

Chapter 1

Yuanshan Zoo during the Japanese Period 1914-1945

Not only is Yuanshan Zoo Taiwan's first large-scale zoo, it is also the fifth government-run zoo of the Japanese Empire (including the colonies). In terms of the types and scale of animal rearing, during the pre-war period, in the dozens of major zoos in all of Japan, it is still one of the top ones. Along with the Tokyo Ueno Zoo, Kyoto Municipal Zoo, Osaka Tennōji Zoo, and Hanseong (today's Seoul, South Korea) Yiwangjik Zoo, these were called the Five Largest Zoos during the period that Japanese ruled Taiwan.



Image Source: Provision by Taipei City Archives

From Privately-Run to Government-Run

In 1914, Japanese private individuals brought a group of exotic animals from Japan, and set up a privately-run “Yuanshan Zoo” at Taipei Yuanshan Park. On April 5th, the privately-run Yuanshan Zoo opened; there were a total of 9 species, 11 rare animals at the time. Then, because of the donations from various sectors, as well as purchasing mainly birds, the Zoo became increasingly enriched. Although the privately-run Yuanshan Zoo only lasted for one short year before it was acquired by the Taipei Prefecture, but it provided the infrastructure, exotic animals, as well as the basic visitors for future management, so that it has the prototype of a zoo.

On the other hand, before the opening of the privately-run Yuanshan Zoo, the Governor-General of Taiwan also intended to establish a government-run zoo in Taipei, and in 1913 “Taipei Zoo” (another zoo, not now of the Taipei Zoo) was affiliated with Shokusan Kyoku Museum; however it was very small in scale, it was a space borrowed from a corner of the plant nursery (today’s Taipei Botanical Garden). In May of 1915, after the Taipei Prefecture acquired Yuanshan Zoo and made it government-run, the “Taipei Zoo” in the plant nursery was closed, and some of the animals from “Taipei Zoo” were moved to Yuanshan Zoo.

On April 20th, 1916, the government-run Yuanshan Zoo officially opened. The Yuanshan Zoo that brought joy and dreams for both adults and children and that became a site for parent-child education and social cultivation was born. The exotic animals that were there with the opening of the government-run Zoo included at least the red-crowned cranes, sikas, small Indian civets, Southern cassowaries, emus, Formosan black bears, Japanese black bears, brown bears, tigers, parrots, golden pheasants, ring-necked pheasants, crocodyles, leopards, striped hyenas, Reeves’ muntjacs, macacas, lions, foxes, raccoon dog, porcupines, leopard cats, alpacas, Formosan sikas, sambars, and Bactrian camels, etc.



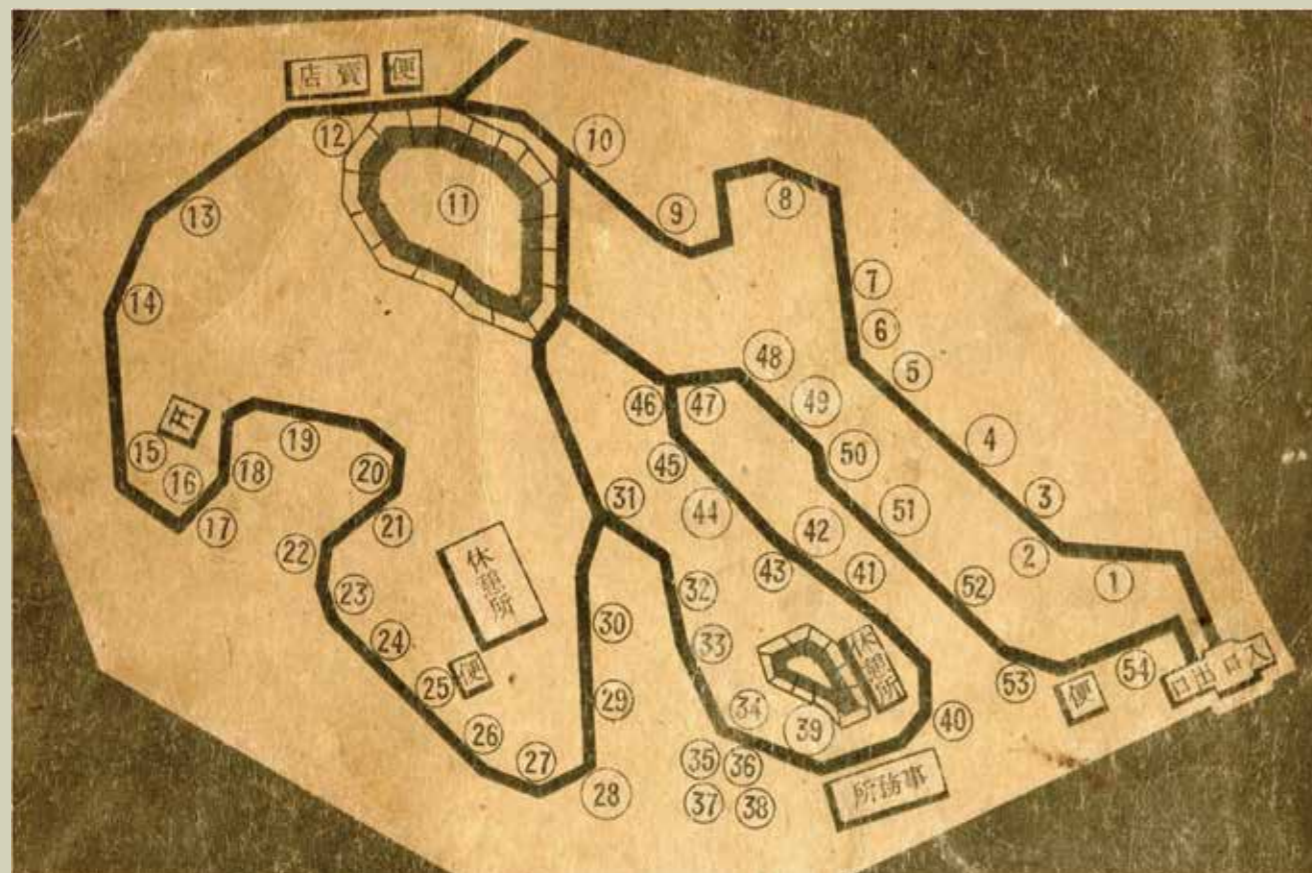
Image Source: Collection and Provision by National Central Library



卵なん産と婦夫の鱷

Chinese alligators laying eggs

Image Source: *Taiwan Daily New Newspaper* (1932)



Zoo map of Yuanshan Zoo

Image Source: Taipei Municipal Office, *Taipei Zoo Photo Post*

Resting Sanctuary

The president of Evergreen Group and a famous entrepreneur, Mr. Yung-fa Chang mentioned in his memoir, “I remember this one time, the teacher was going to take us to Yuanshan Zoo for a visit. I was so excited the night before that I could not fall asleep. I was looking forward to the quick coming of the next day all night long.” Yung-fa Chang, who was born during the Japanese Period, studied at an elementary school in Keelung. Early in the morning, he followed the teacher and students and took the train from Keelung to Taipei Main Station, then transferred to a vehicle heading to Danshui. After getting off the vehicle, there was still a long walk before getting to Yuanshan Zoo; however, “being able to play at the Zoo for more than half the day, the students felt very happy and satisfied.”

Starting in the 1930s, Yuanshan Zoo significantly increased its frequency of holding events. Zoo opening during nighttime, memorial services, animal performances, these were major programs continued down from postwar; they appeared during this period and became fixed acts. In 1930, the Zoo opened at night during the summer for the first time, and it was named “Enjoy Nighttime Cool Air” that year. It provided a nocturnal site for the Taipei citizens in the summer heat, aside from viewing the various wild animals within their cages, various sideshows are arranged under the cool atmosphere, embellishing the Zoo into a nighttime carnival.

“Memorial Services” for animals are activities that have much educational value in caring and loving animals, and can be traced back to 1924 with rituals that internal staff carried out for the support of dead animals. On November 15th the following year, the first memorial service was held within Yuanshan Zoo, and the second memorial service was held on November 23rd, 1930. From then on, each year on November 23rd, which is also the day of Niinamesai (a festival celebrating the harvest of grains) in Japan, the holding of memorial services became a fixed act. Also, to encourage the participation of the general public, the ticket for that day