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Press release

Quolls – mysterious hunters of the night

Zoo Berlin's nocturnal animal house welcomes rare new arrivals

It certainly takes a bit of courage to descend the dark steps at the centre of Zoo Berlin's "Empire of Cats" predator house. But once the eyes adjust from bright daylight to nocturnal gloom, a fascinating new world is revealed. Our basement-level "Creatures of the Night" area is home to those animals that are most active when most of us are fast asleep. Recently, five bright-eyed quolls have moved in to the dark underground space. These spotted marsupials can now be seen scampering around their new home right next to the fennec foxes.

"This lively gang provide constant action and entertainment," says keeper Mario Grüßer, who has been looking after the nocturnal creatures and other animals at Zoo Berlin for over 40 years. "All five have settled in well and have already gained confidence." Quolls are nocturnal predators that originate from Australia and Papua New Guinea. They feed on insects, smaller mammals, birds, reptiles, grass and fruit. There are a total of six quoll species. The five that have moved from Leipzig to Berlin are eastern quolls, which have been considered extinct on the Australian mainland since the 1960s and are now only found living wild on the island of Tasmania. The IUCN Red List therefore currently lists them as "Endangered". The main reason for their demise was the introduction by European settlers of non-native species such as the domestic cat and red fox, which prey on the marsupials' young. The invasive species took much longer to reach the offshore islands – some of which remain predator-free to this day. These habitats have therefore become a final place of refuge for many threatened species. But in 2000 the red fox finally made it to Tasmania, where it now represents a great danger to the quolls and other native animal species. To save the quolls from extinction, the Australian government joined forces with environmental protection associations, universities and local people to take extensive conservation action. Attempts are already being made to reestablish the eastern quoll on the Australian mainland. To this end, zoos and other institutions are financing protected areas that are surrounded by special predator-proof fences.

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Eastern quolls are either light brown or – less commonly – dark brown with white spots. Zoo Berlin is currently home to three light and two dark individuals. “The quolls are a great addition to our nocturnal animal house and represent an endangered species that is rarely found in European zoos,” says curator Dr Florian Sicks. “By enabling people to encounter these fascinating animals, we aim to promote the preservation of our planet’s remarkable biodiversity. These cute marsupials help us raise awareness among our visitors about the need to protect endangered species around the world.”

Next door to the quolls, another new resident has recently moved in to the nocturnal animal house: a still rather shy New Guinea short-beaked echidna, who came here from Tierpark Berlin. More information about these unusual egg-laying mammals can be found here: The egg of the century – Zoo Berlin (tierpark-berlin.de). There is also marsupial news from the Tierpark: Goodfellow’s tree kangaroo Nunsi now has a new companion. The young male moved into her habitat at the Rainforest House this summer and will soon be on view to Tierpark guests.

Our “Creatures of the Night” residents:

- Seba’s short-tailed bat
- Pallas’s long-tongued bat
- Ansell’s mole-rat
- Springhare
- Senegal bushbaby
- Aardvark
- Goodman’s mouse lemur (VU)
- Lesser hedgehog tenrec
- Kinkajou
- Bengal slow loris (EN)
- Bolivian night monkey
- Southern three-banded armadillo (NT)
- Fennec fox
- African pygmy mouse
- Coruro
- Pale gerbil
- Malagasy giant rat (EN)
- Sugar glider
- New Guinea short-beaked echidna
- Eastern quoll (EN)

NT = Near threatened
VU = Vulnerable
EN = Endangered
CR = Critically endangered