


More than 330 coins found in stomach of dead alligator at Nagoya zoo

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NAGOYA – More than 330 coins have been found in the stomach of a dead alligator at a Nagoya zoo in May, apparently swallowed over a span of decades as visitors tossed spare change into the pond while making wishes.

The death of the alligator at Higashiyama Zoo and Botanical Gardens was not related to the trove of largely ¥5 and ¥10 coins, but a veterinarian at the facility advised that throwing coins into the alligator pond would not bring good fortune.

The alligator was brought to the zoo in 1965 and died at the estimated age of 54. An autopsy showed no signs that the reptile had developed any type of organ failure due to the coins.

Alligators have a habit of storing pebbles in their stomachs to facilitate digestion, so the alligator could have swallowed coins together with pebbles.

Through the first two decades of its life at the zoo, visitors were only able to view alligators through a glass screen. But since the opening of a pond with an elevated passage in 1989, visitors have been able to observe from above without a physical barrier.

Since that time, visitors have occasionally thrown coins into the alligator pond. A sign asking guests not to do so appears to have had little effect on the practice.

In line with the custom of tossing coins into a wooden box in front of Shinto shrines or temples, especially to wish for good luck for the coming year, some people are in the habit of throwing coins into artificial waterways or indoor fountains.