches its prey using 4 cm long talons and its curved beak. The beak is also used to deter enemies by cracking. The eagle owl is able to hear much better than man. The noticeable threshold value is 15 to 25 db lower than human beings.

The eagle owl feeds on mammals and birds. It is capable of killing large prey items such as hares, badgers and grouse. Consumed indigestible parts of its prey, like hairs, feathers and bones regurgitated.

The eagle owl inhabits lowlands, mountainous regions, forests with cliffs and rocky areas and usually nests on cliff ledges, in hollow trees. And does not build its own nests.

The female owl lays 2-4 eggs from May until June. The brooding period takes 35 days.

The only large, stable populations of eagle owl in the Free State of Saxony are found in Saxony Switzerland. In northwest Saxony some individuals are found near “Wernsdorf”, in the porphyry quarries of the “Muldentalkreis”.

The last bird of this species was killed in 1920, but it is unknown, if it was the last individual of a resident population or a bird of travelling.

The eagle owl can live more than 60 years in captivity.

**LOCATION**

**Marten facility in the former garden of heather**

The fundamental concept of the wildlife park Leipzig is to present species living in the wild of Central Europe and to keep them under semi-natural conditions. This principle demands a large area and limits the number of accommodated species. Consequently the management decided to specialize in certain families or genera, e.g. the Mustelidae and the Cervidae.

Least weasel (Mustela nivalis), Stoat (Mustela erminea), European polecat (Mustela putorius), European mink (Mustela lutreola), European otter (Lutra lutra), Pine marten (Martes martes), Beech marten (Martes foina), Eurasian badger (Meles meles) and in some areas Steppe polecat (Mustela eversmanni), which has evolved to the domestic ferret (Mustela putorius furo), belong to the family Mustelidae, and are native in Central Europe.

During the last centuries the American mink (Mustela vison) became naturalised in Central Europe through releases and random escapes. The wolverine (Gulo gulo) living in the northern lowland of Germany became extinct in historical times.

Most of the above mentioned species are shown in the wildlife park Leipzig. They are often the favourite ones of the visitors, especially of the children and are relatively easy to keep. Many of the named species are found countrywide living the wild and it is possible to see one in the open country. Therefore it seems to be useful to give some information about species of the Mustelidae.
The Beech marten (Martes foina) is the most widespread species of the Mustelidae. It inhabits regions in and surrounding Leipzig, in open country as well as the woodlands, but especially allotment parks and built-up areas.

The beechnut feeds on small mammals, birds, eggs, fruits and insects. The mating season lasts from June until August, and the female beech martens have 2-5 kittens. During this time, there are usually several calls, which can be heard. The noise pollution of the playing kittens is often habitually loud.

According to § 6 of the Saxon game law, the owner or user of land is authorized to catch or kill the troublemaker or alternatively to put someone in charge to solve the problem. It is not allowed to do this during the breeding season.

Pine marten (Martes martes)
The Pine marten (Martes foina) and the Pine marten (Martes martes) are not at all related as often assumed.

The parent of the pine marten in the Siberian sable (Mustela sibirica) is the European pine marten. Both develop mixed populations.

The Pine marten is found in northern North America. It was kept in big fur farms in Europe for a long time.

At the beginning of the 19th century, many of the fur farms in the New Land became unprofitable and the owners released the farmed minks in the wild with disastrous consequences. They had limited chance to survive considering the amount of animals.

The increase of the area by the leisure park "Belalde" has resulted in a decreased number of fallow deer in Leipzig's floodplain forest.

The most known, stable populations of this species in Leipzig's vicinity are found in the floodplain of the river "Mulde" near the city of Grimma, Colditz and Bad Lausick as well as in the "Dahmer Heide".

The development of antlers peaks at an age of 9-10 years.

The daily requirement of crude protein amounts on average 80 g being equivalent to 12 kg green matter. Fallow deer will be sexually mature with an age of about 16 months. The rutting season is in the second half of October. After a gestation period of 33 weeks, one fawn is born. The fawn is already able to escape after 24 hours if an enemy approaches.

The moulfion is considered as the parent of the domestic sheep. Crossbreedings between mouflon and domestic sheep (Ovis ammon f. aries) are possible without restrictions with their offspring being fertile.

Wisent - European bison (Bison bonasus)
The Wisent is the European bison, species Bison bonasus.

The Wisent was killed in 1627. Later the wisent was often confused with the extinct aurochs. After the extinction of the aurochs the wisent is the only survivor of the Bovidae genus.

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After the last ice age the wisent was found across the complete temperate zone of Europe and Western Asia. In Europe and Middle East a second species of wild sheep was found; the aurochs (Bos primigenius), who is the ancestor of the domestic cattle (Bos primigenius f. taurus) and became extinct in the Middle Ages.

The last aurochs was killed in 1627. After the extinction of the aurochs the wisent is the only European survivor of the Bovidae genus.

Europe's heaviest land animal is close related to the American bison (Bison bison). Wisent (Bison bonasus) can cross-breed with American bison (Bison bison) without restrictions. They generate fertile crossbred individuals, unlike the infertile hybrids of crossbreedings between wisent (Bison bonasus) and the domestic cattle (Bos primigenius f. taurus).

The wisent was approaching extinction caused by hunting and the limiting of its habitat. In England it was already extinct in prehistoric time. Poachers killed the last wisent in East Prussia in 1755. The last individuals in Saxony were hunted in 1793. But it is assumed that the later were imported from Poland for hunting purposes.

At the beginning of the 20th century only two geographically isolated populations existed. One population occupied Caucasian ranges (esp. Bison bonasus), while the other population inhabited...
Experience track in the joint enclosure of red deer, fallow deer and mouflon

In establishing the “Experience track” it was intended to increase the attraction of the wildlife park and to provide an avenue to receive money and donations for the maintenance of the wildlife park. The entrance fee of 2 Euro has to be paid at the revolving door and will be used to maintain the park and to improve its attraction. The track and especially the observation tower offer the opportunity to experience the game and its behaviour in its natural habitat without barriers.

In long-term it is intended to take measures in order to continuous increase the attraction of the experience track, e.g. to establish an enclosure for wolves. But the highest priority has the safety of visitors, staff and game. Therefore it is not allowed to feed the animals. For the same reason the track is closed during the mating season of red deer. Some facts about the species seen during the “Experience track” are provide below.

Red deer (Cervus elaphus)
Elks (Alces alces), Ros deer (Capreolus capreolus) and Red deer (Cervus elaphus) were the only species of the Cervidae historically found in Germany. The other species of Cervidae, e.g. fallow deer (Cervus dama) and sika deer (Cervus nippon) were displaced from northern Europe during the ice age. The population in Leipzig's floodplain forest was extinguished in the middle of the 19th century. In 1780-1829 the last registered hounds of red deer took place. The last observations were made in the 1850s in the forest area “Harten”. After the extermination of elk (Alces alces), aurochs (Bos primigenius), brown bear (Ursus arctos) and wisent (Bison bonasus) in the wild area. Romans introduced it to England between the 2nd and 4th century. At the beginning of the 13th century fallow deer was introduced to Denmark. The most intensive introduction was in the 19th century, at which time it was introduced into Leipzig's city forest, especially in the south. At the end of World War II more deer were released, and the enclosures of the wildlife park were opened. Additionally some animals escaped from the “Obere Kirche” an enclosure in the southeast of Leipzig, and from the wildlife park. Consequently a big population of fallow deer formed in the 1950s in southern floodplain forest and its adjacent recultivated lignite sites.

In recent years frequent accidents with fallow deer have to be registered and consequently the number of animals has reduced. The further development of the state street S 46 (cycle track and fence) connecting the city of Markkleeberg and the south west of Leipzig separated its habitat and makes a walking tour between the forest area “Lauer” and the “Cornweitzer Holz” nearly impossible. It is assumed that the majority of the fallow deer population migrated further south caused by the increased area demand by the released. Nevertheless there were enough individuals to form new populations living in the wild. Therefore the Mink is found in Leipzig and its vicinity. The individuals presented in the wildlife park were found in the forest area “Bienitz” near Ilsefrac, Saale-Canal in the north-west of Leipzig. The local hunting-leaseholder kindly relinquished the hatchings to the park.

The American mink (Mustela vison) is not that close related with the European Mink (Mustela latavora) as often assumed. But both occupy almost exactly the same ecological niche. Consequently it becomes a competitor to the native European mink. High populations of the American mink also cupetates for resources with the native European polecat (Mustela putores). The American mink is physically trigger and stronger to the European mink. Both animals feed on the same sources, resulting in the reduction of available the European Mink.

The male American mink will mate with the female European Mink earlier in spring than the males of the same species. But the embryos die throughout the pregnancy due to the genetic differences. Unfortunately the female European Minks do not breed again that season. This has contributed to the decline of the European species as soon as the American Mink forms new populations in the habitat of the European Mink. This clearly illustrates the consequences of misunderstood love of animals. Since the American Mink in the meantime is spread Europe-wide the last wild populations of the European Mink are in decline, and may not be able to survive.

A successful re-introduction of the European Mink will be very difficult, since the populations of American Mink is continuous over the landscape throughout Europe.

Stoat (Mustela erminea)
The Stoat (Mustela erminea) is found in Central Europe, Northern Europe, Northern Asia and Northern America. It is also found in Leipzig area in small populations. One of its most interesting features is its coat change. While its summer coat is brown the colour changes to white in winter.

In all seasons it has a pronounced black tip on its tail. In its southern range of Europe the coat is brown all the year, whereas the coat can be permanent white in its northern range and mountainous areas.

The relatively high number of stoats kept in several aviaries in the wildlife park results from its relatively lifespan of about five years both, in wild and in captivity.
**Ferret (Mustela putorius furo)**

The ferret is domesticated from the wild European Polecat in order to catch rabbits.

**LOCATION**

**Eurasian otter (Lutra lutra)**

The Eurasian otter (Lutra lutra) is found throughout most of Europe. It is located throughout most of Asia and on the northern tip of Africa.

Even at the beginning of the last century the Eurasian otter was found throughout Germany in freshwater habitats like rivers, lakes, ponds, streams from the coast up to 2000 m above sea level in the Alps. But within only a few decades it was only found in the north and east of Germany. After extensive hunting by man for the fur, or to protect fish stocks and the loss of its habitats, resulting from drainage, construction of canals, water contamination, mass tourism and traffic, the Eurasian otter was all but eliminated throughout most of Germany.

After 1990 the quality of water improved considerably resulting from the shutdown of old industrial plants and the construction of sewage plants. Since the end of the 1990s the Eurasian otter is sporadically seen on the river "Eislar" between "Leipzig/Knausheim" and the "Schkeuditz" as well as on the river "Parthe" between "Borsdorf" and "Leipzig/Platling".

In 1993 a female and male River otter (Lutra canadensis) coming from Quebec/Canada was introduced into the 453 m² wide, seminatural enclosure of Leipzig’s wildlife park. This action was managed by the wildlife park Erkholzt in Großsenaspe (Germany).

The initial intention of purchasing the River otter was to attract more visitors since it is more active on day, than the European otter, which are mostly nocturnal. The male otter was born in 1987, the female otter was born in 1988. Its physique is excellently adapted to live in water and on land. They grow to a length of 70-90 cm weighing about 7012 kg. Males are heavier than females.

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The tail length is about 40 cm. Otters feed on living creatures in and near water, but no plants making these animals carnivorous. The proportion of fish is about 20-90 % depending on the season.

European otters mate at any time of the year. The males will mate with more than one female, staying with each female in her den. An average of 1-3 pups are born after a gestation period of 61-74 days. The pups will stay with their mother up to one year and have a live span of 10-15 years. The only natural enemy worth mentioning is the white-tailed eagle (Haliaeetus albicilla).

The European mink (Mustela lutreola) formerly inhabited great parts of Europe. It extended westward into the north of Spain and up to the Urals Mountains in the East. The last individuals of the European mink in Germany were hunted in 1825. The populations of European mink decreased over a long time, but decreased rapidly since the middle of the 19th century. The reasons for its extinction are not in conclusive. But it seems to be a combination of several factors, e.g. habitat loss, intensive hunting, separation of habitats. It is also likely that the species was outcompeted by the introduction of the larger and better-swimming American mink (Mustela vison). This species was kept in big fur farms in Europe for a long time. From time to time some minks escaped or were released by self-appointed animal rights activists. When the fur farms in the New Laender became unprofitable the owners released the farmed American minks in the wild with disastrous consequences. They had limited chance to survive due to the small number released animals.

The American mink is physically pre- eminent to the European Mink. It feed on the same sources and depredate in the stocks of the European Mink. Moreover the American male will mate with the female European Mink earlier in spring than the males of the same species. But the embryos die after some days caused by the huge genetic differences and the female European Minks do not then breed again that season. This has contributed to the decline of the European species. The European Mink is endangered today and has probably no survivable populations in the wilderness today. Last populations are found in the north of Spain, in the west of France and in Russia. The number of the latter is not known and become more and more separated. The European Mink (Mustela lutreola) is one of the most endangered mammals of Europe and deserves to be protected by the EU.

Its next relative is not the American Mink (Mustela vison), but the European polecat (Mustela putorius) and the Siberian weasel (Mustela sibirica).

Nowadays it seems not possible, that the European mink (Mustela lutreola) can survive in the wilderness. Therefore it is bred to save this species. Since there is only a small number of minks available for breeding a good coordination is necessary to avoid inbreeding.

The aggressive rivalry that the European mink exhibit is an other problem, since a single individual demands about 8 km course of a river. They are usually solitary animals, and keeping them close together is therefore not possible for long periods.