

Conservation-Conscious v/v Conservation-Careless zoos and government agencies

Sally Walker

Many of our readers have been following with interest the ongoing saga of the previously named "bad zoo" issue mooted in two annual conference papers to the prestigious World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The issue of bad zoos also was summarised in successive papers which also summed up what has been done by others in the past and in the ongoing present, at WAZA, PAAZAB, SEAZA, IZE, SAZARC conferences and even at other venues, such as the Madison Avenue Baptist Church, USA, etc.

To review the story, WAZA, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums and other zoo associations had been seized of this issue and trying to deal with it in different ways.

The American Zoo Association had done a great deal by forming a "Roadside Zoo Task Force", collecting information which revealed that there were 10 times the number of unregulated wild animal facilities (~2500) in the USA as there were AZA institutions (~250) which are regulated very stringently by the association itself.

India had done the most, by creating a Zoo Act as part of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 amended in 1991, setting up a Central Zoo Authority, creating a mechanism for registration, inspection, funding improvements or relocating/reconstruction, and closure. India's Central Zoo Authority has identified about 200 zoos for closure and closed half; others, because of the difficulty of disposing of the animals, have been ordered to refrain from breeding or acquiring new animals and let the facility phase out. The Zoo Act which is recognised Indian law, has designated deer parks, breeding centres, and even animal rescue centres as "zoos" in their legislation for the purpose of bringing them under one umbrella and because they all need regulation and monitoring, no matter what they are called. There are different forms for inspecting large, medium and small zoos as opposed to mini-zoos, deer parks, rescue centres, etc.

PAAZAB (the African Zoo Association) has a system of zoo visits in place which had led to documentation, some national legislation and improvements. SEAZA, the South East Asian Zoo Association, has an inspection process. The European Zoo Association, EAZA has a very active committee which inspects and provides expertise and funding for improving Eastern European zoos. ARAZPA, Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria has a very good system of regulation. WAZA, the World Zoo Association, takes written complaints against individual zoos and acts by contacting the relevant zoo association which was to follow up. If the zoo

association does not have a procedure or if there is no zoo association where the complaint has been made, it is close to impossible to do anything effective.

With all this activity, what was the problem? The problem is that although it is something, it is not enough to make an impact in an enormous problem. Also, the 2005 or 2nd version of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy enjoined "all zoos" to make a contribution to wildlife conservation, a dictate that had no meaning when there are perhaps 1000 zoos covered by WAZA membership, either individual or through national or regional association, and anywhere from 5000 - 10,000 wild animal facilities which call themselves or could be classified as zoos that are not under any regulatory or advisory umbrella.

This was pointed out in formal presentations to WAZA membership and the point made that these bad zoos or spurious wild animal facilities are not only NOT contributing to wildlife conservation but actively contributing to species extinction — in a variety of ways of which seven serious ones were listed. In order to introduce the issue with a group of conservation concerned individuals behind it, the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group was utilised as a stepping stone by convening a working group at their Annual Meeting in 2005 which discussed the issue and drew up a statement endorsed by the entire meeting of academics, wildlife vets, field biologists and zoo personnel that WAZA should take up this issue on priority.

WAZA, which had their Annual Conference the following week, approved the setting up of a working group to analyse the problem and create a declaration to be endorsed by the membership. The working group met at Bern in spring 2006 and put up a document that was approved by WAZA membership at the Annual Conference. It was exciting to be at this conference and hear remarks of zoo directors, who, instead of being wary and threatened, were saying things like "now I'll get those fellows in my state", and "it's a good thing", etc.

Now that the issue has been endorsed and formalised, a methodology or protocol has to be put up so that WAZA members zoos can have a flexible standard and choice actions to address the issue in its many forms. It is taken for granted that WAZA itself is not in a position to do large scale help from their small secretariat in Bern and with the linguistic, social, political, ethical and economic issues that abound in this project. WAZA will count

on the regional and national zoo associations to forward the action. In April this year, the Drafting Group (consisting of roughly one person from each major region) will meet again and create a Draft methodology that will be put in front of the members of WAZA in August, at their 62nd Annual Conference at Budapest.

Incidentally a sort of "tact war" has been declared on the subject of what to call "those" zoos. First, when this was introduced as an issue at a WAZA conference in Costa Rica, this writer used the term the "other" zoo world. In the second presentation the term used was "bad zoos". When WAZA took up the issue, they used the term "substandard zoos". Some of the member zoos objected to that term so "zoos which need improvement" came into some of the documentation.

Recently ZOO produced a couple of educational packets, the latter of which included the following terms "conservation-conscious" zoos for good zoos and "conservation-careless" zoos for not-good zoos. Let us see what the WAZA Zoo Standards Improvement Drafting Group comes up with when they meet this month in Karlsruhe, Germany.

In the meantime

In the meantime what is happening in South Asia with its 8 countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka?

Zoo Outreach Organisation which was founded at the suggestion of then Secretary, Department of Environment, T.N. Khoshoo to provide educational and technical support to zoos with an idea of improving them, has not been idle on this issue. ZOO lobbied for Indian Zoo legislation and has been, in the last decade, visiting other countries in South Asia with an idea of encouraging their governments to also adopt zoo legislation. ZOO Founder, has visited several of the countries and generated some interest in almost every one. A review of these countries is in order.

Bangladesh

ZOO visited Bangladesh first to personally invite the Director and Dy. Director of Dhaka Zoo to the first ever meeting of South Asian zoo directors which generated the founding of SAZARC, South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation. The meeting was held in Central Zoo, Kathmandu, Nepal, preceded by a CBSG, India meeting and followed by a South Asian Zoo Educator Training. SAZARC has been funded by sponsorships for travel and accommodation raised by ZOO since inception in 2000 and administered by the ZOO office gratis. SAZARC conducted their 2002 annual conference/meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh where a working group of Bangladeshi zoo personnel drew up a concept paper for a national zoo association and for zoo legislation for their country. SAZARC conference passed a resolution of support to this

working group initiative. Things take their own time in officialdom, but the government of Bangladesh agreed with the resolution for legislation. The initiative to create legislation has proceeded quite a ways down to long road to passage of legislation with an official document when requires passage. Now, the greatest obstacle to this is that two ministries in the government each want to float the legislation and to administer the authority which is created by the legislation. In Bangladesh there are two large zoos, Dhaka Zoo, in the nation's capital one founded 3 decades ago and administered by the Department of Livestock Services and the relatively recent Dulhazara Safari Park founded about 3 years ago near Cox's Bazaar and administered by the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division. There are about 7 other zoos of some medium to small area which are administered by various Municipal Corporations and other institutions. There is also a private zoo or holding facility run by a man who purports to save the animals but is, in fact, selling them abroad and within Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has had the world famous Colombo Zoo, now called the National Zoological Gardens, for many decades and when under the stewardship of Lyn de Alwis, was considered a world class zoo. There is also the Pinnewala Elephant Orphanage and a new, large zoo coming up also in Pinnewala. A few years ago the government of Sri Lanka closed down the only other wild animal facility operating outside government auspices, a crocodile park which had become dangerous. Now, Sri Lanka is in the unique position of having the only Ministry of National Zoological Gardens and Botanical Gardens in the world. The government gives generous and unstinting support, including the creation of 28 research posts for postgraduates by the zoo ministry for the National Zoo and Pinnewala. These researchers will do double duty as educators and their training has already started. We can just sit back and watch Sri Lanka for a while. Sri Lanka has the National Zoological Gardens Act which lays down some rules and regulations about starting zoos, etc. but needs a detailed section on Norms and Standards. Incidentally the Pinnewala Elephant Orphanage is open to the public and has the same status of under the National Zoological Gardens Act.

Pakistan

Pakistan has about 28 animals facilities that they classify together. In Pakistan there are different provincial (sort of like states) departments which look after animal facilities, many under the various departments of forest or wildlife but significant others (such as Karachi Zoo and Safari Park and Islamabad Zoo) under the provincial municipality. For Islamabad there is also a very ambitious National Botanical Gardens and National Zoological Gardens plan which is under the Zoological Survey

Department. In 2004 a meeting of zoo directors of Pakistan was convened by WWF, Pakistan, the brainchild of Ms. Uzma Khan, a WWF conservation biologist on deputation to Lahore Zoo as education advisor, and WWF Director, Dr. Ali. At the meeting, after hearing presentations about the current state of how zoos work in the world, zoo directors voted to start a national zoo association and recommended zoo legislation for the country. Subsequent to this Lahore Zoo and Punjab Wildlife Department organised the 4th SAZARC conference with extreme best hospitality (even for Pakistan) and efficiency. At this time, there are plans in the works to shift some smaller facilities in Punjab and create much improved zoological parks and safaris and also a very large initiative to improve the Lahore Zoo, which is one of the very oldest zoos in the region. These plans have come to a more advanced stage and work is going on. The association and legislation do not seem to be moving but it is possible that Pakistan administrative style, which seems to be stronger in the independent states, is more suited to province-wise initiatives.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has one zoo which belongs to the Municipal Corporation. This is the zoo which attracted so much attention during the hostilities in and around Kabul. With help from thousands of donors who unstintingly gave funds to the North Carolina Zoo which coordinated an appeal for funds and a plan for utilisation, the Kabul Zoo has been able to feed and care for its remaining animals, acquire a few more animals and run a reasonable education programme. The Kabul Zoo fund also provided people, Nick Lindsay from Zoological Society of London and later, Brendan Whittington Jones, to visit periodically for 1-3 months to give some practical instruction and help coordinate improvements. The zoo is still too fragile to impose very high standards, but the group looking after the zoo from outside does find ways to remind the staff as well as the municipal authority there to get back on track when a "conservation careless" project seems about to be implemented. We are not aware of other animal facilities in Afghanistan. The Director and Education Officer have attended training and SAZARC meetings.

Bhutan

Bhutan has only one very small mini-zoo and a crocodile farm that does not actually farm crocs. The mini-zoo is very basic and needs a lot of help. It has not been possible to get the zoo caretaker or a government official to represent Bhutan at any SAZARC meeting so far.

Nepal

The Central Zoo in Jawalakhel, Nepal was described by press recently as the "only zoo of the country... and is yet to give up its traditional image and acquire the shape of a modern life garden." Actually there are many modern things in Central Zoo primarily in education marketing and public

relations which belie its size and layout. The zoo was opened when it was a private menagerie of the Prince. It spent time with the forest department before being put under the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation KMTNC which is now the National Trust for Nature Conservation NTNC. The Central Zoo is in a very crowded and busy locality of Kathmandu. It is lacking in space for modern development but its Director and staff keep up with many modern management trends. This and all other South Asia zoos with the exception of India, which has very stringent zoo legislation on acquisition and disposition of animals, welfare standards, etc., still indulge in many of the habits that characterise the "other" zoo world. There is much will to do things well but sometimes the need for attractions overwhelms the best of intentions.

In the rest of Nepal, there are several animal facilities which would be classified under the heading "zoo" in other countries, e.g. wild animals in captivity in a facility that is available for public viewing even if not officially open. In India all such institutions were classified as zoos for the purpose of their improvement and to stop the wholesale mushrooming of zoos in that country. In Nepal, these institutions are not regulated and will not be unless they are considered with the significance they deserve by the government. At present Central Zoo is declared as Nepal's "only zoo" in the press and by officials. As long as this is the case, that officials do not admit that the other facilities are permanent, sited, visited by the public and house wild animals, they will continue to be unregulated.

Some time ago the presence of these facilities was brought to our attention as well as the fact that there is no animal welfare legislation in Nepal at all. Nepal had fallen through our radar as we believed there to be only one animal facility there. As in the case of Pakistan and Bangladesh if there is a country with more than two or three animal facilities, we give more intensive attention. Recently, we sent one of our staff, R. Marimuthu, to Nepal to visit all the animal facilities he could reach within a reasonable period of time. He came back with a great deal of information about substantial number of animal facilities which we have reviewed in the following pages. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh all list these kinds of facilities along with zoos as captive wild animal facilities. Now there are four countries in South Asia that has more than 2 or 3 zoos — Nepal has joined the "higher category" of zoo presence. We would like for the animal facilities of Nepal to have the opportunity to understand more of modern zoo management and conservation so that they might improve their own. We have understood that the Central Zoo has helped one of these facilities from time to time. It would be a great thing if Central Zoo, as the most advanced animal facility in Nepal, took the initiative and started a national zoo

association for Nepal's wild animal institutions and provided advice and training for their staff.

SAZARC

SAZARC being the association of zoos of South Asia and the association which has promoted the "other zoos" issue should now orient all of our activities around zoo legislation and improvement of substandard or "conservation careless" zoos. In the last two meetings of SAZARC, at Coimbatore and even the SEAZA meeting SAZARC member contributed valuable comments on how to address this issue in South and South East Asia.

In the coming SAZARC meeting, the plan is to conduct the meeting in an old urban zoo which has made changes to comply with Central Zoo Authority and the Zoo Act Norms and Standards. The training theme for the meeting will be improvement of "conservation careless" zoos using the norms and standards of Central Zoo Authority, with an introduction to zoo standards and methods of regulation in other regions. PAAZAB also now has a National Standard - Zoo and Aquarium Practice for South Africa which is their host country. Great Britain has had zoo legislation for a long time and has excellent species specific standards for certain taxon groups. Some Australian states also have this excellent feature in their legislation.

For this meeting we will take pains to insure that one policy maker from each country attends so that he or she will get some idea of how to go about writing and pushing through legislation in their country. Country-specific working groups with experienced persons on zoo legislation will be conducted to help the policy maker and zoo personnel. Hopefully the President and President of WAZA can join this meeting.

It is time to get serious about the "other zoo world" and help them, if they are willing, to improve welfare standards and other aspects so that they can meet basic humane requirements. Then there will be a long process of raising the bar until even these zoos will be "conservation conscious" and will have the capacity to make solid contributions to conservation and cause no extinctions.

(The WAZA Resolution on Improving Standards in Zoos was published in ZPM shortly after the conference. It has been reproduced on the following page so that readers new to this issue can catch up.)

Report on animal facilities in Nepal

R. Marimuthu and Sally Walker

Thanks to the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare UFAW of UK for funding travel associated with the WAZA initiative to improve standards in zoos.

Martyr's Memorial Park, Nawalpur, Hetauda

This park is situated on the top of a small hill in

Nawalpur, five kilometers away from Hetauda town of Makwanpur district or about 120km from Kathmandu. This is the first such park in Nepal established by Hetauda Municipality and now run by the Martyrs Memorial Park Development committee of local people.

The Park was established in 1994 with the area of 20 hectares. The total staff strength is 15 which includes Chief Manager, accountant, animal attenders and other staffs. It is an aesthetically very pleasing park with native trees and ornamental plants which are maintained well.

The following animals are kept in an area of about one acre:

Rhesus Macaque 1:1; Gharial 0:0:1; Leopard 1:0 Chital 1:1; Sambar 1:0; Plam Civet Cat 0:0:1; Common Langur 1:1; Peacock 1:1; Barking Deer 0:1; turtles 0:0:4 as well as many geese, guinea pig and Rabbits. Chital, Sambar, Gharial are having open enclosures with natural substrate. Leopard is also displayed in a large enclosure but other enclosures are tiny.

This park is opened for public and get about 2 lakhs visitors per year in which 30% of them are students. The entrance fee is 5 Rupees for adults and 3 Rupees for children and 10 Rupees for foreigners.

The park gets veterinary assistance from the Government Veterinary Service whenever required. There are no education activities or record keeping. Simple signage boards identifying the animals on the enclosures are mostly in Nepali and few both English and Nepali.

Date of visit : 3 December 2006. Contact: Mr. R.C. Neudane, Chief Manager

Contact details: Mr. R.C. Neudane, Chief Manager, Martyr's Memorial Park Development Committee, Nawalpur, Hetauda 11, Nepal. Tel: +977 57 521988/ 525804

Mani Mukunda Sen Park, Bhoopari, Butwal

This park is situated in Bhoopari, 2 kms away from the Butwal, about 220 kms away from Katmandu, situated in East-west highway. It was established by Butwal Municipality in 1996 and run by a committee of people which consists of 11 office bearers and 259 members. The Municipal Commissioner is the chairman of the committee. When the post of commissioner is vacant, the corporation executive officer serves as the chairman of this committee.

The ruins of the winter palace of King Manimukunda Sen are situated in this premise, thus the park has been named for him.

The Park's total area is about 12 hectares, situated in the high land area. Staff number 19 which