

Zoos & Menageries in Graeco-Roman Egypt

Sherihan Ibrahim Gadallah

Lecturer in Tourist Guiding

Department

High Institute of Tourism and Hotels

King Marriott Alexandria

Prof./ Enayat Mohamed Ahmed

Professor of Greco-Roman

Archaeology, Alexandria University.

Introduction

"Zoo" is a short term for "zoological park" or "zoological garden". The term (zoo) as it is known now wasn't existing in Ancient Egypt, while in Latin known as "Zoonyma". Zoos in ancient Egypt are usually described as menageries. Glorification and enjoyment were for kings and aristocratic.

The idea of zoo or menagerie in Egypt during pharaonic and Greco-Roman period was deepened on collecting breed of strange animals in garden of the ruler's palace. The main means to obtain animals was hunting, or Trade, or confiscation.

Zoo & Menagerie in ancient Egypt

Animals were important for Egyptians in the religion and life sides .They interest in keeping animals such as elephants, gazelles, crocodiles ,lions, hippopotamus , leopards, deer, giraffes ,ostriches and birds may be for many purposes, may be for practical ,religious and military purposes.(Kisling,2001)

Evidences of a civilized history cleared relationships between humans and animals. Many animal bones were found in most archaeological sites. These scenes, inscriptions, and texts reflect the existence of zoos and menageries in ancient times (but not exactly the same of current zoos), and this is evidence of the existence of a large number of rare animals that have been extracted in ancient Egypt. (Hesse & Wapnish, 2002).

The earliest zoo in history is thought to have been at Hierakonpolis (Nekhen: was the capital of Upper Egypt during the Predynastic period. Nekhen is Located south of Luxor (fig:1), "Hierakonpolis," is the Greek & Roman name, and means "City of the Falcon," referring to the falcon-headed god Horus).(El-Shamy, Ibrahim, Hassan & Shaikh Al Arab,2019) However, this zoo solely houses animal corpses that have been mummified. Nekhen was home to numerous cats, dogs, crocodiles, hippos, gazelles, aurochs (an extinct species of wild bovine), crocodiles, and other creatures. It appears that animals had a range of functions in Nekhen. They may be cherished pets or items. (Hikade, Pyke & Neill,2008).

The gardens were an important part of the palace or house and its accessories, such as the orchard planted with flowers, plants and trees, which may be provided with a small pool for rest and pleasure.(Kleiner & Mamiya,2005) (fig:2)



Fig:1 Map of the site of Nekhen (Hierakonpolis)

<https://alchetron.com/Nekhen#nekhen-96328309-6299-4f45-9e28-4b44528f4ab-resize-750.jpeg>



Fig:2 Tomb of Nebamun, Thebes. 18th Dynasty (Daines,2008)

The idea of zoos and menagerie in ancient Egypt included keeping animals and plants in extensional place accessory to their palace , such as pets and fish In small ponds and lakes, and caged birds in order to bring joy and pleasure to the owners, which was resemble zoo currently (fig:3) .(Brewer, Redford& Redford,1994).



Fig:3 Tomb of Rekhmire, The Valley of the Kings,18th Dynasty (Daines,2008)

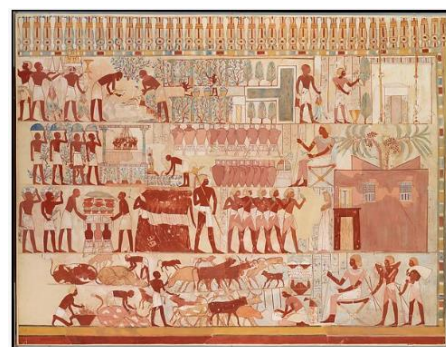


Fig:4 Wall painting from Tomb of Nebamun. Metropolitan Museum of Art 30.4.57 <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545114>

The kings of ancient Egypt dedicated temples and sacred gardens to serve this purpose because they believed that they had been appointed to rule by a divine

revelation. The kings also believed that the gods were his donors and keepers of life, so it was important to provide the temple gardens with plants and trees and to maintain them. (Wilkinson,1998).

Menageries and zoos were on both sides of the roadways in the temple courtyards leading to the temple gates, a large area within the main corridor with animals, trees, and flowers parks in between the buildings with fruit groves and other flora, and lotus and papyrus grew around the temple lake. (جميل، ٢٠١٢).

They had also been crucial in the breeding of the animals and birds used for sacrifices. Since the time of the ancient monarchy, birds have been bred in the gardens and orchards of the temples, which also included a poultry barn for the rearing of animals and birds. Throughout the late Ptolemaic and Roman eras, breeding has continued in temples. (Wilkinson,1998).

From ancient Egypt, the phenomenon of owning and bringing animals from remote lands has begun despite the high costs of grabbing and fetching them. (Kleiner & Mamiya,2005). They also cared about the animals and insured that they were fed. (fig:4)

The rulers continued to collect plants and animals, especially in the new kingdom, The majority of kings in the New Kingdom had the concept of zoos or menageries in adding to their palaces to gather flora and animals, (Breasted,1907).while Queen Hatshepsut's Temple of Eldier Elbahry's walls showed her famous Punt expedition in the ninth year of her reign include collection of hounds, giraffes and monkeys (Saleh,1972).These animals were included into the royal menagerie. (Hoage & Deiss,1996).(fig:5)

During the reign of King Thutmus III, he recorded his news of his campaigns and conquests, and on the walls of the Temple of Karnak depicted 300 kind of plants and animals.It was attached to the garden of the Royal Palace and King Thutmos III's garden contained four birds he brought in, the first poultry factions in ancient Egypt. The Sennefer tomb, built during the reign of Amenhotep II, informs us that he established a garden with a variety of animals and plants. He also brags about collecting animals having planted gardens to deliver offerings to the gods. (Bellinger,2008).

In order to cultivate it in a separate chamber of the temple complex, along with his festival hall, Thutmose III imported incense from other countries. Numerous symmetrical ponds surrounded by flower-filled terraces, vine pergolas, and a variety of fruit trees.

The park of the Amenophis III funerary temple provides other instances of temple parks. In front of the temple, a stela depicting a lake with fish and birds and decorated with vegetation was constructed. (Robichon & Varille,1936)

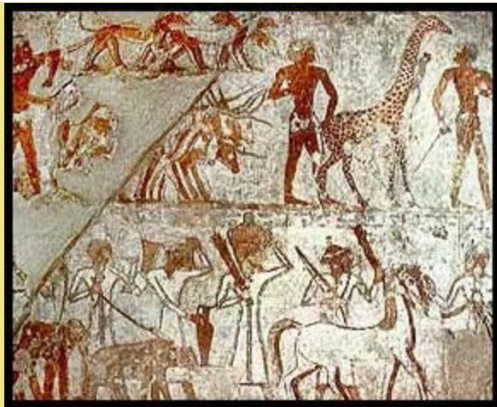


Fig:5 Queen Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt on the walls of Temple of Eldier Elbahry (Saleh,1972)



Fig:6 Garden with growing plots (Bellinger, 2008)

During excavations at Tel Al-Amarna, various gardens with animal and plant ruins were uncovered, while many rooms with plants, trees, a water lake, a water pond, and birds were also found in the yards, and many parks and gardens were unearthed.(fig:6) Akhnaten kept a lion in the garden of his palace, and recorded on his temple in Tell Elamarna a garden that looked as if it were a zoo containing deer and others, as well as a lake that may have contained fish and water plants and planted the garden sycamore trees and flowers. (Bellinger, 2008) (fig:7)

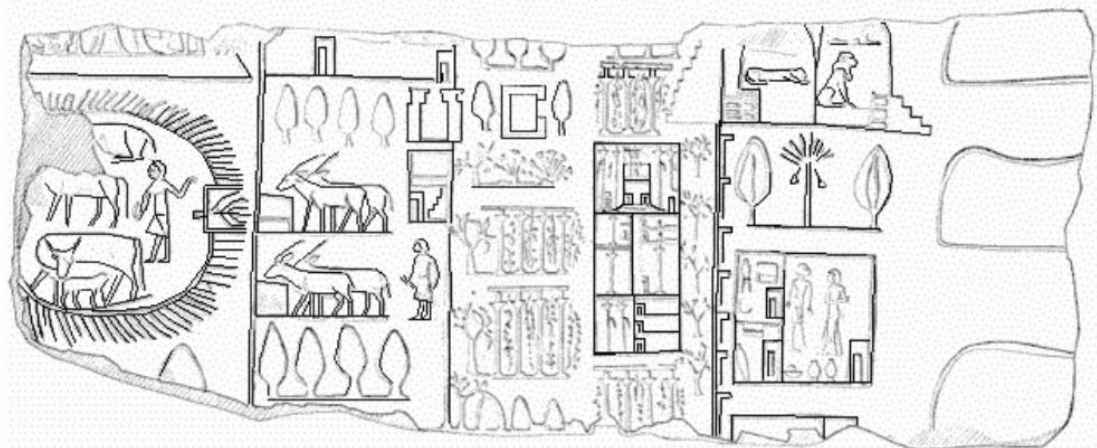


Fig:7 Zoo in the palace of Akhnaton in Tell Elamarna (Anus,1971).

Interest in these gardens continued in the era of the nineteenth dynasty and its following dynasties, and King Ramses II owned a zoo includes grape trees and olives. This was evidenced by the fact that they contained the bones of animals such as lions, elephants and giraffe.

Zoos and Menageries in Greco-Roman Egypt

The urge to collect rare, strange, and wild animals seems to be shared by all people. It has been practiced for ages on numerous continents and in a variety of cultural contexts. Only kings and nobility had the means to amass strange creatures in their

palaces and pleasure grounds because keeping animals merely for enjoyment is expensive. For a variety of causes that have changed over the years, rulers have hunted unique animals. Ancient Rome's wars frequently supplied the impetus and means for obtaining exotic animals in the Hellenistic world. Walled parks, called "paradeisoi" by the Greeks, where they maintained numerous beasts for contemplation, hunting, and court ceremonies. (Morton, 2007).

The Hellenistic era and, to a greater extent in terms of consumption, the Romans shared this passion for exoticism. One could acquire and transport more exotic animals and larger sums of money from far-off nations the more money they had. The most ostentatious and up-to-date entertainment persisted for several hundred years after the parade of Ptolemy's exotic animals. Unlike Ptolemy II, whose fascination in exotic creatures wasn't just a sign of the luxury he could buy but possibly even first and foremost, it is a thirst for knowledge. In Ptolemaic Egypt and Imperial Rome, keeping wild and exotic animals under human control in menageries was a clear sign of authority, particularly in Rome, where it appeared to be stronger after the more ferocious beast was captured. Without incredible financial resources, this message could not be transmitted. Only the tools of luxury could transmit this message of power. (Wazer,2013).

The wealth of kings and emperors served as their propaganda tool. Animal oddities collection became popular among Roman elites and emperors, in particular the luxury characteristic of gathering intriguing and exotic animal species. The Roman emperors used triumph as well. As in Ptolemaic Egypt, elephants were used primarily for military expeditions in Imperial Rome, but they were also a part of the Emperors' menageries. (McKechnie & Guillaume,2008).

A painted menagerie was discovered in a Palestinian necropolis close to Marisa. A complex animal frieze that is identified as being from Ethiopia adorns Tomb I. The parade includes the following animals: a cow, a dog, a boar, an elephant, a giraffe, a rhinoceros, and a panther. The composition's allegorical meaning also has a connection to Dionysos. The Marisa frieze provides a visual portrayal of the Ptolemaic excursions to Eritrea, despite the provincial character of the frieze painting. Some theories suggest that the owner of the disputed tomb may have been a trader in wild animals, a supplier of African wildlife to the monarch, or even a collector of strange animals. (Peters & Thiersch,1905).

Alexander the Great left behind a civilization that had become luxurious. The commodities that were imported from the East served as both a method of propaganda for the monarchs and emperors and served to certify their wealth. There was a trend of animal collecting among the nobles and emperors of the Hellenistic and Roman eras.

During the Ptolemaic Period the practice of elephant hunting was established. They also built hunting camps from which the groups would hunt elephants all the way down to Port Sudan, in the south. African elephants were mostly utilized for military purposes, but they were also used in displays, with the Great Procession under Philadelphus serving as the greatest example. Ptolemy II launched an expedition to kill them before the Second Syrian War. Since the hunters wanted to bring the monarch a broad range of animals to win large prizes, a lengthy list of specimens was recounted in an account of such a procession

Ptolemy II was the first Ptolemaic ruler who collected animals, especially exotic animals, in his palace's garden; it was such a zoo where he kept several types of animals and birds. The enthrallment of Ptolemy II with the wild and strange realm of nature. He collected the animals from the captured and regions as political gifts. The hunters resolved to risk their lives by capturing one of the enormous snakes and bringing it to Ptolemy in Alexandria after seeing the king's generous prizes. They gathered a sizable group of hunters. (Oldfather & others, 1933) Ptolemy II was favored wanting to imitate the opulent standards of living. He undertook several excursions in the interior of Africa that One facet of his opulent lifestyle was his famed collection of exotic animals on exhibit at the Pomp, On the other hand, it was departure in the musings on exotic menageries that were in the grounds of his palace; it was such a zoo where he housed many sorts of animals and birds. He was involved in multiple battles. (Matthew & others,2001).

Nonetheless, a fact is that such animals were brought to Alexandria and that one of the purposes for their display was to show the king's might and wealth, to boast the variety of exotic species he managed to gather. One of Ptolemy's motivations for collecting animals for his zoo was to increase Greeks' expertise of strange animals. He brought some of these animals to Alexandria, including domestic species from very far lands sheep, goats, wild animals that were relatively harmless different types of antelopes, asses, and monkeys, wonders (elephants, giraffes, rhinoceroses, camels, ostriches, wild beasts felines, bears. (Peters & Thiersch,1905)

The elephants, though, were Ptolemy's favorite animal. He organized an African elephant hunting trip soon before the Second Syrian War began because he employed them primarily for military purposes. And this had a big impact on the Roman world. The elephants were used as a victory symbol.(Hoage & Deiss,1996).

When Philadelphus organized a procession in celebration of the deity Dionysus, he was able to display an amazing array of exotic animals to his bewildered people and foreign visitors. Ninety-six elephants towing military chariots marched first. They were followed by oryxes with dazzling white bodies and horns, ostriches, camels, a gigantic white bear, leopards, cheetahs and a giraffe. After his Grand Procession, Philadelphus sent his animals to live quietly at the royal zoo, with the exception of the elephants. (Belozerskaya,2007,p.61).

During the reigns of Kings Ptolemy III and IV, elephant hunting expeditions were still being sent out. It has been asserted that Ptolemy V resumed explorations. (Cobb,2016).

Ptolemy VIII recorded that in 186 BC strange animals gradually appeared in Roman public life. The most frequent was a presumption about a zoological garden in Alexandria's Palace district.(Chauveau,2000)These animals were transported to Alexandria, and one of the reasons for their presentation was to demonstrate the king's power and fortune by showcasing the range of exotic species he was able to amass. (Dumont,2001)

Roman Emperors also interested in collecting animals and especially wild animals. They considered collecting exotic and rare animals is a feature of luxury. They also considered collecting exotic and rare animals is a feature of power.

Nero had a palace known as ‘the Golden Palace’. He also added a pond, which was meant to resemble a sea, and buildings meant to resemble cities. Nero also added vast expanses of land with a variety of tilled fields, vineyards, pastures, and woods, as well as a large number of domestic and wild animals. (Jennison,1936).

Elagabalus amassed a large collection of domesticated animals in Rome and used them to demonstrate his wealth and enjoy life. It is said that the emperor made fun of his visitors by putting lions, leopards, and bears in their rooms at night. Due to the animals' flawless training, taming, and removal of their fangs and claws, no harm was done (Jennison,1936).

A zoo or a menagerie was built by Septimius Severus in his palace. He did have one form of entertainment in the Palace that brought him the most joy and provided him with a respite from the stresses of statecraft. He set up aviaries for pea-fowl, pheasants, hens, ducks, and partridges, and he derived great amusement from these, but most of all from his doves, of which he reportedly had up to twenty thousand. (Rutledge,2012)



Fig:8 Nile Mosaic of Palestrina (Meyboom,1995)

In The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina (fig:8) the area between the high-rise mountains, the temple area and the dwellings seems to be a zoo affluent with many animals and organisms. The artist has identified this area on a card written in Greek. We find lion, elephant, deer, also reptiles, including cobra snake, and trees and plants are rare species(عنايات، ٢٠١٠)

The Palestrina Mosaic, also known as the Nile Mosaic of Palestrina, is a floor mosaic from the late Hellenistic period that shows the Nile travelling from the Blue Nile to the Mediterranean. The mosaic was a piece of a Classical sanctuary-grotto

in Palestrina, an Italian village east of Rome. Its dimensions are 5.85 metres in width and 4.31 metres in height, and it offers a glimpse into Roman fascination with ancient Egyptian exoticism in the first century BC. It also serves as an early example of Egypt's place in Roman culture and a representation of the genre known as "Nilotic landscape," which has a long iconographic history in Egypt and the Aegean. (La Malfa,2003)

Conclusion

The results of this research are that zoos, as they are now known, did not exist in ancient civilizations. Menageries and gardens began as an important part of the palace in ancient Egypt. Animals were important in both religion and life.

Egyptians interest in keeping animals such as elephants, gazelles, crocodiles ,lions, hippopotamus , leopards, deer, giraffes ,ostriches and birds may be for many purposes, may be for practical , religious and military purposes.

Hunting, trade, or abductions were the primary methods of obtaining animals; therefore, the monarchs launched expeditions to capture animals or went hunting.

Hatshepsut established an exhibition of animals when she sent an expedition to hunt to bring animals. Having wild animals in custody has sometimes been used as a means for rulers to display their power. The rulers continued to collect plants and animals, especially in the new kingdom, ThutmusIII and Akhenaten had zoos in their palace garden.

Many of Ptolemaic rulers had strange animals in their places' gardens to show off. Ptolemy II was the first Ptolemaic ruler who interested in collecting animals, especially exotic animals, in his palace's garden; it was such a zoo where he kept several types of animals and birds.

Roman Emperors also interested in collecting animals and they preferred wild animals and they considered collecting exotic and rare animals is a feature of luxury.

References

Anus, P. (1971). Un domaine thébain d'époque" amarnienne" sur quelques blocs de remploi trouvés à Karnak. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire*, (69), 69-88.

Bellinger, J. (2008). *Ancient Egyptian Gardens*. Amarna.

Belozerskaya, M. (2007). Menageries as Princely Necessities and Mirrors of Their Times. *Oudry" s Painted Menagerie: Portraits of Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Mary Morton.(Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007).

Breasted, J. H. (Ed.). (1907). *Ancient Records of Egypt: Indicies* (Vol. 5). University of Chicago Press.

Brewer, D. J., Redford, D. B., & Redford, S. (1994). *Domestic plants and animals: the Egyptian origins*. Aris & Phillips.

Chauveau, M. (2000). *Egypt in the Age of Cleopatra: History and Society under the Ptolemies*. Cornell University Press.

Cobb, M. (2016). The Decline of Ptolemaic Elephant Hunting: An Analysis of the Contributory Factors. *Greece & Rome*, 63(2), 192-204.

Daines, A. (2008). Egyptian gardens. *Studia Antiqua*, 6(1), 5.

Dumont, J. (2001). Les animaux dans l'Antiquité grecque. *Les animaux dans l'antiquité grecque*, 1-474.

El-Shamy, S., Ibrahim, O., Hassan, T., & Shaikh Al Arab, W. (2019). Goddess Nekhbet Scenes on Royal Monuments during the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. *International Journal of Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality*, 13(1), 190-201.

Hesse, B., & Wapnish, P. (2002). An archaeozoological perspective on the cultural use of mammals in the Levant. In *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (pp. 457-491). Brill.

Hikade, T., Pyke, G., & O'Neill, D. (2008). Excavations at Hierakonpolis HK29B and HK25: The campaigns of 2005/2006. *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo*, 64, 153-188

Hoage, R. J., & Deiss, W. A. (Eds.). (1996). *New worlds, new animals: from menagerie to zoological park in the nineteenth century*. JHU Press.p.9-11

Jennison, J. H. (1936). *Dynamic Studies of the Displacements of Buildings Frames Due to Vibrations* (Doctoral dissertation, California Institute of Technology).

Kisling, V. N. (2001). Ancient collections and menageries. In *Zoo and aquarium history* (pp. 1-46). CRC Press.

Kleiner, F. S., & Mamiya, C. J. (2005). Gardner's art through the ages , volume II. *California: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning*.

La Malfa, C. (2003). Reassessing the renaissance of the Palestrina Nile Mosaic. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 66(1), 267-272.

Matthews, J. O., Southern, L. L., Higbie, A. D., Persica, M. A., & Bidner, T. D. (2001). Effects of betaine on growth, carcass characteristics, pork quality, and plasma metabolites of finishing pigs. *Journal of animal science*, 79(3), 722-728.

Meyboom, P. G. (1995). *The Nile mosaic of Palestrina: early evidence of Egyptian religion in Italy* (Vol. 121). Brill.

Moffitt, J. F. (1997). The Palestrina Mosaic with a " Nile Scene": Philostratus and Ekphrasis; Ptolemy and Chorographia. *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 60(H. 2), 227-247.

Oldfather, C. H., Sherman, C. L., Welles, C. B., Geer, R. M., & Walton, F. R. trans. 1933–1967. Diodorus of Sicily. 12 vols. LCL.

Peters, J. P., & Thiersch, H. (1905). *Painted Tombs in the Necropolis of Marissa (Marēshah)* (Vol. 30). Committee of the Palestine exploration fund.

Rutledge, S. (2012). *Ancient Rome as a museum: power, identity, and the culture of collecting*. Oxford University Press.

Saleh, A. A. (1972). Some problems relating to the Pwenet reliefs at Deir el-Bahari. *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 58(1), 140-158.

Schrijvers, P. H. (2006). A literary view on the Nile mosaic at Praeneste. In *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World* (pp. 223-240). Brill.

Wazer, C. (2013). *The Exotic Animal Traffickers of Ancient Rome*.

Wilkinson, A. (1998). *The garden in ancient Egypt*. Rubicon Press.

المراجع العربية

ايهاب جميل (٢٠١٢) ، النشاط الاقتصادي للمعبد في مصر القديمة خلال الدولة الحديثة ، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة ، جامعة بنها ، ص ١٨٣

محمد احمد , عنايات. (٢٠١٠). *طيبة (الأقصر) عاصمة السياحة العالمية قديماً* | المجلة العلمية لكلية السياحة والفنادق جامعة الإسكندرية. 7(1), 13-36.

Websites

<https://alchetron.com/Nekhen#nekhen-96328309-6299-4f45-9e28-4b44528f4ab-resize-750.jpeg> (15/12/2022 at 2:00 pm)

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/545114>(15/12/2022 at 3:00 pm)

حدائق الحيوان في مصر اليونانية والرومانية

الملخص

إن مصطلح «حدائق الحيوان» كما هو معروف الآن لم يكن موجودًا في الحضارات القديمة. في بداية الامر كانت حدائق الحيوانات كجزء مهم من قصر مصر القديمة.

كانت الحيوانات هامة جداً بالنسبة للمصريين في كلا من الحياة والجانب الديني . إنهم مهتمون بالحفاظ على الحيوانات مثل الفيلة والغزلان والتماسيح والأسود و فرس النهر والفهود والغزلان والزرافات والنعام والطيور وذلك لأغراض عديدة، قد تكون لأغراض عملية ودينية وعسكرية. كانت الوسيلة الرئيسية للحصول على الحيوانات هي الصيد أو التجارة أو المصادرة.

تعتبر Hierakonpolis (Nekhen) موقع أول حديقة حيوانات في العالم. لكن حديقة الحيوان هذه تحتوي فقط على بقايا الحيوانات المحنطة. ربما تكون الملكة حتشبسوت قد أنشأت معرضًا للحيوانات عندما أرسلت رحلة استكشافية إلى بونت لجلب الحيوانات. في بعض الأحيان، ان احتفاظ الحكام بالحيوانات البرية اعتبر كوسيلة لإظهار قوتهم. استمر الحكام في جمع النباتات والحيوانات، خاصة في المملكة الجديدة، وكان لدى تحتمس الثالث وأخناتون حدائق حيوانات في حديقة القصر.

كان بطليموس الثاني أول حاكم بطلمي يهتم بجمع الحيوانات، وخاصة الحيوانات الغريبة، في حديقة قصره ؛ كانت حديقة حيوانات حيث احتفظ بعدة أنواع من الحيوانات والطيور. كان لدى العديد من الحكام البطلمية أيضًا حيوانات غريبة في حدائق أماكنهم للتباهي بها. اهتم الأباطرة الرومان أيضًا بجمع الحيوانات وخاصة الحيوانات البرية واعتبروا جمع الحيوانات الغريبة والنادرة سمة من سمات الرفاهية.

الكلمات الدالة: حدائق الحيوان ، العصر البطلمي ،العصر الروماني