

Vista provides rare insight into gorilla life

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL), is a charity devoted to the worldwide conservation of animals and their habitats. Operating conservation programmes in Britain and across the world, the society's two Zoo sites are at the forefront of utilising the latest electronic surveillance technology to help further animal development, employing CCTV to monitor animals in enclosures at both Whipsnade and London Zoos.

After the success of previous installations at both zoos, ZSL again turned to the world of high-performance CCTV to monitor one of the most popular species at London Zoo; Western Lowland Gorillas.

Emma Kenly from ZSL London Zoo takes up the story: "We required electronic surveillance for two main reasons; one was to monitor the staged introduction of a new male gorilla into the group, and another was to oversee the pregnant female gorilla Mjukuu through the later stages of her pregnancy and birth of her baby."

Having previously provided camera systems to oversee animals at ZSL's Whipsnade Zoo, MJ Security Systems Ltd was again enlisted to provide a unique camera installation for the London Zoo site. Mick James, Managing Director of MJ Security Systems explains: "Our previous

installations at Whipsnade had included camera systems designed and specified to monitor the Zoo's elephant, lion and rhino enclosures. Using this invaluable experience, we designed and installed a system for London Zoo's gorilla enclosure.

"We knew the Vista range of cameras, recorders and monitors were a powerful combination, and after technical liaison with ZSL staff, they were chosen as the ideal choice for this application. To reassure the staff at ZSL that they were investing in the best technology, with support from Vista we arranged an on-site visit of the Vista demonstration van. Equipped with the latest in Vista camera, control and recording technology, the van enabled the zoo's staff to experience the quality of image and ease of operation for themselves."

MJ Security Systems installed Vista VPDL-5WP-P-C 22:1 VR D/N CLR cameras complemented with Vista VIREL60-10-850 60deg 10m 12/24V Infra-Red lamps around the gorilla enclosure and activity area. These were strategically placed to capture images of the animals no matter where they ventured within the enclosure.

Connected to a Vista Quantum QP08-1000f 8-Channel 1Tb FSK 400ips DVR, images from each camera are displayed on Xeno XLCDVGA15 15" LCD VGA monitors, and controlled via a high-performance Vista VKBD4 3-Axis Control Keyboard. Keepers can now view all aspects of the gorilla's behavior, an advantage that proved vital in the integration of the new male, in addition to capturing important images of the birth of the new addition. Emma Kenly of ZSL London Zoo explains: "The high-resolution footage from the cameras enabled us to manage the integration and staged introduction of the new male. When it came to monitoring Mjukuu through the critical moments of the birth, our keepers were able to ensure all went well,

without direct interference. Thanks to the quality of the CCTV system, we were able to capture detailed footage of a gorilla birth – something that has very rarely been seen before. This has proved vital in furthering our understanding of these complex animals."

Video footage of the birth derived from the Vista end-to-end system has been distributed across the world, to assist other zoos in successful breeding programmes. Illustrating the quality of the video images, footage from the Vista based solution has also been included in a BBC documentary series.

"With such critical demands on the quality of camera footage, selecting the correct technology for the zoo was vital," continues Mick. "Using Vista technology we were confident of the resulting image quality. We've worked with Vista for many years and their comprehensive technical back-up has proved invaluable on many installations, and this project was no different."

The installation continues to provide unrivalled access into the gorillas' world and their relationships with each other, and will present keepers and visitors at ZSL London Zoo with enlightening images for many years to come. Such has been the impact of this installation, that the zoo is considering additional systems for other enclosures at this extremely popular attraction.

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About MJ Security Systems Ltd

MJ Security Systems Ltd covers the whole spectrum of security protection; from domestic CCTV and Door Access Control systems, through to the most highly sophisticated audio/visual industrial systems.

Based in Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, the company serves a customer base throughout the South-East of England. Their custom-built premises includes a state-of-the-art demonstration suite that features the latest technology solutions.

MJ Security Systems Ltd is a registered NSI company and accredited to ISO9001:2000. In addition, all administrative and engineering procedures are designed in accordance with NSI/ISO9001:2000 requirements.

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