

Yorkshire Wildlife Park welcomes new Baboons for Easter!

Thousands of visitors braved the chilly winds to enjoy the Easter arrival of award-winning Yorkshire Wildlife Park's baboons.

The baboon reserve is part of a unique play complex - the £1.2m Monkey Playhouse - which has 600 sqm of play area, café and conference rooms.

Children playing in the warmth of the Monkey Playhouse were mesmerized by the new monkeys.

They could see the antics of 17 baboons – one large troop of both males and females through a huge glass viewing window. Visitors can also view the baboons from an external walkway.

The baboons are called Romulus, Gimlie, Nemty, Niandan, Uma, Umba, Gouba, Riga, Xiao, Royanba, Royaka, Rouake, Gambara, Koura, Rotouma and Nafagui – and two infants who are not yet named who were born at the end of last year.

The baboons came from Edinburgh Zoo, whose troop of 60 Guinea baboons had fallen out – and this family of baboons were outcasts until Yorkshire Wildlife Park offered them a home.

The new arrivals were released on Good Friday into their new reserve for the first time and were soon enjoying the space, running about, climbing and jumping – and destroying the new plants!

Guinea baboons are the smallest of the 5 baboon subspecies. Living in troops of up typically up to 40 individuals, they have a strict social hierarchy. They are one of the most playful of all animals and have a long juvenile phase to learn about their surroundings and the rules and boundaries of their social group.

They are terrestrial and spend most of their time on the ground foraging, playing or grooming each other. Guinea baboons are IUCN listed. The IUCN recognises the world's species in urgent need of protection. These animals are not yet endangered but their conservation needs to be monitored.

The Monkey Playhouse is the only play barn in the UK where children can not only be inspired by the climbing ability of real monkeys but can actually see them while they are playing.

The play area has three levels of play equipment and includes wooden climbing frames and towers, dens, slides, swings and rope bridges. There is a soft play area for the under 5's.

The baboons were unveiled as YWP is about to celebrate its fifth anniversary of opening on April 4th and anytime now its ONE millionth visitor.

Director, Cheryl Williams said: "We are absolutely delighted to welcome Baboons to the park, and they seem to be really enjoying themselves! They are very social primates and the visitors are enjoying watching them as they are just so active all the time.

"There are two very young babies, still being carried around by their Mums who have become very firm favourites with everyone. The Alpha male Romulus is really impressive, strutting around and so very proud of his new territory!' The baboons are curious about the children playing next door and will often go up to the glass window and have a good look at them.

"This Easter will be remembered as a very special one. It was wonderful to see so many come and see the baboons on their first weekend. Especially when just a week ago, the park had to close due to the snow – which fortunately disappeared in time for the holiday "

The special one millionth guest is expected through the gate later this week and will win a super family VIP package to mark the important milestone for YWP, which only opened in 2009.

Since then the innovative attraction has won an international reputation by offering unrivalled access to some of the world's most beautiful and at risk wildlife.

Director Cheryl Williams added: "We can't believe we are already about to hit a million visitors.

"We have welcomed 980,000 visitors so far since we opened and our millionth guest is due to arrive over the Easter holidays. It seems only right for whoever is our millionth visitor to get a special prize.

"We can't thank everyone enough for all their support – our goal was to offer a unique experience bringing visitors almost face to face with some of the world's most endangered species."

"By the number of people who come back again and again seeing us grow it is clear they share in our vision."

The one-millionth visitor will win a VIP package, including a lifetime family pass – with a countdown online to the million."

Over the Bank Holiday weekend, visitors enjoyed the Billy the Bunny Easter trail. Starting at Billy the Giant Rabbit's enclosure, the clues took the children from location to location around the park until the 7th one which was the answer of one of the animals living at YWP.

They then took their ticket down to the prize collection point to claim their gift.

YWP is open daily all year round and visitors enjoy the innovative walkthrough animal areas that give them unrivalled access to some of the most amazing and most endangered animals in the world.

Lion Country is home to 12 lions rescued from a run-down zoo in Romania, who now live in the extensive reserve with its lake and waterfalls.

Endangered Amur Tigers Vladimir and Sayan roam in Land of the Tiger and last year, but the park welcomed its rarest inhabitants at Leopard Heights, the world's largest and most spectacular leopard enclosure.

Home to Amur Leopards, the most endangered big cat on the planet, it is a spectacular design with an 8 meter tall viewing tower and 10-metre long glass viewing window.

With Conservation at the heart of what they do, the most endangered carnivore in Africa, the Painted Hunting Dog, can be also be seen at YWP, and on the 'African Plains', Zebra, Antelope, Ankole cattle and Ostrich roam free.

Voted Yorkshire's Most Magnificent Attraction 2012, YWP is the UK's most acclaimed and fastest growing tourist attraction and offers a fun filled day for every member of the family.

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