

## WAZA! ... glue binding organised, well-intentioned and ethical zoos of the world

Sally Walker

The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums began as a mixed meeting of zoo directors and animal dealers, some decades ago. The organization dropped the animal dealers and moved toward a more dignified and academic profile, taking on the title of International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens and rubbing coat sleeves with the prestigious IUCN or International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, now casually known as IUCN.

The Union was, if you will, somewhat pompous and insulated for many years (bisected by World War) but ultimately began to change, albeit slowly and with some angst between members with different views. The real and accurate story appears in a book about the History and Evolution of WAZA published in 2012 in recognition of WAZA's 77th Anniversary. This book gives much perspective and every zoo should have at least one copy in their Library and one in their Director's office. It is particularly useful for countries in which the zoo directors do not serve a lifetime, but merely a transfer post lasting from 6 months to a very few years. Almost nothing holds a zoo back like the transfer system practiced in several regions or specific countries. Persons coming to the job initially would do a better job after reading this book, as well as Heini Hediger's books, the first for admin and the second for animal care.

The Central Zoo Authority of India is a Member of WAZA and has been selected to host the Annual Conference of WAZA in 2014. The WAZA Annual Conference is where zoo directors, zoo association chairs, and other zoo or science personnel who have become WAZA members.

Zoo Outreach Organization is a member and so is the South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation are Members of WAZA, and although the Central Zoo Authority has a tradition of ignoring these organisations, we feel we should support their conference by feeding information about WAZA and encouragement to zoo personnel to try and attend. Many zoo people find WAZA unfathomable or, because it is so far removed from their experience, irrelevant to what they do. Speaking as Founder and Director of both ZOO and SAZARC I would like to make

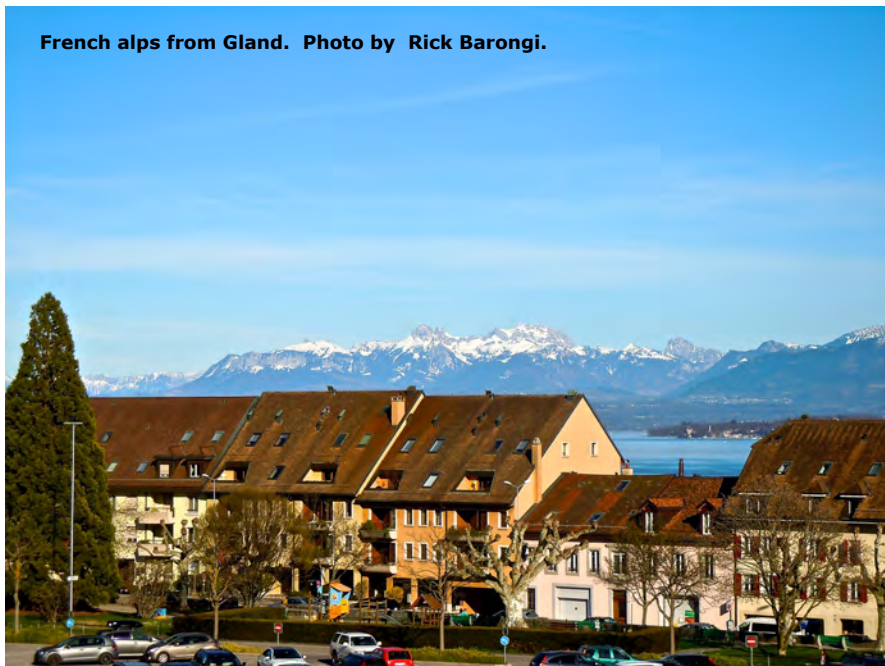


**Above**  
Two similar photos of WAZA Council meeting in IUCN HQ meeting rooms. Can you guess which one was taken morning and which one afternoon (late).

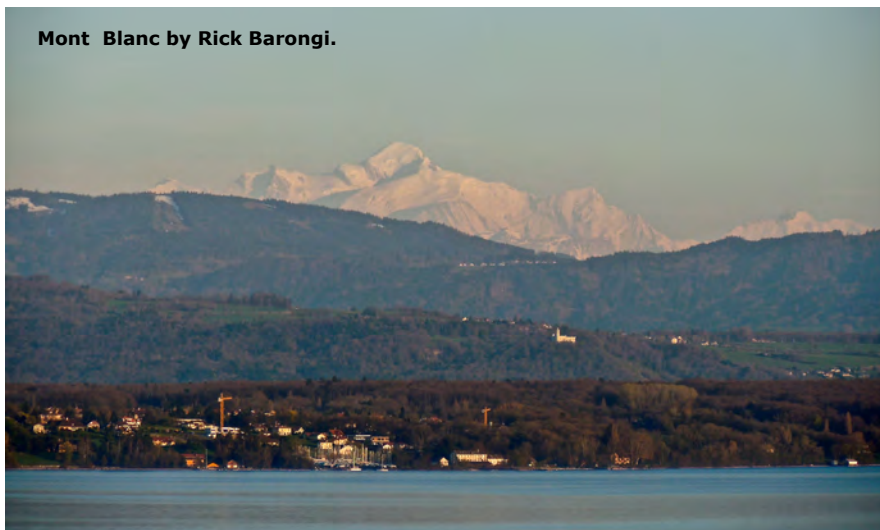
**Left**  
Susan Hunt, Animal Welfare Comm. Chair and Jenny Grey (newly co-opted member) is Chair of the CPM, Committee for Population Management following the discussion carefully.



**French alps from Gland. Photo by Rick Barongi.**



**Mont Blanc by Rick Barongi.**



**Above: Rick Barongi, Houston Zoo; Lesley Dickie, Director, EAZA & David Field, Director, ZSL, UK. Our group migrated to this charming spot after a long day of discussions.**

**Right : Joanne Lumiere, Calgary Zoo, Gerald Dick, EO, WAZA, Kris Vehrs, AZA Director & Lee Ehmke, Director, Minnesota Zoo & President Elect WAZA. Photos by Sally Walker.**



WAZA more of a "household word", or more accurately a "zoohold word". Because, everything you do, or want to do, or should NOT do has relevance to WAZA. And WAZA, like a kindly father with too many children, would like to be helpful to every zoo ... even (maybe especially) the +/- 9000 dysfunctional zoos as well as the effective zoos, be it 500 or 1000.

WAZA Council is a relatively small group of both elected and selected WAZA members who meet officially 2 times a year to discuss issues of importance. Some of the issues are finance, the annual conferences, committee events like Marketing, misbehavior of WAZA member zoos, zoo animal welfare, public complaints, publications, climate change, all things pertaining to conservation of wildlife and wildlands and many others.

Recently (17-18 April) WAZA Council Midyear meeting was conducted at Gland, Switzerland at the august venue of the IUCN Offices, from where WAZA operates. Dr. Gerald Dick is largely responsible for this impressive location. Traditionally, just before WAZA Council meets, the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group CBSG SSC IUCN has a one or two day meeting to discuss their issues and often those intersect with those of WAZA.

This year, as often happens, an extra day for WAZA was added which is reported here, e.g. the WAZA Zoo Animal Welfare Strategy.

There is a democratic procedure of Member voting for WAZA officers and Committee Chairs are selected in Council. Every year for the Conference bids are made for the honour of serving as Host at different venues giving each regional group an opportunity to host. For the mid-year meeting WAZA Council itself selects the venue, choosing for different reasons. Gland was selected this year because of the welfare conference. Other countries are selected because Council is interested to see their zoo.

Specific discussions in Council are not public so the photos of the meeting and the relaxation event will have to do.

Anybody can learn more about WAZA by accessing its excellent website ... [www.waza.org](http://www.waza.org). Do it ... you won't regret it