



# World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA)

## United for Conservation

### ANIMALS - WAZA'S VIRTUAL ZOO

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### CLASS - MAMMALIA



Distribution map

|          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| Order    | RODENTIA     |
| Suborder | SCIUROMORPHA |
| Family   | SCIURIDAE    |

### Alpine Marmot

(*Marmota marmota*)

|                |                                                                                                                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| French         | Marmotte des Alpes                                                                                                          |
| German         | Alpenmurmeltier                                                                                                             |
| Spanish        | Marmota alpina                                                                                                              |
| Local language | Italian: Marmotta comune<br>Polish: Swistak<br>Romansh: Muntanella<br>Serbo-Croatian: Planinski svizak<br>Slovensko: Svizec |
| Range          | Alps, Carpathians, Pyrenees, Tatra Mountains                                                                                |
| Habitat        | Mountainous grasslands                                                                                                      |

|                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>IUCN Red List Status 2006</b> | Lower risk          |
| <b>CITES Status</b>              | Not listed          |
| <b>CMS Status</b>                | Not listed          |
| Wild population                  | Unknown             |
| Zoo population                   | 28 reported to ISIS |

### DID YOU KNOW:

that a North American cousin of the Alpine marmot, the woodchuck or ground hog, is used for traditional weather forecast? It is believed that, if on February 2 a groundhog can see its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it cannot see its shadow, spring is on the way.

### Useful Links

[Animal Diversity Web](#)

### In situ Projects

### Facts about the Alpine Marmot

With a **head-body-length** of 63 to 73 cm the Alpine marmot is one of the two largest species of the squirrel family, the other being the bobac marmot from Central Asia. Its tail is 13 to 16 cm long. In autumn marmots may weigh 5.5 to 7.5 kgs, in spring about 2.8 to 3.3 kgs.

Alpine marmots occupy **alpine meadows** and scree slopes. They spend most of their lives underground in burrows they excavate in well-drained soil. They are deep **hibernators** and may sleep up to 9 months of the year, living on their fat reserves during that period. They may emerge briefly during spells of mild winter weather.

Alpine Marmots are **social animals** that live as dense societies near their burrows. One can often see an Alpine Marmot "standing", that is keeping a look-out for possible predators or other dangers emitting a loud shrill or chirp on such an occasion.

### Exhibits on ZOOlex



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## Why do zoos keep the Alpine Marmot

The Alpine marmot, although overhunted in the past, is not a threatened species and may be hunted under licence in most of its range. Zoos therefore keep marmots, representing a prototype of a hibernating species, primarily for **educational** reasons. Marmots also allow for arranging **close encounters** with children, which is important to awake a positive attitude towards animals and nature.



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## How the Alpine Marmot should be kept

Alpine marmots are kept in outdoor enclosures. For up to 5 animals a minimum surface of 100 m<sup>2</sup> must be provided, and for each additional adult 10 m<sup>2</sup> more. Considering that marmot colonies tend to grow to a certain size, it is not advisable to design the enclosure smaller than 150 m<sup>2</sup>.

The bounds of the enclosure - half-moats, walls or glass panels - should be at least 1.2 m high and need deep foundations to avoid that the marmots will dig their way out of the enclosure. If a boundary fence is used, the upper part should be covered with a ~30cm-wide sheet of metal.

The soil of the enclosure should be well drained and covered with grass. Small pines (*Pinus mugo*) and alpenrose (*Rhododendrum ferrugineum*, *Rh. hirsutum*) may be planted to structure the enclosure along with natural rocks. Suitable dens should be provided for sleeping, rearing of young and hibernating, or the animals should be allowed to dig their own burrows.

The diet consists primarily of green fodder, hay, and vegetables. In addition branches should be offered for wearing the teeth.

Alpine marmots are suitable animals for walk-thru exhibits, and they can be kept in mixed exhibits e.g. together with vultures or ungulates such as chamois or Alpine ibex.



## How the Alpine Marmot should be transported

For air transport, Container Note 79 of the **IATA Live Animals Regulations** should be followed.

Fact sheet compiled by

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Photographs by courtesy of

- (1) PD, taken at Argelès Wildlife Park (France)
- (2) **Alpenzoo Innsbruck** (Austria)
- (3) PD, taken at Argelès Wildlife Park (France)
- (4) **Natur- und Tierpark Goldau** (Switzerland)
- (5) Peter Linhart, **Tiergarten Schönbrunn**, Vienna (Austria)

