Abstract

The thesis is based on the presumption that zoological gardens are cultural institutions which reflect social and cultural interpretations of what is called 'nature' and animals. By analyzing data gained through participant observation it focuses on the meanings and forms which are ascribed to animals living in the Prague Zoo via the gaze of visitors. Furthermore, by analysis of visual and textual sources provided by the zoo, I examine how the 'zoo animal' is constructed by the zoo itself. I argue that this zoo animal constitutes a specific form of the animal, different from both the domesticated and the wild one. The zoo and its visitors create a chimeric 'beast' which encompasses different and even contradictory trends and conceptions of thinking about the zoo animal.