

Preface and acknowledgements

This is a textbook about how and why zoos manage and maintain populations of animals. It is about how zoos meet the animals' physical needs—such as ensuring that they have good housing, health, and an appropriate diet—and it is also about how their psychological needs are met, how they are kept as free as possible from stress, and how they are given opportunities to perform as many as possible of the behaviours they would perform in the wild. But it is more than that: we have also tried to give some idea of the context within which zoos operate, so there is some consideration here of topics such as zoo research, which is so important to advancing our theory and practice of zoo biology, and zoo history, which helps us to understand how zoos have evolved.

There are several good books about zoos, but none seems to cover all of the different aspects of animal management, behaviour, and welfare that are brought to bear in modern zoo practice. This book arose more out of frustration than inspiration: frustration that we were not able to recommend to our colleagues, or to our students, a single textbook that provided a broad, but accessible and reasonably concise, overview of the zoo, how it operates, and how it fulfils a role within modern society. But we were also very aware of the growing amount of good research in zoo biology and the presence of a large literature that had not really been surveyed in a book of this sort.

All three of us know the sheer joy of being close to animals, and zoos allow that opportunity in a way that few other experiences do. We have tried to capture some of this in the way in which we have approached the topics in this book. Between the three of us, we have clocked up more than 50 years' researching in, working in, and supervising students in zoos. We hope that this, together with the particular mix of zoo-based and university-based experience that we have, makes us a strong team for writing this book.

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