

The sprawling North Carolina Zoo -- a treat for zoo buffs

It was fortuitous to have an introduction to the Collections Manager Roger Sweeney, and (retired) director of the zoo for 22 years Dr. David Jones. On my way to Minneapolis after meeting with Sally Walker in her hometown, I spent a day at the NC Zoo. The trip was worth every cent for the warm hospitality I received, the wonderful meeting we had on discussing future strategies, and for the personal tour of the well-wooded humongous zoo and its grounds.

Spread over 2500 acres, the zoo currently has a focus on two continents Africa and North America, and is planning on adding exhibits from other continents. One of the two state-owned zoos in the United States, NC Zoo has an envious setting in a rural /semi-urban area close to the big cities of Raleigh, Durham, Asheboro, and Greensboro.

Sally and I always wanted to visit the zoo, and we would talk about it every time I visited her hometown in Goldsboro, but it never materialized. Since after the 2001 Afghanistan war when Kabul Zoo was nearly destroyed, it was David Jones of NC Zoo and Sally who worked together on various aspects of building back the Kabul Zoo. Zooreach has been involved in training and building capacity for Kabul Zoo staff over the years through SAZARC. It was, therefore, a sobering meeting between David and me not to have Sally in with us and there was not a moment

Impressive sculptures by artists spread across the zoo to promote wildlife art in conservation





With Roger Sweeney (centre) and David Jones (right) at the Sonoran Desert exhibit

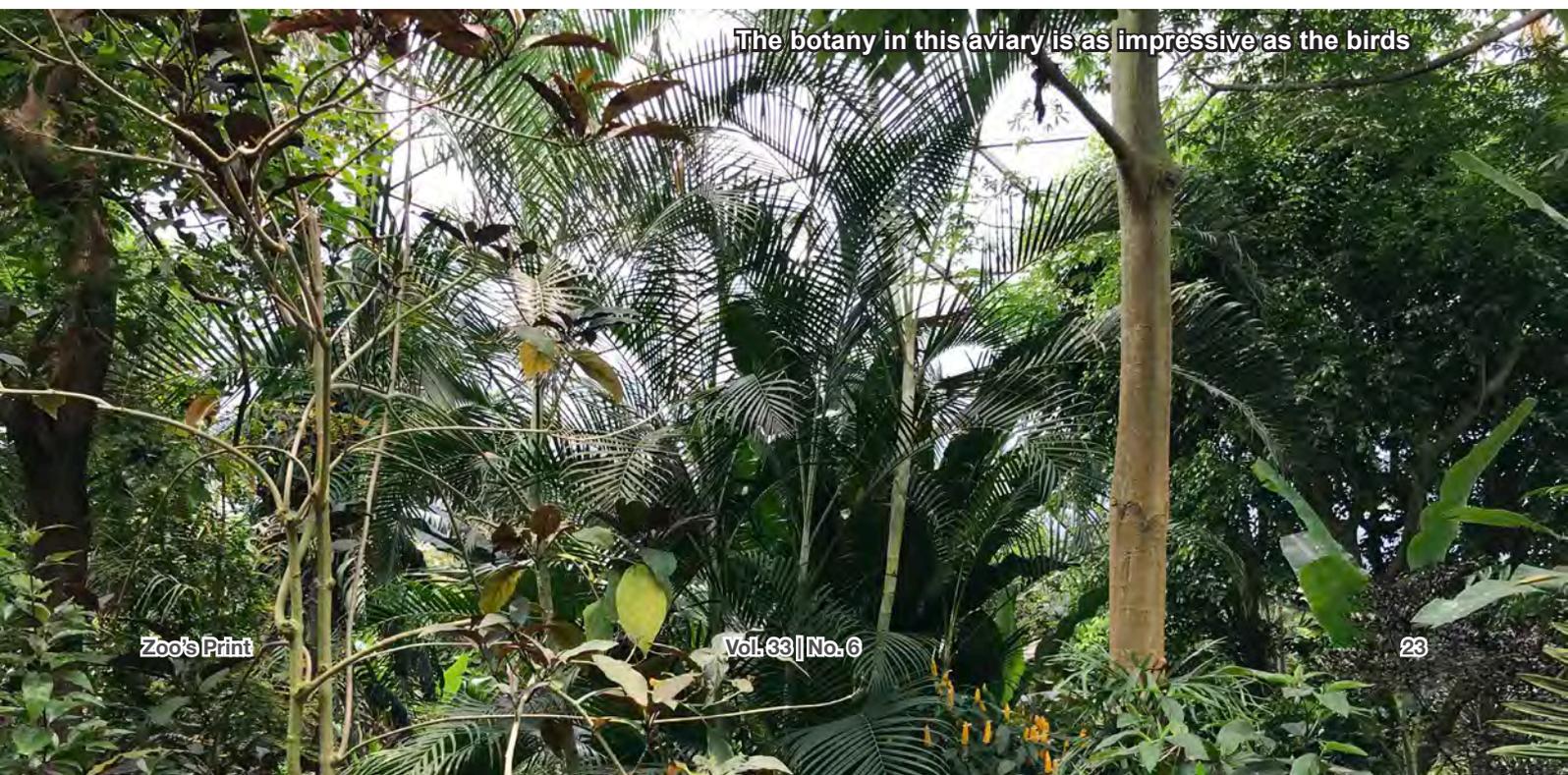
spent without referring to her contributions in India and South Asia.

The aviary, one of the oldest, but well ahead of its time when constructed when the zoo was established in 1967, boasts several thousand plants in addition to birds. A botanical-cum-zoological garden the NC Zoo contributes to the outreach of fauna and flora

equally throughout its campus. The Sonoran Desert was another testament to this flora-fauna association that can make exhibits interactive, well-rounded and naturally beautiful.

The Cypress Swamp, permanent wetland, and the open African grasslands make one believe they are transported out of the zoo. The zoo's famed gorilla exhibit, the expanded baboon exhibit, the chimpanzee and lemur exhibits are all worth their stories of transformation, individual animal behaviours, training protocols, exhibit designs, etc. The zoo staff is involved in marking and tracking 200+ individuals of native snakes on the property, combined with an active outreach for visitors. The NC Zoo is an excellent example for large zoos in South Asia to learn from, and perhaps partner.

Sanjay Molur



The botany in this aviary is as impressive as the birds