



AS IT IS

In Lockdown, London Zoo Fights to Survive

February 20, 2021

The London Zoo is one of the city's most-visited places. During normal times, it is filled with visitors – both young and old.

However as the coronavirus crisis continues, the zoo is once again in lockdown – meaning no visitors at all. No one to watch **silly** monkeys play in trees, dangerous King Cobras sun on rocks, or friendly penguins slide down **slippery** surfaces.

Besides that, the lockdown is causing great economic harm. Every month without visitors costs the zoo about \$1.4 million dollars, Reuters news agency reports.

So, the future of the world's oldest scientific zoo is unclear.

“We are losing so much money,” zoo employee Kate Sanders told Reuters, “I’m concerned the zoo might not survive.”

Sanders is the team leader for big cats at the zoo. She added that having no visitors “has been a really sad time for the zoo.”

Located in Regent's Park in central London, the London Zoo was opened in 1828 by the Zoological Society of London. Charles Darwin visited while writing his “Origin of Species.” Queen Elizabeth II is the zoo's **patron**.

Ticket sales

But famous connections will not be enough to keep the zoo open with no visitors. The zoo has already faced millions of pounds in losses and the latest lockdown is again keeping visitors away, even during the usually busy school holidays.

The London Zoo was forced to close for 18 weeks in 2020, Reuters reported. That lockdown caused the zoo to lose 15 million pounds. The latest lockdown is expected to cost another 1.8 million.

The caretakers of the animals, the zookeepers, are sad and **anxious**.

The Zoological Society of London also owns Whipsnade Zoo, located north of London. Together the two zoos care for nearly 23,000 animals. All those animals need feeding and other kinds of care. So, the number of zookeepers cannot be reduced any more than it has already.

“We can’t **furlough** animals,” said Kathryn England, Chief Operating Officer of the London Zoo. “And you can’t furlough all the **staff** who look after the animals.”

“It just remains so sad that we are closed,” she added.

England says there is another sad part to the lockdowns – not being able to educate and **inspire** visitors to the zoo.

One purpose of the zoo, England said, is “to inspire people about wildlife.” As long as the zoo remains closed, the staff and zookeepers will keep trying to find other ways to teach the public. But, she added, “nothing really beats having people in the zoo and having a great day out.”

I’m Anna Matteo.

Ben Makori, Hannah McKay reported this story from London for Reuters. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English. Bryan Lynn was the editor.

Words in This Story

silly – *adj.* playfully lighthearted and amusing

slippery – *adj.* having a surface smooth or wet enough to make holding onto or moving or standing on difficult

patron – *n.* a person who gives money and support to an artist, organization, etc.

peak time – *n.* the most busy time

anxious – *adj.* afraid or nervous especially about what may happen : feeling anxiety

furlough – *n.* a period of time when an employee is told not to come to work and is not paid

staff – *n.* a group of people who work for an organization or business

inspire – *v.* to move (someone) to act, create, or feel emotions
