

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS AFTER EEP-VCF STAFF VISIT AT THE POZNAN ZOO

Following the proposal from the EEP to transfer the alone staying Bearded Vulture female from Plock Zoo to Richard Faust Breeding Center, there was a possibility to visit Ostrava zoo. Therefore between Ostrava Zoo and EEP/VCF it was accorded to take advantage of the planned trip, to invite Alex Llopis and Hans Frey to visit the Zoo, and have a look at the new built Bearded Vulture aviary.

### Introduction:

Ostrava zoo has two breeding pairs:

1. A young pair, born in 1999, which arrived in 2000 at Ostrava zoo, is actually housed in an old aviary, and
2. the old pair -male from 1994 and female from 1995-, which arrived in 2002 at Ostrava zoo. The female in 2004 was changed by another female because pair bonding couldn't be observed. During summer 2014 the pair received a new huge aviary.

During the 17th October afternoon, we had the opportunity to visit the pairs and the new aviary.

### The Bearded Vulture new aviary:

The Bearded Vulture new facility is a huge almost square aviary. The welded elastic wire mesh is sustained by wooden pillars. The aviary is located in a forest area where visitors are normally not frequenting. The ground is a smooth slope covered with grass, and at its end by each corner-pillar there is a wooden cave as nesting site. By both wooden caves a fixed iron leader is installed to give the keepers the possibility by nest control to enter without introducing a hand leader. Near the entry there is a huge bath bowl, perfect for bathing and drinking (picture 1).



Picture 1: View from the entry. The huge Bearded Vulture facility has only wooden pillars for sustain the mesh.

The back of both cave have an “L” form. The nest-platform is elongated in front as de roof (picture 2). Behind the drink bowl two wooden dowels are installed where food is placed. In the middle of the aviary some wooden pillars are installed which support several branches -with a

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diameter around 10-15cm- as perches. Furthermore several young firs are planted as environmental enrichment (picture 1).



Picture 2: Two wooden caves are installed in opposite pillar corners. Both nests have a fixed iron leader.

### Conclusions and suggestions:

Following are exposed the possible suggested improvements by the aviary facilities.

- Bearded Vultures as cliff breeders use small caves in the wild (90-120cm height), and well protected from bad climatology. It is well known that Bearded Vultures by wet nest normally abandon the clutch. It will be necessary to **enlarge (min. 1m) the wooden roof of both caves** for assuring that the nests will be always dry.



- Bearded Vultures as cliff breeders, the perches need to be adapted to suit the anatomy of their feet. For assuring to maintain its balance on it is recommended to install flat perches, around 20cm wide, 4-5cm thick and also need to be rigid enough to prevent them from bending during copulation on the perch. We recommend **to replace the branches -which are installed as perches- by wooden planks.**



Furthermore Bearded Vultures are soaring birds of prey and it is difficult for them, especially for females and older birds, to access perches/nest-platform through flapping flight. For assuring that the birds can climb without problems up to the nest by transporting material or food we suggest to **install the wooden planks in different altitudes.**

- Obstacles like trees by other facilities have already caused the loss of several individuals because of collisions. One stuck a branch deathly into the chest. Even the

firs are very small; to prevent this kind of accidents in the future we **recommend removing them** or changed for small bushes.

- It is recommended to avoid entering and crossing the cage for feeding the birds. Remember their cage = their territory. Like in the wild, if you approach their territory the pair feels threatened and leaves the nest. **Install a 90 x 90cm feeding place close to the entry** where food can be deposited by only opening the door, without entering in the aviary.
- For giving the birds the possibility to use the whole aviary, we suggest to **install platforms at the pillars** -as it has been done by other zoos- at the same height as the nest platform. This gives them the possibility to maintain at the top of the aviary where they feel safer, without getting on the ground, especially when the nest must be controlled by the keepers.



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