

## Learn English With Photos 20 – Dartmoor Zoo

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Hello, and welcome to episode 20 of Learn English With Photos. My name is Jeffrey Hill and I'm going to be using some photos I've taken to help you improve your English vocabulary and practise your listening and speaking skills. The subject of this lesson is Dartmoor Zoo, which is situated on the edge of Dartmoor National Park, just a few miles from my hometown Plymouth in south-west England.

Dartmoor Zoo is probably most famous for being the inspiration behind the 2011 Hollywood movie 'We Bought a Zoo', starring Matt Damon and Scarlett Johansson. The film was based on the 2008 book of the same name by the zoo's current owner Benjamin Mee, which tells the true-life story of how his family bought the run-down zoo and met the challenge of reopening it to the public.

In fact, the zoo was originally opened as Dartmoor Wildlife Park in 1968 by a man named Ellis Daw on farmland which his family had bought in 1948. After concerns over the welfare of the animals and falling visitor numbers, the zoo was forced to close to the public in April 2006. The Mee family bought the zoo for £1.1 million in August 2006, and reopened it as the rebranded Dartmoor Zoological Park in July 2007 following a major refurbishment of the site.

I had already visited the zoo at least a couple of times in its earlier incarnation, and again in 2008, after the Mees had taken over. However, this lesson is based on photos I took during a visit in May 2014. Unfortunately, the weather was not great – Dartmoor seems to have its own microclimate consisting mostly of rain and mist. Still, it could have been worse.

The zoo is set in 33 acres of beautiful woodland with some stunning views of the surrounding countryside. One problem is that it is not easy to find, and you have to drive through some very narrow country lanes to get to it. This may partly explain why the zoo has a constant struggle to survive, despite the boost from the book and movie. On this particular day, there were quite a lot of visitors, but it was the school holidays in May. I can imagine that there'd be a lot fewer people on a wet Wednesday in February.

The animals in the zoo include tigers, lions, lynx, cheetah, bears, wolves, tapir, capybara, raccoons, meerkats, and monkeys. However, if you are hoping to see elephants, giraffes, or seals, you'll be disappointed since there aren't any.

There are plenty of open spaces where children can run free and parents can have a rest and enjoy the surroundings. There's also a walk-through enclosure, where you can smooth the goats. Regular daily events include public talks at feeding times. Here you can see the otters being fed, not with fish, as you might expect, but with day-old chicks.

The big cats are undoubtedly the most popular attraction and we were lucky to see the tigers being fed. It's an amazing experience to see these beautiful creatures at such close quarters, though it would be even better if they were in the wild.

Most of the animal enclosures have informative signs outside and I took photos of some of them. I suggest you pause the video if you want to find out more about the various animals.

Let's start with the tigers, who have a big enclosure complete with some Stonehenge-type rocks and a moat.

Here's Josie the lion, who was actually born at the zoo in 2000, and whose roar could be heard all round the park.

Staying with cats, this is a Siberian lynx.

One of the zoo's oldest residents is Hayley the bear, who arrived in 1987.

And everyone's favourite animal, the incredibly cute meerkats.

We mentioned the otters before, but here they are again.

This funny-looking animal being inspected by a couple of keepers is a tapir, which the Indonesians say was made from the parts left over when God had finished making all the other animals.

These reindeer look a bit out of place here. The snowy wastes of the arctic tundra would be a more natural environment.

And to finish here are some birds.

A falcon, which is a bird of prey, meaning it hunts and feeds on other animals.

An owl, which is a nocturnal bird of prey.

Some flightless rheas, which are related to the ostrich, of which this is a particularly fine specimen.

And finally this splendid peacock, which was roaming free around the grounds.

Well, that completes our visit of Dartmoor Zoo. We saw plenty of other animals such as this capybara, but I think I've covered the most interesting ones.

With increasing concerns over animal welfare not to mention animal rights, zoos have come under closer scrutiny in recent years. Some organizations like PETA would even like to see them banned. Meanwhile, safari parks, where you can see animals in something like their natural environment have grown in popularity. I'm in two minds about the question. While it's fascinating to see exotic animals close up, there's no getting away from the fact that many are kept in cages or cramped enclosures, which severely restricts their natural behavior. Of course, the zoos would argue that they are performing a valuable job in the areas of conservation and research. In fact, Dartmoor Zoo does have a small but active Conservation and Research department covering a variety of research themes. At the end of the day, you pay your money and you take your choice, as we say in English.

In the second part of the lesson I'm going to go over some of the vocabulary we've seen in a bit more detail. I'll say each word twice and you can repeat it after me if you like. I'll also make some additional comments where appropriate.

# Vocabulary

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- ❑ **acre** — a unit for measuring the surface area of land, equal to 4,047 square metres
- ❑ **ban** — to say officially that people must not do, sell, or use something
- ❑ **bear** — a large wild animal with thick fur. There are several different types of bears, for example the polar bear and the grizzly bear. A young bear is called a bear cub.
- ❑ **big cat** — a large wild cat such as a lion or a tiger
- ❑ **bird of prey** — a bird that hunts and eats other animals. Prey is an animal that is caught by another animal and eaten.
- ❑ **cage** — a container made of wire or metal bars and used for keeping birds or animals in
- ❑ **capybara** — a South American mammal that resembles a giant, long-legged guinea pig. It lives in groups near water and is the largest living rodent.
- ❑ **cheetah** — a large African wild animal that has yellow fur with black spots and can run extremely fast
- ❑ **chick** — a baby bird
- ❑ **conservation** — the preservation and protection of the environment including wild animals
- ❑ **countryside [U]** — the area outside towns and cities, with farms, fields, and trees
- ❑ **cramped** — small and crowded
- ❑ **elephant** — a very large wild animal that lives in Africa and Asia. It has thick grey skin and a very long nose called a trunk.
- ❑ **enclosure** — a secure area surrounded by a fence or bars where animals are kept
- ❑ **exotic** — used for describing things that are interesting or exciting because they are in or from distant foreign countries
- ❑ **falcon** — a bird that kills other birds and animals for food and can be trained to hunt. The activity or skill of training falcons to hunt is known as falconry.
- ❑ **feed** — to give food to (feed, fed, fed)
- ❑ **feeding time** — a specific time when animals are fed in a zoo
- ❑ **giraffe** — a tall African animal that has a very long neck and legs
- ❑ **goat** — an animal similar to a sheep but with longer legs and a thinner coat. The male goat is called a billy goat and the female is called a nanny goat. A young goat is called a kid.
- ❑ **keeper** — someone who looks after a group of animals in a zoo
- ❑ **lane** — a narrow road, especially in the countryside.
- ❑ **lion** — a large African wild animal with golden fur. The male lion has thick hair around its head called a mane, and is commonly referred to as the king of the jungle.
- ❑ **lynx** — a wild cat that has a short tail, long hair on the ends of its ears, and dark spots
- ❑ **meerkat** — a small South African animal that has grey fur with black marks
- ❑ **mist** — water in the form of very small drops floating in the air or falling as rain
- ❑ **moat** — a deep wide hole, usually filled with water, that surrounds a castle as protection against attack
- ❑ **monkey** — an animal with a long tail that climbs trees and uses its hands in the same way that people do
- ❑ **ostrich** — a large African bird with a long neck and long legs that runs very fast but cannot fly
- ❑ **otter** — an animal that has a long body covered in brown fur and that can swim very well

- ❑ **owl** — a large bird with a big head and eyes and a small sharp beak. Owls hunt small animals at night and make a sound called hooting.
- ❑ **peacock** — a large brightly-coloured male bird with long blue-green tail feathers that sometimes spread out and up. The female is called a peahen.
- ❑ **PETA** — People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an American animal rights organization based in Norfolk, Virginia
- ❑ **raccoon** — a small animal with a black and white face and a long tail that lives mainly in North and Central America
- ❑ **refurbishment** — the act of making something neat, clean, or complete, by renovating, re-equipping, or restoring
- ❑ **reindeer** — an animal like a deer with large antlers growing from its head that lives in the Arctic and in northern regions of Europe and America
- ❑ **rhea** — a large flightless bird of South American grasslands, resembling a small ostrich, with grayish-brown plumage
- ❑ **roar** — the loud deep sound that a lion makes
- ❑ **run-down** — in bad condition because no one has spent money on repairs
- ❑ **safari park** — a large area of land where wild animals are kept so that people can drive through and watch them
- ❑ **scrutiny** — careful examination of someone or something
- ❑ **seal** — a large sea animal that eats fish and lives mainly in cold parts of the world. Seals are amphibious, that is to say they can live both in water and on land.
- ❑ **sign** — a flat object with words or pictures on it, put in a public place to provide information or advertise something
- ❑ **stunning** — very impressive or beautiful
- ❑ **surroundings** — all the things that are present in a place and that form the experience of being there
- ❑ **talk** — an informal lecture about a subject
- ❑ **tapir** — an animal that has a long nose and lives in tropical forests
- ❑ **tiger** — a large Asian wild animal that has yellowish fur with black lines and is a member of the cat family. The female tiger is called a tigress. A young tiger is called a tiger cub. The noise loud made by lions and tigers is a roar, which is also a verb.
- ❑ **tundra** — a large flat area of land without trees in very cold northern parts of the world
- ❑ **welfare** — good care and living conditions for animals
- ❑ **wolf** — a wild animal similar to a large dog that lives in groups. The plural of wolf is wolves
- ❑ **woodland [U]** — an area of land filled with trees
- ❑ **zoo** — a large place where many types of wild animals are kept, usually in cages, so that people can see them

# Questions

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1. What are your earliest memories of a zoo?
2. When was the last time you visited a zoo or a safari park?
3. What is your favourite zoo animal? What do you like about it?
4. How many other zoo animals can you name?
5. What are the good things and bad things about zoos?
6. What purpose do zoos serve?
7. Would you like to work in a zoo?
8. What was the last news story you heard about a zoo?
9. Do you feel sorry for the animals in zoos?
10. Are zoos morally wrong? Should they be banned?

