

No App for This: Croc Gulps Phone, Starts Ringing

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Crocodile Gena resting in his enclosure at Dnipropetrovsk's zoo on Friday.

KIEV — Workers at a Ukrainian aquarium didn't believe it when a visitor said a crocodile swallowed her phone. Then the reptile started ringing.

The accident in the eastern city of Dnipropetrovsk sounds a bit like "Peter Pan," in which a crocodile happily went "tick-tock" after gulping down an alarm clock.

But Gena, the 14-year-old croc that swallowed the phone, has hardly been living a fairy tale: He hasn't eaten or had a bowel movement in four weeks and appears depressed and in pain.

Gena noshed on the Nokia phone after Rimma Golovko dropped it in the water. She had stretched out her arm, trying to snap a photo of Gena opening his mouth, when the phone slipped.

"This should have been a very dramatic shot, but things didn't work out," she said.

Employees were skeptical when Golovko told them what happened. "But then the phone

started ringing, and the sound was coming from inside our Gena's stomach, and we understood she wasn't lying," said Alexandra, an employee who declined to give her last name as she wasn't authorized to speak publicly.

Since then, Gena has been refusing food and acting listless. He also won't play with three fellow African crocodiles, despite being the leader in the group.

"His behavior has changed," Alexandra said. "He moves very little and swims much less than he used to."

Doctors tried to whet the crocodile's appetite last week by feeding him live quail rather than the pork or beef he usually gets once a week. The quail were injected with vitamins and a laxative, but while Gena smothered one bird, he didn't eat it.

Dnipropetrovsk chief veterinarian Oleksandr Shushlenko said the crocodile would be taken for an X-ray this week if he continued to refuse food. Surgically removing the phone would be a last resort, he said, since incisions and stitches usually take at least three weeks to heal in reptiles and the procedure is dangerous for the animal and the vets.

"Everything will depend on where the foreign body is located," Shushlenko said. "We don't have much experience working with such large animals."

The crocodile in "Peter Pan" with the ticking stomach was on the hunt for Captain Hook after getting a taste for the pirate's flesh from eating one of his hands. But luckily for Hook, he could always hear the crocodile coming.

Golovko has about as much optimism for retrieving her phone as Hook did for retrieving his hand. But she does want to get back the phone's SIM card, which holds her precious photos and contacts.

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