

The Animal Collection of People's Park Zoo, Madras, From 1876 to 1890

First established by Edward Balfour (1813–1889) in 1855 as an extension of the Government Museum, the Zoological Gardens of Madras were relocated in 1863 to the large People's Park in the center of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Looking for information about the rhinoceros which lived here since 1870, I happened to come across details about this zoo in the formal annual *Administration Reports of the Madras Municipality*, of which a large series from 1876 onwards were recently digitized by the Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL) in Chennai (<https://rmrl.in/en/dl/official-publications/colonial-records>). The reporting year generally was from 1 April to 31 March.

These reports from 1876 to 1890 contain varying sets of details of accounts and events in the short section on People's Park. In only two early examples, 1877 and 1878, the text is signed by the superintendent Charles James Hay-Ellis (1842–1926). In Appendices to the reports of 1878, 1879, 1881 and 1886, there are comprehensive lists of the animals present in the collection.

Despite archaic English and scientific names, I have combined these lists, with some adjustments to the sequence (Table 1). These show the presence of 46 species of mammals, 39 species of birds, and four species of reptiles. So far, photographs of the enclosures in People's Park have remained elusive. The Madras Zoo, renamed Arignar Anna Zoological

Park (or Vandalur Zoo) was relocated to new premises in 1979.

People's Park had a large area for an urban zoo. It was more than just an animal collection. Bands played every Wednesday evening and Saturday. The annual Madras Fair commencing 30 December was first held in 1878, with fireworks on 1 January attended by over 20,000 people on the first occasion.

Besides the lists of animals, the reports provide some interesting details of new animals and births:

Report for 1877–78: Additions include one Sambar exchanged for two Spotted Deer from Zemindar of Malpaukam; one Orang-outang exchanged for a lioness from Calcutta. Births include two Cheetah on 14 July 1877; one Black Panther on 2 December 1877. The death of a popular Orang-outang on 4 June 1877 resulted in reduced attendance (Madras Municipality 1878).

Report for three quarters of 1878: Purchase from Abraham of Bellary two tigresses, two Samburs, one wolf, one fox, one lemur, one entellus, four crocodiles, one ostrich. Gift from Municipality of Ballarat (Australia) two dingoes and two kangaroos. Gift from Rajah of Wallur one tiger. Births include one cheetah on 9 June 1878; two Spotted Deer on 21 May, 14 June 1878 (Madras Municipality 1879).

Table 1. Animals in the Zoo of People's Park, Madras, on 31 March 1878, 1 January 1879, 1 January 1881 and 31 March 1886. The list combines the four inventories found in the administration reports of the Madras Municipality (respectively 1878, 1879, 1881, 1886). The sequence of species has been slightly changed to keep related taxa together. The English and scientific names are those found in the reports. 1/0 = 1 male; 0/1 = 1 female

English name	Scientific name	1878	1879	1881	1886
	MAMMALIA				
Lions / Lioness	<i>Felis leo</i>	2 / 1	2 / 1	1 / 1 + cub	0 / 1
Tigers / Tigresses	<i>Felis tigris</i>	2	3 / 2	2 / 2	2 + 3 cubs
Leopard or Cheetah	<i>Felis leopardus / Felis pardus</i>	1/1	1/1 + cub	1 / 1	2 + cub
Black Panther	<i>Felis pardus (Niger)</i>	1	1	1	1
Spotted Panther	<i>Felis pardus / Leopardus varius</i>	2	1	1	1
Striped Hyaenas	<i>Hyaena vulgaris</i>	2	3	3	5
Bears (Juggler)	<i>Prochilus ursinus</i>	2	2	1	2
Malay Bear	<i>Prochilus malayanus</i>	1	1		
Jackals	<i>Canis aureus</i>	2	1	4	
Ratel	<i>Ratellus mellivorus</i>	1	1	3	1
Rhinoceros	<i>Rhinoceros unicornis / R. indicus</i>	1	1	1	1
Elephant (Asiatic)	<i>Elephas indicus</i>	1	1	1	1
Jungle Cats	<i>Felis catus ferus / Felis chaus</i>	2	2	1	1
Tiger Cat	<i>Dasyurus maculabes</i>				1
The Rusty Spotted Cat	<i>Felis rubiginosa</i>	1			
The Common Tree Cat	<i>Paradoxurus musanga</i>	3	6	3	3
Civet Cat	<i>Viverra civetta / Viverra malaccensis</i>	2	2	2	2
Fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>		1	1	
Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>		1	1	1 + 2 cubs
Wild dogs	<i>Canis dingo</i>		2	1	
Dogs	<i>Canis familiaris</i>				2
Otter	<i>Lutra vulgaris</i>				1
Opossum	<i>Didelphis</i>	1	1	1	
Common Porcupines	<i>Hystric cristata</i>	2	2	2	2
Rabbits	<i>Lepus cuniculus</i>	24	24	42	50
Common Cavy or Guinea Pigs	<i>Cavia cobaya</i>	21	34	24	20
Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>				2
White Rats	<i>Mus decumanus</i>	22	13	20	
Axis or Spotted Deer	<i>Axis maculatus</i>	1	14	24	33
Rangoon Deer	<i>Burman cervus / Rucervus duvaucelii</i>	1	1	1	1
Sambur	<i>Cervus aristotelis</i>	1	3	5	3
Indian Antelope	<i>Antilope bezoartica</i>	1	1	1	
Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	1	1	1	
Antelope	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>	1	1	1	1
Elk	<i>Cervus alces</i>	1			
Hill Goats	<i>Capra hircas</i>			2	2
Sacred Abyssinian Baboon	<i>Cynocephalus hamadryas</i>	1	1	1	1
Lion-like Monkeys or Wanderer	<i>Macacus leoninus / Inuus silenus</i>	3	3	1	1
Pig-tailed Monkeys	<i>Macacus nemestrinus</i>	2	3	1	1
Ceylon Bonnet Monkey	<i>Macacus pileatus / Macacus radiatus</i>	1	1		1 died

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Common Monkeys	<i>Madras cercopithecus / Macacus radiatus</i>	12	16	7	10
Black Monkey	<i>Macacus radiatus (Niger)</i>				1
Common Gibbons	<i>Hybulates lar</i>				1 died
Entellus or Madras Langur	<i>Presbytis priamus</i>		1	1	
Lemur	<i>Loris gracilis</i>		1	1	1
Kangaroos	<i>Macropus sp.?</i>		2	1	
	AVES				
Hawk	<i>Faconidae</i>	1			
Bald-headed Vulture	<i>Otogyps calvus</i>	1	1	1	
Vulture, Griffon	<i>Vulture falons</i>				1 died
Eagle	<i>Aquila</i>		2		1 died
Mottled Wood Owls	<i>Syrnium ocellatum</i>	2	2		
Owl	<i>Darnia nyotea</i>				1 died
Rice Bird	<i>Loxia oryzivora</i>				1
Greater Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	<i>Cacatua galerita</i>	3	2	1	
Cockatoos	<i>Phytolophus</i>				1
Black Parrot	<i>Psittacius sp.</i>		1	1	
Rose-headed Parakeets	<i>Palaeornis rosa</i>	[empty]	2		
Rose-ringed Parakeets	<i>Palaeornis torquatus</i>	3			
Rose Hill Parakeets	<i>Platycercus eximius</i>	2	1		
Little Lorikeets	<i>Trichoglossus pusillus</i>	2	2		
Spotted Munia	<i>Munia undulata</i>	8			
Peacocks / Pea Hens	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	3 / 7	3 / 6	4 / 5	2 / 3
Guinea Fowls	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	1	1	3	2
Jungle Fowls	<i>Gallas sonneratii / Megaposius tumulus</i>	5	4	3	4
Malta Pigeons	<i>Columba sp.</i>	6	12	22	
Lucknow Pigeons	<i>Columba</i>	17			
Pigeons	<i>Columba intermedia</i>	11	35	50	40
White-headed Pigeons	<i>Columba sp.</i>		8	4	
Doves	<i>Turtor sp.</i>	10	5	4	
Coucal	<i>Centropus rufipennis</i>	1	1	1	
Ostrich	<i>Struthio camelus</i>		1		
Emu	<i>Dromanis novae hollandiae</i>	2	2	1	
Sarus / Crane	<i>Grus gigantea</i>	1	1	1	1
Adjutant	<i>Leoptilos argala</i>	1	1		
Heron, Common	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1	1	1	
Vackas or Herons Night	<i>Nycticorax griseus</i>		7	8	2
Storks	<i>Mycteria australis</i>		2	2	
Stork	<i>Ciconia</i>				1
Pelicans	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	2	2		1
Black Swans	<i>Cygnus atratus</i>	5	5	3	1
White-breasted Water Fowl	<i>Gallinula phoenicura</i>	1	1		
Pacific Gull	<i>Larus sp.</i>	1	1	1	

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Brown-headed Gulls	<i>Xema brunnicapala</i>	6	5	2	
Koels	<i>Eudynamys orientalis</i>	2	4	3	
Partridge	<i>Francolinus vulgaris / Ortygornis pontic-erianus</i>	3	3	1	
	REPTILIA				
Starred Tortoise	<i>Testudo elegans</i>	1		1	
Crocodiles	<i>Crocidilus palustris</i>			4	5
Monitor	<i>Varanus niloticus</i>				1
Rock Snake	<i>Python</i>			3	1
		1878	1879	1881	1886

Report for 1880: Additions include 1 Saras crane from Ahmed Moideen Khan, one Cheetah cub from S. Biligiri Aiyangar, three hill goats from T. Ottman and the Duke of Buckingham. Births include one lion on 5 July 1880, two tigers on 21 August 1880, one Sambur on 6 October 1880. Deaths include one Malay Bear, one Bear Juggler, one Hyaena, one Ostrich, two Tiger cubs and one Emu (Madras Municipality 1880).

Report for 1884–85: Additions include two Hyaena from P. Kotasami Tevan, one Armadillo from G.H. Smith, one Gibbon, one Spotted Cheetah by purchase. Births include one Sambur. Deaths include one Cheetah, one blind Sambur, one Armadillo and one deer. It was admitted that the Park “with its broken railings and its ruinous aviaries and bridges has the appearance of a property in charge of a Court’s Receiver” due to lack of funding (Madras Municipality 1885).

Report for 1885–86: nil. List of animals at start and end of financial year (see Table 1) (Madras Municipality 1886).

Report for 1886–87: Additions include two kangaroos, two emus, two Black Swans, two Tasmanian Devils, one Tasmanian Wolf exchanged with the Zoo in Adelaide for two young tigers (Madras Municipality 1887). The shipment was received in December 1886 (Madras Municipality 1888).

Report for 1887–88: Animals sent to Adelaide in exchange: one Cheetah, one alligator, three kites, two owls, two crows, three tree cats, two squirrels, two jackals (Madras Municipality 1888).

Report 1896–97: Deaths include Orang-outangs on 1 April 1896 and 19, 20 October 1896 (Madras Municipality 1897).

Report 1897–98: Deaths include one elephant, one tapir, one Orang-outang, two tigers (Madras Municipality 1898).

The Zoo did well for the Orang-outang, big cats, rhinoceros and deer. The cooperation with Australian collections in Ballarat and Adelaide is noteworthy. The specimen of Tasmanian Wolf *Thylacinus cynocephalus* received in December

1886 from Adelaide is remarkable because the species went extinct in 1936. Apparently, the Adelaide Zoo sent two Thylacines in September 1886 (Paddle 2012: 85), so perhaps one died on the way. Their date of death remains unknown.

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1879. Report for the last three quarters of 1878. General department, Appendix II, pp. 31–34.

1881. Report for 1880. General department, Appendix II, pp. 28–31.

1885. Report for the fifteen months from January 1st 1884 to March 31st 1885. General department, p. 16 and Appendix IIC, pp. 63–64.

1886. Report for 1885–86. General department, Appendix IIC, pp. 72–74.

1887. Report for 1886–87. General department, p. 57.

1888. Report for 1887–88. General department, Appendix I, p. 84.

1897. Report for 1896–97. General department, pp. 57–58.

1898. Report for 1897–98. General department, Appendix II, pp. 133–134.

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