

Passed away on: 15 Nov 2008

In Memory: Late Abdul Latif Shanoori, Curator of Animals, Kabul Zoo

Abdul Latif Shanoori, a dedicated Curator of Kabul Zoo for many years passed away recently of heart disease. Neither he nor his family knew he had heart disease as diagnostic facilities to determine to such conditions are not so readily available in Afghanistan.

Many organisations and individuals which gave time, funds and/or expertise to assist the Kabul Zoo and its dedicated personnel to recover physically and emotionally from the horrendous damages inflicted during the fighting. A few examples are the North Carolina Zoo, which collected a small fortune with which it rebuilt enclosures, provided veterinary supplies, funded an education officer and other actions to improve the welfare of the animals and the effectiveness of the zoo. The London Zoological Society contributed Nick Lindsay's time and expertise. The Mayhew Animal Home has been a long term supporter through veterinary advice, materials and coordinating support. Wildlife Conservation Society sent staff to assist more recently, particularly in education. Zoo Outreach Organisation promoted the Kabul Zoo by publishing a number of news and features about the Kabul Zoo in ZOOS' PRINT, arranging for

hundreds of copies of Dr. Kushal Habibi's Mammals of Afghanistan, which ZOO edited, illustrated and published, to be donated to the zoo and providing training opportunities. Therefore, we wish to honour this dedicated man, who suffered who neglected family, friends and his own health for the sake of the animals at Kabul Zoo.

Several of his friends, family and associates contributed legends about him and perhaps the best way to tell his story is to simply arrange these contributions in some sort of order. S Walker

Introduction:

Abdul Latif Shanoori was Curator before the Taliban took over. He went to Pakistan and returned to resume his post after something like 20 years. He was committed to the zoo, its animals and staff and had a burning ambition to see the zoo reach its original standards and to develop further for the people of Afghanistan. In a tough life there he was as committed as anyone.

(Contributed by Nick Lindsay, Curator, Zoological Society of London)

Abdul Latif Shanoori the teacher

In a place like Afghanistan where so many have hardship in their

lives, it is rare to find someone that shows compassion and care for animals. Abdul Latif Shanoori did and I think that makes him a very special and unique person. His contribution to the Zoo will be sorely missed. **(Contributed by Kara Stevens, Training & Capacity Building Manager, WCS).**

Abdul Latif Shanoori, a father to his animal and human families

I want to speak about my father Abdul Latif Shanoori, former Director of Kabul Zoo, who was faithful to his friends Nick Lindsay, David Jones, Brendan Whittington-Jones, James Hogan, Sally Walker and Jim Gregory and others.

My father had the honour of protecting animals in Kabul zoo. Today he is no more and we can only write his story in death. He expired on 15 November at 7 pm. I think we will never find a professional like my father in Kabul Zoo again. My father spent the whole time of quarter century in his employ for Kabul Zoo, protecting the animals and birds there. Abdul Latif Shanoori had heart disease but our family didn't know it and could not save him. I request to his best friends like Nick Lindsay, Jim and

Brendan to be faithful to Shanoori, remember his family and give my father honour of Aka Aka Akbar (the man who gave his life for animals and birds).
(Contributed by Md. Hafizula of Kabul Zoo, son of Shanoori)

Shanoori friend & colleague

As we all know Mr. Shanoori, professional and technical member of Kabul Zoo sadly passed away in November. He devoted 25 years of his life to Kabul Zoo. He worked hard with love and enthusiasm to keep the Zoo alive. He was an experienced person who, with his knowledge understood how to take care of the animals. He was the only zoologist in Kabul Zoo who could take care of animals like his children under very harsh circumstances to keep them safe and alive. He was always interested in getting in touch with wildlife conservation societies, so when Kabul Zoo became a member of the South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation, SAZARC, he was so happy and he always mentioned it was the result of our international friends attention and hard work for Kabul Zoo. He always wished Kabul Zoo would achieve same level of development as neighboring countries zoos like Iran, India and Pakistan.



Shanoori and Md. Faizil on a study tour of Pakistan's zoos. Shanoori was not to be seen without his notebook taking copious notes. SRW

In that regard he had appealed to Kabul Municipality and suggested new things and changes, but as few at that level of Municipality had interest in animals he didn't get sufficient attention. He was demoted from Director of Kabul Zoo to lower positions, as it has become common, but he always worked hard and never gave up.

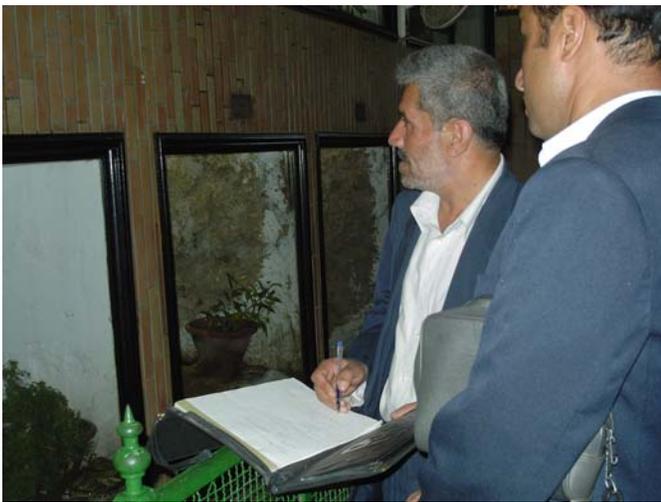
As I remember he tried to collect some donations for the hungry animals from pedestrians in front of Kabul Zoo. During civil war there were no visitors and nobody paid attention to the zoo and the poor animals. He bought some food with that donated money and loaded it on his bicycle and took it to the zoo. He used to spend nights with Aka-Akbar to take care of all the animals while fighting was going on.



Dr Khadr, Shanoori and Fazil. Khadr and Fazil were Shanoori closest colleagues. Photo by Brendan Whittingdon-Jones

Right now as we all know there is nobody to replace him and fill his position and this is a big loss to Kabul Zoo. It is like a family has lost a kind and hard working father. As an ex-coworker of Mr. Shanoori from 2003-2007, I request you all to remember his hard work, his love to his job and Kabul Zoo. Please remember him by printing his photos and biography as a Kabul Zoo legendary zoologist in press and websites. This is so that, not only we do our job remembering a great co-worker, we will let his family and people know we value such persons who are honest and hard working in any situations. Also we all know he was struggling with economic problem at home. His death not only been a tragedy to the family, loss of a loved one, but family facing an economic problem also. All his co-workers, Afghans and internationals as well will comfort themselves by remembering him and helping his family as well.
(Contributed by Fazil Saidal, formerly Education Officer, Kabul Zoo)

Protector of animals & former glory of the zoo
 When I remember time at Kabul Zoo it is impossible to ignore Shanoori, or his closest colleagues Dr



Shanoori (with faithful notebook) and Fazil with Director M. M. Qazi at the remodeled Karachi Zoo Museum which opened officially the day of the training ZOO conducted there. It was his wish to restore the Kabul Zoo Museum. Photos SRW.

Khadr and Md. Fazil. It was striking in my earlier days of visits to the zoo, that despite Shanoori's position as director of the zoo he appeared unwilling to make changes to the zoo which I felt were urgently needed, even if initially only temporary. It would take a lot of negotiating and explanations before he would change his position and agree to any changes. He was sceptical of unconventional ideas despite all the makeshift plans he'd had to implement to keep the zoo surviving in it's most traumatic days!

It was without doubt frustrating to me, but once he'd agreed, he did everything in his power to assist in bringing an idea to fruition, and he took great interest to see that the idea was followed through.

It took many weeks before I finally understood the logic behind his objections. It was his drive to see the zoo restored to it's former glory as he remembered it, and as he wished it to be again. He

felt that the temporary measures may in some way impact on any chance of the zoo once again becoming a beautiful place of relaxation and enjoyment for Afghan families as he remembered it.

His passion for the animals was unquestionable, and while he had little opportunity to improve his knowledge through the many years of civil war and persistent dangers inherent in trying to protect such a vulnerable patch of violence ravaged Kabul, he wanted the Kabul Zoo to rival the best in the South Asian region. He struggled on a daily basis to try ensure animals survived when much around them had been destroyed, blown up, shot or neglected.

Despite the language barrier, with the assistance of Fazil, and over the months of spending time on a daily basis with Shanoori it became evident too that he was a passionate family man who cared deeply for his children and their future. There was great excitement at the zoo the day he purchased a motorbike. He had brought his eldest son along for the ride to show off his pride in both his gleaming new transport and also his family. After his lunch time nap, which was an unwavering ritual, we'd walk the zoo grounds as he cajoled staff into the afternoon routines to make sure the zoo was looking at it's best for the deluge of visitors that arrived as the heat of the day faded. Despite the overwhelming odds he faced as he tried to keep his family and the zoo going, he was always keen for a good laugh and it wouldn't take much for the grin to lead to laughter after a comment from Fazil or Dr Kadhr. His personality and passion at the zoo, and with his family, will be sorely missed by all those who knew and worked with him.

Contributed by Brendan Whittingdon Jones, Wildlife manager, South Africa (Brendan volunteered at the Kabul Zoo at the worst of times and stayed for months, returning later to help again.)

A Stabilising Influence

Although I never met him, Shanoori was clearly the heart and soul of the new face to Kabul Zoo. In the hundreds of e-mails that flowed back and forth between those of us most involved in the Zoo's reconstruction, it was clearly evident that his loyalty and love for the Zoo was a driving force in ensuring that as much was done as could be done with the limited resources available.

Despite the comings and goings of others in authority around him, his was the stabilising element that ensured that the animals received the attention they needed. He will be difficult to replace" ***(Contributed by David M. Jones, Director, North Carolina Zoo who directed the highly successful fundraising campaign for Kabul Zoo)***

Shanoori, willing student and planner

Md. Shanoori attended an combined field techniques training and zookeeper training course in three



Shanoori and Md Fazil with their translator at Lahore Zoo Pakistan

cities in Pakistan organised by Zoo Outreach Organisation.

We had invited Md. Fazil Saidel and Md. Shanoori to that particular event because we had been searching for opportunities for them to see some different zoos and also to get some kind of training, and Pakistan was relatively close to Kabul and certainly close to the culture of Afghanistan, so it seemed a natural.

Finding translators for the course work was not easy but the two colleagues made the best of the situation and spent some lecture time just looking around the zoos and safari parks of Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore and their surrounds. The zookeeper training was useful for them as Fazil knows English and we gave him a good presentation on how to organise and conduct zookeeper training and a manual by S. Paulraj, formerly Curator of Arignar Anna zoo. They learned things also simply by seeing how buildings and enclosures were constructed and how the various zoo procedures were carried out in different places.

One of the moments I remember best with them was when they saw the new Zoological Museum at Karachi Zoo. Shanoori wept to see it because he saw the lovely Museum at Kabul Zoo in rubble with all the animal models pilfered. He said he hoped Kabul zoo could have a nice museum again one day and it is sad this could not happen in his lifetime. I hope when it does, someone will remember to name it after him.

In Islamabad, the workshops were hosted by the Pakistan Museum of Natural History and Shah Nuri got to spend time there as well.

In Lahore we worried a lot about him because he became very very sick with either a bad cold or flu and had to spend a day in bed, but valiently got up for the last days of the workshop there.



Shanoori undoubtedly envisioning the day when Kabul Zoo will have such a garden and fountain.



Shanoori attended three zoo management training courses in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore in the space of two weeks.



Just Shanoori !

It is worrisome that Kabul Zoo, sort of getting back on his feet, has again been hit by the great loss of this dedicated and knowledgeable zoo manager. **(Contributed by Sally Walker, Zoo)**