

The Indian Lion and Gir Forest in the North-West of India (from the English press release)

The habitat of the Indian lion

The Indian lion originally inhabited a large area reaching from the Arabic Peninsula, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor to the Levant. Over the course of the centuries, hunters pushed the lions farther back towards the East. It is only in North-Western India, in today's Gir Forest National Park, that a small number of these lions has survived. Contrary to their African relatives, Indian lions live in wooded areas.

The Indian lion is highly threatened - With increasing intensity, the habitat of the Indian lion is farmed and utilized in other manners. Many lions perish by falling into wells on the nearby human habitations; poaching is still a problem which seems to be growing more vicious. In addition there are numerous farmers who let their cows graze on the grounds of the National Park and the small lion population is threatened by diseases transmitted by domestic animals.

Conservation breeding program

Since 1991, the number of Asiatic lions that are part of the EAZA conservation breeding program has increased to 80 in Europe. This international breeding program in zoos in Europe combined with the Central Zoo Authority's breeding programme in India thus provides a measure of security for this rare species should a catastrophic event occur and wipe out much of the native population.



Highlights

Commendation

"The people of Gujarat, particularly those living in or near the Gir Forest, the Gir Conservation Area, the Forest Department of Gujarat and the Government of Gujarat deserve all praise for saving the Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*) from the verge of extinction. By the early nineteen nineties, the majestic lion which once enjoyed a wide distribution throughout Asia and Europe had vanished from its entire distributional range, except a very small population left in the Gir Forests of the then Junagarh State.

All credit goes to the then Nawab of Junagarh and subsequently to the Forest Department of Gujarat as managers and the Government of the State of Gujarat in the Union of India for creating the enabling conditions for revival of the beleaguered population of this proud felid from a low of an estimated 20 in 1913 to an excess of 350 presently. Gir Conservation Area today is a fine example of a vibrant and well-managed protected area.

We feel happy to recognize and salute the courage and conservation spirit of the people of Gujarat State in India for their sterling achievement in safeguarding the king of the forests."

Zurich Zoo



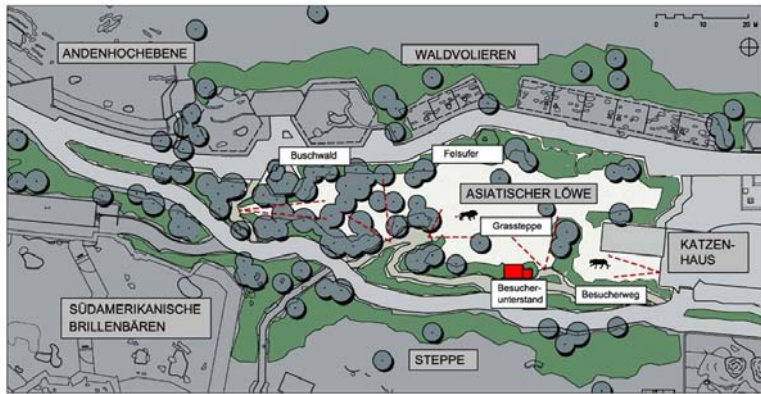
Alex Rubel, Director, Zurich Zoo presents Commendation to people of Gujarat, and donation Gujarat Forest Department NGO for conservation by way of Sri Pradeep Khanna, IFS.



Late P.P. Ravel, "a man who breathed lions", Superintendent of Sakkarbaug Zoo and DFO Gir was honoured in the Seminar and at the public opening ceremony



More Highlights



Vetsch Nipkow Partner

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Rhino shaped maps of Zurich Zoo

Schematic of Lion exhibit



Indian visitors under the city symbol.



Visitors from Lion country helped inaugurate the first "floating" street car, which toured Zurich while an Indian lunch was served. Just like a riverboat cruise.



Pradeep Khanna and Manoj Mishra, IFS, retd. and Managing Trustee of PEACE Foundation, New Delhi in front of the Zurich Zoo.

President of Zurich Zoo and Sri Pradeep Khanna cut the ribbon to the new Lion Exhibit as public and press look on and cheer.



Interpreting the Gir Lion



An indoor display of human / lion artifacts and symbols of culture and history of lions.



Outside interpretive graphic by the enclosure



Scale model of Gir Forest in the interpretation centre



Historical image of man's relationship to lion.



Early illustrations of lions in zoos in the west



Lions in modern or contemporary culture. Display in interpretation centre.