

## **The importance of animal welfare during the transformation process at Buenos Aires City Interactive Ecopark**

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The reconstruction of the former Buenos Aires City Zoo (Zoológico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires) boosted by the law N°5.752/2016 started with the planning and implementation of a series of modifications that were approved, in May 2018, with the intention to tackle the different needs of the process.

With animal welfare standards being one of the most important objectives of the project, during the first phase of transformation there were different strategies. First of all, to better the quality of life of the animals that are part of the institution: creating and developing enrichment programs and animal training, construction of adequate animal management facilities, better the enclosures and moving the animals to new appropriate habitats. And then, to evaluate and identify which species and individuals could be moved to other institutions that can better their current living facilities and to cooperate with the receiving institutions developing an adequate animal management plan.

It is vital for the objectives mentioned above that this transformation process starts by doing building and enclosure modifications, and adequate working groups. In this context, some animals were moved to new enclosures that were built according to their species specific and individual needs. Many of these animals were previously living in listed buildings that could not be modified as they are classified as historical monuments.

In some species, new social grouping were created by introducing individuals that used to live in different areas of the park.

Also new objectives were introduced to the daily animal care and management to deal with the building and construction work that had already started in the park. This process came hand to hand with the creation of a new team called “Cuidado Animal” (animal care), product of the amalgamation of the Zookeeper and the Animal Behavior teams. This triggered the reorganization of the working teams to achieve the new task strategies: development of enrichment and operant conditioning training, working protocols, new animal care and management techniques, team skill training, establishment of indicators and evaluation of animal welfare, and the reorganization of the animal care team.

Each of these areas were developed according to the feedback given by another interdisciplinary team who’s job it is to evaluate continuously in order to get constant improvements.

There were also assessments for those animals that were unable to move to a new enclosure due to chronic illness or old age along with a plan for their daily care according

to their specific needs. The majority of the animals mentioned above are dependent on medication or have special dietary requirements they also need medical training to be able to take blood samples, control their weight etc.

This progressive transformation of the Ecoparque Buenos Aires is now taking its first steps and will require carefully planned cooperation of all the departments in the park.

The planning and evaluation of the mentioned strategies, hard work, teamwork, effective communication and proactivity have lead us to achieve many goals and demands from such a complex process.

The responsibility of the team is to excel in the daily care of all the animals, improving their quality of life. As the animal welfare is the starting point for every change and the priority of every stage of the process.

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