

# Introducing the Modern Zoo

Zoos keep animals for public display, right? Yes, but what animals, in what way and most importantly why?

Wild animals have been kept in captivity for thousands of years. However, what we now recognise as the modern zoo developed in the early part of the 19th century with London, Paris and Dublin zoos opening within a few years of each other, with millions flocking to see unusual animals from far-off lands.

The majority of zoos served simply to display animals, with the more advanced among them, including London, also utilising their collections for the study of zoology. However, over time, good zoos have changed their mission and focus due to a growing realisation of the decline in wildlife, driven mostly by loss of habitat.

From the mid-20th century these zoos have been finding ways to help conserve wild animals and their habitats, and the animals in our zoos now fulfil a number of roles, from education to ambassadors for their species. Some of the species we keep are now extinct in the wild and would have disappeared completely without zoos.

The modern zoo has changed to reflect this new role and developed dramatically over the years. They have specialists in many different disciplines including animal husbandry, health, nutrition, behaviour and records keeping.

By visiting our zoos you make a direct contribution through your entry ticket to our field activities and to maintaining the threatened species in our zoos. Through your visits you also help us provide training and technical assistance to other conservation groups and individuals in many countries around the world, including here in the UK.

<http://www.zsl.org/discovery-learning/the-modern-zoo/introducing-the-modern-zoo,438,AR.html>