

THE FUTURE OF ZOOS
Level 1 Pre-Intermediate

1. Pre-reading task

1. Make a list of all the animals you might see at a city zoo.
2. Which of these animals are the most popular with visitors to the zoo?

2. Find the information

1. How was Jim Robson killed?
2. When did the first elephants arrive at London zoo?
3. Which animals do people most want to see?
4. Which animals are leaving the zoo

3. Reading

The Future of Zoos

Last month the senior elephant keeper at London Zoo, Jim Robson, was killed by one of the elephants he loved. This was a tragic death, and it could be a big problem for the future of London Zoo -and maybe for all of Britain's city zoos. Last week the zoo said that it will move its three elephants to a wild animal park outside London. The zoo's director-general, Michael Dixon, said: "We are sorry that the elephants are leaving; there have been elephants in London Zoo since 1831."

One newspaper criticised the decision. It said that although many small animals are very interesting, most people wanted to see big animals like lions, tigers, gorillas, giraffes, pandas, rhinos - and most of all elephants.

London Zoo is not only losing its elephants. The rhinos will also leave soon and most of the bears have already gone. Outside the elephant house at London Zoo, a woman called Mary said: "I'm in favour of zoos. This is the only way that young people can see animals without travelling abroad. Their work is very important." Zoos are not perfect places for animals, but they can help conservation. Children can also learn a lot about animals when they visit zoos.

Another visitor, a man called Alan, was very angry. "If we send them back to the wild they will die. The seals have gone; the bears have gone; the rhinos and now the elephants are going; the gorilla will go soon. If you take away the big animals, people will stop visiting the zoo. The zoo can survive at the moment but it won't survive in the future."

Mary Rosevear, director of the Federation of Zoos, believes that city zoos can survive without their large animals. "A few years ago Edinburgh Zoo decided they couldn't keep elephants any more, but the number of visitors did not fall. People enjoy seeing smaller animals too. City zoos must survive."

The actress Virginia McKenna, a famous conservationist, does not agree with Rosevear's opinion about city zoos. "This type of zoo is not right - the animals are just living museum pieces. Zoos should be places where people can learn about conservation."

But will people want to visit a conservation centre if the elephants and rhinos are not there? "People should learn about smaller animals too" says McKenna. "Beetles, ants and bees are very interesting if you understand their lives and customs. We don't need elephants to help us learn about insects."

The Guardian Weekly 8-11-2001, page 21(edited)

4. Matching exercise

Match the beginnings of each sentence with the correct ending.

1. Zoos are important..... when they visit zoos.
2. In zoos, people can see animals..... they will die.
3. Children can learn a lot about animals..... people will stop visiting the zoo.
4. If you send animals back to the wild, without travelling abroad.
5. If you take away big animals,..... because they help animal conservation.

5. Vocabulary

Find the word or phrase that means:

1. a person who looks after animals
2. very sad
3. a large zoo in the country
4. protecting animals
5. a person who visits

12 animals are mentioned in the text. Can you find all twelve names?

6. Discussion

Do you think it is right to keep animals in zoos?