

# Khao Kheow Open Zoo

## First Visit: 19th February 2017

The enclosures of the tigers were larger than most seen around Thailand, averaging about 200sqm, though some were larger. Most of them had a glass front and were fully enclosed (open roof), thus preventing the tigers from really seeing or hearing the visitors. This could be argued both ways in terms of welfare:

- For: The tigers would be unable to see or hear the visitors and therefore less stressed.

- Against: The tigers are removed from the outside world and sounds, smells, experiences that can be a form of enrichment.

Each of the enclosures contained a large pond and natural features, such as vegetation and rock formations as well as a variety of enrichment items. These included hanging toys, balls, logs, tyres and food items. There were places for the tigers to hide, however, they were never completely out of sight from the public. All enclosures were covered with either a sand/dirt substrate or grass.

There appeared to be various night or lock down rooms at the back of each enclosure, though these were not viewed by the researchers.

There was minimal interaction with tourists with the exception of a tiger feeding interaction, where tourists could give pieces of raw meat to one of the tigers using tongs. This appeared to be very entertaining for the tigers involved and there was no direct contact between visitors and the tiger.

The last addition here was the tiger show. This show was based more on enrichment concepts and demonstrating the natural abilities of various animals. Other animals in the show included otters, pelicans, a lion, hyena and various small hunting cats. No keepers were in direct contact with the animals, but clickers could be heard off to the sides.

The tigers swam or climbed up feeding poles, both activities being good physical enrichment as well as informative to the public.

Generally, the tigers appeared alert, playful and relaxed with lots of natural behaviours observed including the Flehmen Response, scent marking and perimeter patrolling.

### **Second Visit: 9th April 2018**

A year later, our researchers did not notice much difference in the welfare of the tigers. Some of the tigers were in different enclosures, indicating that a rotation was in progress and adding to possible enrichment. In-cage enrichment was also changed, demonstrating an ongoing process. Some of the tigers used within the tiger show were also different, suggesting they were not placed in the show for lengthy periods of time.

General disposition of the tigers remained the same, though some tigers were observed pacing. Overall welfare is better than most facilities in Thailand.

### **Third Visit: 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2019**

Overall there was not much change in the setup or the tigers. The same tigers were used within the show as the previous year. Some tigers had been moved in the enclosures, which is good for enrichment purposes. Enrichment as a whole was good with every enclosure offering something in the way of toys or novel food items.

Generally the behaviour was positive from the tigers who appeared relaxed. Body condition is good, though one tiger was observed limping. White tigers are still present.

For the most part this is one of the better facilities in Thailand.