

Editorial

Dear Readers:

We give much attention to the CBSG (Conservation Breeding Specialist Group) and WAZA World Association of Zoos and Aquariums) meetings and conferences. Some of you may wonder why. It is simply because CBSG and WAZA are the nodal organisations for zoos while at the same time conducting activities in field conservation.

Unfortunately it is very expensive for people from South Asia (as well as other low income countries and regions) to attend these events. Thus, I report these conferences in ZOOS' PRINT in order to share some of the events and opportunities of CBSG and WAZA, and to keep people apprised from time to time, issue to issue, on what zoo and wild conservation activities are going on. If you will have a look at the projects and papers of CBSG and WAZA mentioned in this issue of ZOOS' PRINT, you will soon see that ex situ (zoo) conservation and in situ (field) conservation have merged to a great extent. This has always been the case with CBSG although early in its "life" it seemed more dedicated to zoo conservation, but with every passing year, more wildlife conservation science and related activities were incorporated. That is how it should be. It was not so long ago that Zoos role was entertainment and education. Today zoos participate energetically in a whole raft of in situ conservation projects, largely influenced by CBSG and WAZA.

CBSG's big project at present is Climate Change. Climate is having a serious negative impact on much of the Earth and that means it is also impacting the wildlife of the world ... not to mention human beings. Read about their project in this issue, including the booklet Zoos & Aquariums 350 which will give you some ideas to ponder and act upon. WAZA also is firmly on board with CBSG and they are working together to utilise zoos to spread the word of this threat literally to life on earth.

Many zoos, primarily those in high income countries, have taken up in situ projects, collecting funds from visitors and others to sponsor activities in low-income countries that hold a number of declining populations of threatened species. These field conservation projects being funded by zoos are a perfect example of ex situ and in situ coming together.

For some years now, I have wondered how these useful projects were going to be done in India and other South Asian countries when the forest departments have total control over the forests. Although the Ministry of Environment and Forests includes zoos under the dynamic Central Zoo Authority and now the Directors of the bigger and better zoos are Forest Officials, still there seem to be scant examples of the foresters working with the zoos the way the emerging Field Conservation projects do in much of the rest of the world. The Forest Department seems to be more interested in reintroduction of zoo bred animals to areas where they have shrinking or extinct populations, which is expensive and very rarely a long term solution.

It puzzles me how, now, so many foresters have real zoo experience, yet can't seem to generate the expertise required for truly successful zoos. There ARE good zoos in India but a) not enough of them, b) they are "good" but can't rise to excellence, and c) unable to achieve any genuine conservation in zoos except occasionally through education.

Next year, India will host the CBSG/WAZA Conference for the first time. The CBSG/WAZA Conference is a challenge for any zoo in the world, so the Central Zoo Authority which holds all the zoos in India together, is pulling out all the stops to make the 69th WAZA Conference a GRAND success.

I have no doubt that India's Central Zoo Authority can pull it off, BUT I hope the Indian zoo community will not focus totally on "wowing" their guests, but also on learning from the better zoos in the world how to make our zoos in India better and best. Let us all ponder this and think of ways that we might bring this about.

Sally R. Walker, Editor