

# Damnoen Saduak/Tiger World

## **First Visit: 2nd August 2016**

After nearly missing the facility, our researchers finally arrived, finding the tigers locked in bare 4x4-metre cages. To give the place its due, the keepers genuinely seemed to love the tigers and the tigers responded positively. None of the tigers showed any aggressive behaviour and they were very happy to come up and chuff to us as well. All names were known by the staff and the hands-on interaction was done without any sticks or implements. The tigers came of their own accord to the handlers to be petted--a pleasant change.

Unfortunately, the tigers appeared severely inbred, descending from one deformed male named Samsung. It was announced with pride that he was "Father to all." There were multiple serious deformities among the other tigers, including clubbed feet and short back syndrome. Most were cross-eyed, and one displayed a kind of palsy, unable to walk properly without shaking and nearly falling. Happily though, there were no young cubs. The youngest was a litter of four at one year old, demonstrating less of the speed-breeding mentality so prevalent in other attractions of this kind.

On a positive note, there was a large number of very spacious enclosures nearing completion. One could only hope that all tigers will have access to these - not just those that see tourists. All were furnished with ponds, trees, shade and platforms, which would be a welcome change from the barren cages they were currently living in.

## **Second visit: 23rd February 2017**

The facility was just as poorly sign-posted as last time and still had the half-built atmosphere. The tigers were in the same concrete-floored cages, and more of them had been built. The range of

programmes remained the same, as did both the tiger's and staff's attitudes towards each other. In one specific programme involving tourists sitting outside with free-roaming two-year-old tigers, our researchers witnessed staff feeding small pieces of raw chicken to the tiger when it stayed still instead of using a stick to force the tiger in place. This was an absolute pleasure to behold and was a standout in a facility that otherwise is not necessarily one of the best in terms of welfare.

Four new cubs had been born this time, but all the same tigers were there as last time, so it appears the facility only has one litter per year. These did appear healthy with no obvious deformities.

Some of the enclosures that were being built the previous year were now open and being used. It appeared that all tigers would have access to them at some point during the day. In fact, the staff performed a rotation during our visit proving this very fact. Again, this was a positive step.

### **Third visit: 12th April 2018**

No real changes were noted regarding cages or enclosures, except that another enclosure was completed and in use. Our researchers were not allowed to visit all the tigers on this occasion, and staff informed them that they were "dangerous." However, all the seriously deformed tigers seen in the previous years were no longer in the viewable sections. What could be seen of these "dangerous" tigers appeared to be curved spines and hunched backs, as well as some of the larger males.

There were also more cubs, raising concern that the breeding is now fully underway and looking to continue at a faster pace. Some of the one-year-old cubs had issues as well, with one female displaying a twisted neck and the inability to walk in a straight line.

Staff and tiger interaction was still good. Tigers did not appear scared and staff were playing with toys or sitting out in enclosures with large tigers, all at ease. It remains to be seen which direction this facility is headed.

### **Fourth Visit: 5<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

Breeding seems to have slowed again, with no really young cubs. This is possibly because the breeding pairs are getting older as they

use the same ones. Staff were able to visit all areas this year, but did not see some of the really deformed tigers of previous years (the decreased number of tigers observed also supports this). Due to the severity of their deformities it is possible these tigers have passed away. There were still other tigers with deformities, twisted necks and crossed eyes. Some of the tigers were seen limping and the same tiger as before was seen having seizures.

The enclosures are large and the tigers are rotated out into them even without tourists present. The majority of the tigers do not interact with the public directly. Most are generally friendly or disinterested. Tigers in enclosures were more prone to play while there was pacing from those inside.

Once again the cages were clean, but barren.

Overall this facility is plateaued.

