

# Updating WZACS ... the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy ... Houston hosts!

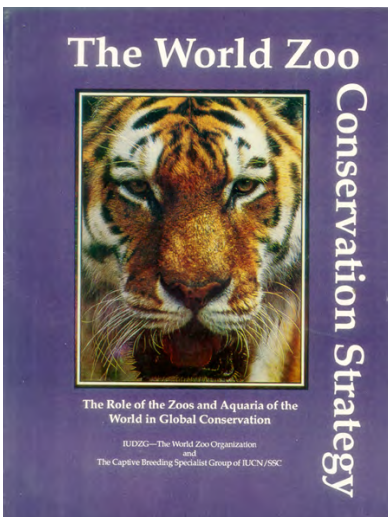
Editor

It was a dark and windy night when the last exhausted stragglers reached the Houston Airport. The stragglers were exhausted because most of them had been forced to wait in their home airports while a lone gunman with an AK47 managed to get sort into one of the busiest terminals and scare the hell out of a lot of would be passengers, "meeters" and greeters ... not to mention airport personnel.

Fortunately Houston Zoo had organised a comfy town car and entertaining driver to meet the latest arrivals. I had been waiting in my airport for 7 hours and the others almost as long in theirs. As we rode into Houston we were informed that we missed the sumptuous steak dinner in one of the best Houston restaurants. When we reached the hotel the wind was so strong we could hardly make it to the door. Once inside ... straight to the bar for drinks, peanuts and pretzels (no steak).

A wide variety of zoo person had been invited to discuss the update at the Houston Zoo on 03-04 May 2013 ... some who had worked on WZACS before and others keen to help. It had been about 8 years since the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation strategy had come out and our fast-paced zoo world and real world had changed sufficiently to require an update.

WAZCS was not the first strategy ... about ten years before WZACS the first strategy was published as the World Zoo Conservation Strategy: the Role of Zoos and Aquaria of the World in Global Conservation (below). That strategy itself was groundbreaking and it was welcomed by zoos around the globe.



Our host Rick Barongi, Director, Houston Zoo. Gerald Dick, Executive Officer and Jorg Junhold, President, WAZA

A working group hard at work during the WZACS workshop.

Jill Allread, an experienced facilitator, led us through the process of outlining what we need to know to proceed.



**World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy, Published by WAZA Executive Office, 2005**

The following information is taken from the Personal Notes Houston 03-04 May 2013 compiled by Dr. Heribert Hoffer, a unique, brilliant, often annoying, yet very popular WAZA personality. He is a university scholar, researcher and professor and a great help and to us in WAZA. In addition to his brilliance, he is very entertaining so,

**What changed since 2003 that motivated us to update WZACS**

Heribert's notes are, I think, a combination of suggestions from the group and additional ones from Heribert's fertile mind. I poached these notes honestly, having begged them from Heribert who gave them up on a memory stick:

- the power of behavior change campaigns and the first examples for that
- the emphasis on social and emotional aspects of communicating conservation issues in zoos
- a new conservation policy framework from the Aichi targets
- the amphibian crisis
- integrated conservation management planning
- collection sustainability
- importance and urgency of climate change
- ocean acidification
- the realisation of the collective failure of political processes to reach conservation targets
- the realisation (and lack of action) of the collective political power of zoos
- urgency of conservation needs
- threats now and coming
- importance of changing the human condition for conservation
- other conservation organisations moving out of species conservation

- coping with changing taxonomy (species identification definition)
- species focus comes with special challenges – zoos as repository of problems
- new *ex situ* and reintroduction guidelines
- social media and new communication
- the general, albeit grudging, acknowledgement of zoos as conservation-relevant organisations
- increasing pressure to provide evidence on conservation achievements
- new tools to provide such evidence (conservation database, ZIMS)
- making a business case for conservation in order to make the visitors feel better

**Some Important Goals for the updated document**

- Get zoos more engaged
- Get audiences engaged
- Use our strengths
- Commitments
- Being more Integrated, Inspirational, Realistic, Flexible and Effective
- Helping zoos be more accessible and digestible
- Being a document that helps reach Aichi targets
- Address bad zoo behaviour
- Provide steps to becoming a zoo that does conservation
- UN Rio +20 targets
- Timing – 2020
- Should address different types of zoos
- Should help zoos to do good
- Target info to regional conservation strategic planning
- Make the business case for conservation (doing well to do good)
- Etc.

There was much more but that will do as a taste for now. Don't hold your breath till the updated WZACS appears ... there is MUCH more work to be done. There was much more work done at the workshop with working groups, plenary discussions, etc. and it was rewarded with good food and fellowship. We went home happy.

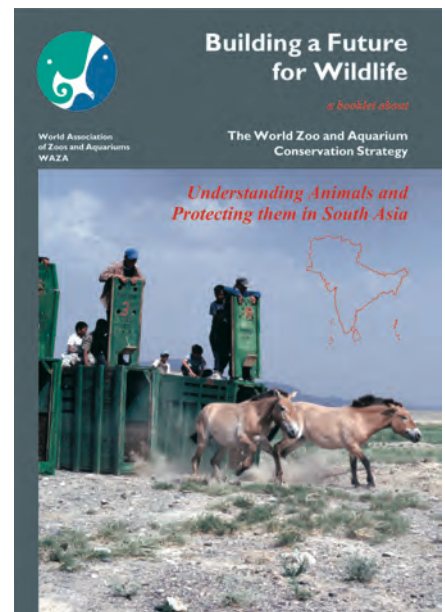
**What ZOO and SAZARC did with the Strategies**

I'd like to relate some of the things Zoo Outreach Organisation did with the Strategies in South Asia that bolstered many of the zoos quite a bit professionally as well as in their education programmes. We made stickers and pamphlets using the attractive cover of the first strategy and these were very popular. We explained very simply the basics of the Strategy which could be understood by all ages and levels of English usage on the pamphlet accompanying the

sticker. These were distributed widely to zoos and ngos conducting education.

For the 2nd version we got more elaborate. First we made a poster of the cover with lots of information about WZACS on the back of the poster. Having understood from the last version that many Indian zoo personnel appreciated the Strategy in but were not able to relate to some of the text, we created a South Asian version which highlighted the major features of the 74 page WZACS and put it in a context that was more easily understood by people whose first languages was not English such as zookeepers and some other staff, visitors to zoos, teachers and young people. Because it was 24 pages instead of 74, carried photos of Indian zoos and visitors, and explained the chapters, it was an easy read and less expensive to produce and post. Because it was focused on South Asia it was more palatable to many people and inspired them to request and read the original version.

All the WZACS chapters were covered with a précis of each chapter, an explanation of how it could be used in South Asia and information about South Asian zoos and WAZA.



**Building a Future for Wildlife ...a booklet about the WZACS...Understanding Animals and Protecting them in South Asia, 24 page regional booklet about WZACS concepts in local context.**

**This is a PDF available free !  
Request  
sallyrwalker@zooreach.org or  
zooreach@zooreach.org  
by email only. 4.1MB**



Left -- The Education Working Group completing their lists and discussion.

Below Riveted participants (Onnie, Markus, Paul PK, Julie, and Fiona) observe the final touches to the way to proceed. Or maybe just tired. Fiona looks particularly dubious as she has been named the Ditor. Good luck to you Fiona!



Below: Heribert, Gerald, Bengt and Paul continue discussing even during a break.

Left : Rick windsup the last day by praising our brave facilitator, his excellent staff and all the participants.





**Left: President and President Elect**

**Right: Evidence of zoo visit.**

**Below left: Zoo Aquarium dinner**

**Below right: Evidence of Alcohol (not me) Host and Heribert**

**Bottom Left: Mexican bar makes everyone happy.**

**Bottom right: New relationships developed**

**Bottom: Host and President observing the Piranhas**





The last night after the last day's discussions and the last supper at the Mexican Restaurant and the last cat was hung!  
Now the real work begins on the WZACS upgrade. Watch these pages.



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