Man’s best friend?

By Erin

Seems as if dogs are no longer man’s best friend as a German shepherd is spotted in a Siberian tiger enclosure at a reserve dedicated to breeding big cats.

At a centre in Slovakia Jenny the Alsatian and Suria the tiger have grown up together along with Suria’s daughter Sunny and two other dogs, Blacky and Hugo. According to the Oasis of Siberian Tigers’ Centre the dogs and big cats have been inseparable since they first met.

When she was born two years ago, Suria began to be friendly with the dogs and it seems to be that four-month-old Sunny is following in her footsteps by also play fighting and grooming the unique pups.

The dogs and big cats were first captured by Lucia Zustakova, who works at Oasis, and volunteer Martin Ziman.

Lucia, 29, said it is nice to see it all adding: ‘It is so amazing to interact with these beautiful animals’. The daily playtime allows interaction between the odd group of friends although it sometimes gets quite rowdy as play fighting can get vicious. However, at the end of the day it is just play fighting and none of the animals are ever hurt.

The Oasis is run by Yveta Irsova, owner of the dogs, and it opened in 1999. It houses 28 tigers, 23 of whom were born there.

‘Suria plays with the dogs every day and they just love her’ said Yveta continuing: ‘I love animals and love the Oasis - it's a great project to help these tigers that are facing extinction.'

Due to intense poaching, many species of tigers are extinct so Yveta and her team devote most of their lives to protecting the Siberian breed.

Martin said: 'The dogs are almost the same age as Suria and have grown up together. They spend most of the time together. They are really like siblings and play together all day long. They never hurt each other.'

Many other strange animal friendships have been known such as Fred and Dennis; dog and duckling, Torque and Shrek; dog and owl and Tinni and Sniffer; fox and dog. The examples listed above show that dogs can make friends with almost any animal possible so what makes Suria and her puppy pals so special?

Well Suria and her canine companions are the biggest group of varied animal groups in the world. Jenny, Blacky, Hugo, Suria and Sunny make up five animals. Baloo, Shere Khan and Leo; lion, bear and tiger come in a close second with three.

Suria and her canine companions can interact all day and all night if need be as they live in an enclosure of over 1.5 kilometres big. For now this odd trio of dogs and their tiger companions, will play all day.