



LOCATION

Branton, Doncaster, DN3 3NH, UK
 Phone: 0044-(0)1302-535057
 URL: <http://www.yorkshirewildlifepark.com>

KEY WORDS

Oradea Zoo, Romania

ANIMALS:

Family:	Species:	Common Name:	Capacity:
Felidae	<i>Panthera leo</i>	African lion	6.10.3

AWARDS

2011 BIAZA Enclosure Award, Commendation

DESCRIPTION

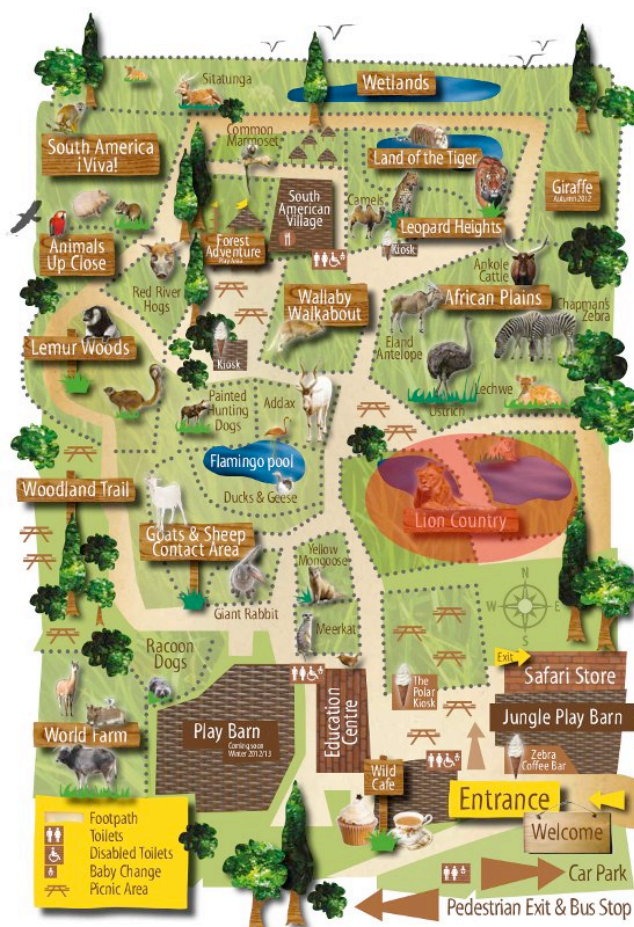
The original concept for the park was to hold one pride of African lions in an approximately 0.8 hectare enclosure before the decision was made to take additional lions from a Romanian zoo. A fundraising campaign helped to raise the money for building additional enclosures and transporting the animals. The project was supported with donations, sponsorship awareness and technical support from News of the World, BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), Jet2, Woburn Safari Park and IZVG (International Zoo Veterinary Group).

The design goal was to build a large, naturalistic exhibit for holding and managing three prides of African lion that were received from a Romanian zoo. Visitors should have uninhibited views of the lions and feel that they were walking through the exhibit with panoramic views of the lions and the African hoof stock in the adjoining African Plains exhibit. Visitors should also get as close to the lions as possible without looking through a glass barrier or fence.

The main features of the exhibit are a 3,292m² lake that divides the three enclosures, a 14m bridge spanning the lake, a 6m natural rock waterfall and the 700m path running through and around the enclosures.

SIZE

The lion enclosures were designed to hold 3 prides of lion. The 3 enclosures are 3,094m², 5,192m² and 10,472m². There is a 3,292m² (approx 1,500,000 litres) lake dividing the 3 enclosures along with a 700m long visitor walkway that runs through the exhibit and over the lake. Lion



Overview ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Before the move to Lion Country ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Who is watching who ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Walk "through" the lion exhibit ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012

Country is overlooking the African Plains hoof stock exhibit 38,180m² in size.

COSTS:

£300,000 including 10% for design.

OPENING DATE:

May 2010

DESIGN

Beginning: April 2009

- General Design: Yorkshire Wildlife Park, Doncaster
- Landscape Design: North Eastern Plant, Doncaster

CONSTRUCTION

Beginning: November 2009

- Landscaping: North Eastern Plant, Doncaster

PLANTS

The false acacia trees (*Robinia casque rouge*) were chosen for their acacia appearance. The aquatic plants were to help create a good quality habitat for local wildlife.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO ANIMALS

The size and land form of the exhibit allow the animals enough space for exercise and to spend time separate from pride mates. Elevated areas give the cats a panoramic view of the surroundings outside of their enclosures and of other exhibits. The planting of the enclosures and lake offer natural cover for the lions and local wildlife. The landscaping and caves give individuals shelter and privacy.

Containment is a 4m high fence with three strands of hot wire on the bottom 2m. Four strands of hot wire run around the top of the fence and under the bridge as an overhang. One strand of hot wire runs around the lake just above the water level and approximately 2m from the water edge to allow animal access.

The race system that runs along the length of the house allows for the 3 prides to be moved to different outside enclosures. There are 5 indoor dens, 36m² each, with raised platforms, logs and wooded furniture for enrichment.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO KEEPERS

The keeper passage is wide enough to allow for wheelbarrows and large objects to be moved along it with ease. The mesh covered den front, 6m wide, 2.5m high, gives the keepers an easy view of the animals and plenty of natural light. The roof overhang all around the building is for shelter and meets the outer fence at the front for security. There is also double gate access to the front of the house. Sliding doors connect the dens and allow to move the cats in to the race at the back of the house. As the dens are large, the race and crush cages give the keeper an opportunity to inspect the cats closely and administer veterinary treatments with minimal stress for staff and animals.

FEATURES DEDICATED TO VISITORS

Large parts of the enclosures are higher than the fence and bring lions and visitors at eye level. The 700m long path that winds around the 3 enclosures is raised using soil mounds which give the visitors uninhibited eye-level views of the lions. The bridge spanning the lake gives the visitors views of all three enclosures.

INTERPRETATION

The education department produced 12 signs with bite size information about lions in the wild and their conservation status. These are spaced out around the walkway. There are also 4 large (2.5m wide x 1.2m high) signs telling individual stories of the lions and illustrating the construction of the exhibit. There are two keeper talks a day, telling the visitors about the transport of the lions, their rehabilitation and the conservation issues of African and Asiatic Lions.

MANAGEMENT

There are large vehicle access gates to each enclosure for mowers, etc for grounds maintenance. They also allow access for forklift trucks to add or move logs/tree trunks,



Visitor area ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Lions' view of the park ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Enrichment ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



First of several signs around the exhibit ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Interpretation. Story of rescue ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Keeper area at the front of the dens ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Having a drink from the lake ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012

etc. The race that runs along the house and the crush cages connects the three enclosures. This means that we can move the animals easily between enclosures and carry out veterinary checks and treatments.

The animals are given 24-hour access to their outdoor enclosures except in extreme weather and when the lake is frozen.

Two 15hp, 11kw water pumps run the waterfall that circulates the water of the lake and through a neighbouring small flamingo lake. This improves water quality in the flamingo lake and keeps the lake ice free for much of the winter.

The lions are all non-breeding as they had no records with them and may all be inbred. Once they have lived out their natural lives, a breeding group of African lions will be brought in as part of the breeding programme of the EAZA felid TAG.

RESEARCH

To date we have had four dissertations completed on the lions since their arrival in March 2010. The first and second studies were carried out over a twelve-month period to assess and monitor any changes in their behaviour, mainly observing stereotypic and/or abnormal behaviours. The effects of being introduced to a large, naturalistic enclosure after being kept in small cages and in poor conditions was also monitored. The third and fourth were enrichment studies (olfactory and different feeding methods) to reduce any stereotypic behaviours, increase positive activities and enclosure use. The fourth study focused on behaviours exhibited in the night quarters over the winter period. In general, the three prides are kept out or have 24-hour access to their outdoor enclosure through the warmer month. When temperature are approaching freezing or the weather is particularly bad, the cats are shut indoors. Night vision cameras were set up in the dens to film the three prides over these periods and then enrichment (olfactory and different feeding methods) was added. The studies showed an increase in natural behaviours and a decrease in stereotyping indoors and outdoors.

CONSERVATION

The lake and banks, creating the raised viewing area for the visitors, are designed to encourage local wildlife including aquatic and marginal plants, grasses and wild flowers for birds and invertebrates. The waterfall is only run during the opening times of the park to save electricity.

Conservation awareness and fundraising for lions is done through the interpretation around the enclosures and keeper talks throughout the day.

LOCAL RESOURCES

Where possible, local materials, resources and companies were used. The main contractors' base is less than a mile away. This kept the overall cost and fuel use down for the project. Rocks were taken from a local quarry. The water supply is from our own bore hole and the drinkers are on automatic fillers. There is electricity supply to the house, but this is only to run the low wattage electric fence unit. The design of the project was carried out by the management staff of the park which also reduced the overall costs and travel.



Lion den ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Lion cave ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012



Going through the race ©Yorkshire Wildlife Park, 2012