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Press release

Zoo Berlin bids farewell to its oldest inhabitant

Ingo the flamingo has died

Greater flamingo Ingo, Zoo Berlin's oldest animal, passed away on 3 February aged at least 75. His age could be roughly determined by a ring around his leg that read "Cairo, 23.6.1948", which he must have been given as a young bird. "Ingo the flamingo reached the grand old age of 75 thanks to excellent care and 'assisted living'," reports Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "The average life expectancy of a wild flamingo is about 30, although they have been known to reach 50." According to post-mortem findings, the cause of death was multiple age-related changes to the bird's health. Ingo clearly had good genes, as he survived many adversities to reach such an impressive age. Ingo the flamingo will now be given a place in Berlin's natural history museum alongside other Zoo Berlin celebrities gorilla Bobby, giant panda Bao Bao, and polar bear Knut.

At 66 years old, female gorilla Fatou is now the oldest animal at Zoo Berlin – and, indeed, the oldest known gorilla in the world. She celebrates her birthday on 13 April. Elderly animals are a phenomenon that usually only occurs in human care. In their natural habitat, animals are not generally able to reach an age where they might develop cancer, cataracts or osteoarthritis, for example. Natural selection ensures that the sick and decrepit are quickly eliminated: they make an easy target for predators, are driven out of their territory by rivals, or starve to death because they can no longer feed themselves. In scientifically managed zoos, on the other hand, animals tend to live significantly longer than in the wild due to the protection, tailored nutrition and medical care that they receive. However, that also means that Zoo animals exhibit signs of aging that are rarely or never seen in their natural environment.

A total of 77 flamingos now live at Zoo Berlin:

- 29 lesser flamingos
- 16 Chilean flamingos
- 14 greater flamingos
- 6 James's flamingos



- 12 Andean flamingos