

Interview with Jorg Junhold, Director of Leipzig Zoo & President, WAZA

Brief on Jorg Junhold

Jorg Junhold, Director of Leipzig Zoo since 1997 is credited with bringing a "strategic realignment" of the zoo and also creating a "Zoo of the future." The Leipzig Zoo is an enticing attraction for visitors from Leipzig, Germany, Europe and the whole world. The number of visitors had increased by one million since 1997 by 2008. Jorg Junhold's term as President of WAZA has created a formidable example for other Presidents to follow. In October 2013 he will hand over the gavel to Dr. Lee Ehmke, Director of Minnesota Zoo, at the end of the upcoming Annual Conference of WAZA.

Jorg is the son of a veterinarian and began his own education in a vocational training school and then university. He did his military service in the NVA from 1983 to 1985 in Halle and studied Veterinary Medicine at the University of Leipzig 1985 to 1990. In 1990 he graduated from the Surgical Veterinary Clinic, U. Leipzig, and in 1994 was appointed Dr. med. doctorate. He became a research assistant in marketing management in Effem GmbH, a manufacturer of pet food to work until 1997.

In 1997 Jorg Junhold became the first manager of the Leipzig Zoo, having been chosen over 50 other applicants. His service he took effect on 1 November 1997 and in August 2000 he was appointed Managing Director. On 7 October 2011 he was elected president of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and has been super active ever since ... traveling to a plethora of meetings, conferences, inspections and all things associated with both zoo and wildlife conservation.

Jörg is married to a lovely, spunky and patient lady and has a daughter and a son. In his zoo life he has been given several honors such as the 2001 Media Award for construction and the exhibit for Savannah lions and also the Pongoland, worlds largest ape exhibit.

See at the end of this interview information about Jorg's and colleagues' amazing [Gondwanaland](#) and the baby giraffe.

Jörg Junhold, President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums WAZA, is nearing the end of his Presidency. According to the WAZA Constitution, he will hand over his office to the next elected WAZA Council member. Dr. Junhold is Director of the well-known and excellent Leipzig Zoo. A very brief overview of his career can be found above.

SW: *You have served almost two years as President of WAZA. You have been a very dynamic President, so I'd like to hear your current view of some of your favorite projects as well as some difficult situations you faced while President.*

JJ: I should start with a project that may be the most ambitious and important in WAZA's future in many ways. This is the **WAZA Animal Welfare Strategy**, which is intended to give guidance to WAZA members as well as non-member zoos, but also serve as an instrument for public information and our standard for addressing or responding to extremists. As you know we conducted working groups and workshops at last



**Could not resist ! Jorg Junhold (Interviewee) & Sally Walker (Interviewer).
Photo by Rick Barongi (a.k.a. "Bang Bang" Barongi).**

year's Annual CBSG meeting and WAZA Conference (2012) as well as the workshop held at the Mid-Year meeting in Gland more recently (2013).

Susan Hunt graciously took over the Welfare and Ethics Committee when she became a WAZA Council member and drafted a first version of a strategy to work with. The welfare workshop at mid-year meeting was well attended and facilitated, and pushed forward the ideas and contents for this strategy. Susan will keep working with the ideas and comments of workshop participants and I hope to have an elaborate draft ready for the upcoming Annual Conference that we can present, discuss and decide further steps we should take. Although I am anxious to see this document in our hands as soon as possible we must take sufficient time to think hard about its content and style.

SW: *What about the WAZA Conservation Strategy, known as WZACS?*

JJ: Well, a decade after the last revision it was decided to look at this Strategy again and evaluate it in terms of its relevance to the current scenario and whether an update is needed. This project comes under the auspices of our Conservation Committee, chaired by Rick Barongi. The committee drafted a questionnaire for all members to determine how they used the current WZACS in their daily routine and what sort of update they believe is necessary. The result of the survey and discussions were "climate change" and "population sustainability" as well as "social media" and new technologies" such as for edutainment. And, as you know a first workshop was undertaken in Houston, Texas where Rick could utilise his excellent staff and facilities on 3-4 May 2013. More issues will be updated or added after this workshop. This project will take some time and we will see the finalization in 2015.

SW: *What is the status now of projects such as Sustainable animal populations, or the role of Committee for Population Management*

JJ: One of the focal points of my agenda as President also included the improvement of WAZA's role for sustainable animal populations. Looking back to the last year we have also seen major improvements in the structure and work of the Committee for Population Management. During a very good initial workshop in Gland in



Susan Hunt, WAZA Animal Welfare Chair and Jenny Gray, Chair, WAZA Committee for Population Management at the WAZA Council Midyear Meeting. Photos by Sally Walker



Monica Gump, Gerald Dick and Jorg Junhold at Council.

April 2011 led by Dave Morgan the structure and role of Global Species Master Plans (GSMPs) were discussed intensively. A number of GSMPs were approved since then and more applications are on the way. We see a real shift of interest to use this instrument and fill it with activities! Jenny Gray is now Chair and also an observer in WAZA Council. She has conducted some good meetings.

SW: *Maybe you would like to say something about ISIS ZIMS which makes GSMP as well as all other population management activities possible.*

JJ: Of course, the global data keeping is of utmost importance for our work. I am very satisfied with the progress that the implementation of ZIMS is making. As Leipzig Zoo was a test zoo from the start of this project, I know what I am talking about! In the beginning we saw many problems and the final success of the whole project was unsure. Thanks to the hard work of Roger Stonecipher and his team and our colleague David Field as the current Board Chair we are now in a completely different position. More and more zoos are migrating their data to ZIMS and the databank comes to life! It is working and "bugs" and mistakes are fixed through regular updates.

ZIMS is a real milestone for the zoo community and we need to keep track on this work. More modules are in the process of development and will complete the project to a sound software platform.

SW: *How do you manage so many projects and issues with only two major meetings of Council per year?*

JJ: Well, that is a good question ... we do have many concerns and have used the AZA and EAZA Conferences in between for separate interim meetings to discuss major issues. A budget was approved from WAZA Council for the future work.

Also we restructured our committee work in a extra meeting in Leipzig and the overall work has now benefited from this with more activity visible.



Council at work at the IUCN Offices in Gland, Switzerland (above) and Council at play in the charming town of Nyon, a 10 minute train ride away.



Thanks to all who have participated in the evaluation and discussions about the committee structure and who are Chair of one of the committees now.

Also in January and in July, we had our second and third conference calls as an additional WAZA Council Meeting between our regular meetings. I am very pleased with this new means of communication and therefore recommend to further establish these

conference calls as additional Council meetings. So despite the number and intensity of our projects and problems, we find ways to gather and communicate in a number of ways to keep WAZA well on track.

SW: *What are some of the routine measures that have helped make an impact and connect loose ends this year?*

JJ: Well, Jenny Gray from Zoos Victoria was appointed as new CPM Chair at the last Annual Conference and I am positive that under her leadership the overall activities will remain on a high level.

Secondly, a working draft for a GSMP Resource Manual was approved in order to strengthen the structure and goals of this instrument. Moreover, ZIMS, as described above, will play a significant role in making the data keeping much more effective and reliable and through this also back up the possibilities that we have to raise the number of studbooks and with that GSMPs over the years.

Furthermore, in the aforementioned WZACS update the question of population sustainability as also rated by our members as most important and needs a separate chapter within the WZACS which will also help to keep up this most important issue in our minds and actions. Additionally, I feel we should add this important topic into our main strategic directions of our WAZA Strategy

Also as discussed and decided in Melbourne we wanted to collect all bylaws changes necessary until the end of January in order to get an approval at our next Annual Conference in Orlando. Thanks to the working group especially Kris Vehrs and Gerald Dick we had a first draft to be discussed at our mid-year meeting.

SW: *What about developing countries ... any plan to make WAZA Membership more attractive and possible for them?*

JJ: Yes this is most important and I am very interested to include our considerations on an additional trial membership category for developing countries including a modified fee structure for those candidates into our bylaws changes as well.

SW: Any other projects you would like to mention?

JJ: Definitely the WAZA Biodiversity Project generously supported by MAVA Foundation is a great boon. We have received the grant of MAVA and could start the ambitious project. Staff of 32 zoos are taking part in a working group which is dealing with the single steps of the project. WAZA office has created one new position to run this project and communicate with this zoo group.

One first issue was to carry out a visitor survey in these 32 zoos to find out what our visitors know about biodiversity and if and how this changes after a zoo visit. From a scientific point this is a difficult task and I am very eager to hear about the first results. We are grateful to Gerald Dick and his team for working out the MAVA application and dealing with the many matters needing attention during the three year period that the project will run.

The MAVA undertaking is a grand opportunity for both our public appearance as World Zoo and Aquarium Association and communication to the public.

SW: What about WAZA's relationship and participation with international organisations?

JJ: Oh yes, WAZA is a member of IUCN and CITES among others. Gerald Dick and I and some other members have taken part in these two big international conferences (e.g., IUCN World Conservation Congress in Jeju, Korea and the 16th CITES CoP in Bangkok, Thailand).

WAZA is a comparatively small player in this international field although we represent so many zoos with 700 million visitors etc. Our potential is huge but we still need to be recognized more and more as self-acting organization with special goals and much potential that other players don't have. This is why WAZA needs to take part in these international meetings and conferences and also needs to play a role in the public appearance. Otherwise we lose the chance to talk to people of other NGOs or governmental

bodies and being accepted as trustful partner. So for those reasons I strongly like to back up our appearance in these meetings.

SW: Thank you for such a detailed interview. I think it is important for my colleagues in South Asia to become more knowledgeable about all what WAZA does, particularly in the light of the CBSG and WAZA meetings to be held in New Delhi, India in 2014.

For that reason, I thank you for permission to include below some of the meetings and events you as WAZA President attended in the last few months. Perhaps many people do not know what being the President means and how much activity is required.

JJ: It has been my great pleasure ... both the interview and the activities!

Participation in meetings/events by WAZA President during last few months and into the remainder of his term

6 - 8 November 2012: GRASP Council Meeting, Paris (France).

9 November 2012: Official retirement farewell ceremony of Uli Schuerer, Zoo Wuppertal (Germany), Welcome address on behalf of WAZA.

23 - 25 November 2012: 125th Anniversary City of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and ground-breaking ceremony for new lion exhibit (1st step of new zoo).

30 November - 2 December 2012: Visit of Central Zoo Authority New Delhi (India). Signing of MoU for conservation programme Leipzig Zoo - CZA, discussion about WAZA Conference location.

11 January 2013: Zoo Leipzig (Germany). Meeting with Gerald Dick, review and appraisal of the 2012, workplan and participation in congresses/meetings.

15 - 18 January 2013: AZA Strategic Directors Day, New Orleans (USA) with a fantastic WAZA session on international trends in zoo design organized and led by our President-elect Lee Ehmke together with Sue Chin (WCS).

31 January - 1 February 2013: Meeting with IUCN President in Gland, IUCN Headquarters / meeting with Gerald Dick and office team.

4 March 2013: Workshop "Zoo of the future", Green party of the German Bundestag, Berlin (Germany), presentation on behalf of WAZA.

8 - 14 March 2013: 16th CITES CoP, Bangkok (Thailand)

9 March 2013: Action Animals Asia-Workshop conducted by the IUCN SSC Chair, Bangkok (Thailand).

22 - 25 April 2013: 24th Conference and AGM of PAAZAB; Cape Town (South Africa)

25 - 26 April 2013: EAZA Directors Day and Spring Council Meeting; Athens (Greece)

3 - 5 May 2013: Workshop for update of WZACS; Houston Zoo (USA)

29 - 31 May 2013: Annual Conference of Association of German Zoo Directors (VdZ), Munich (Germany)

9 - 13 June 2013: Annual Conference of APLPZA; Sao Paulo (Brazil)

14 June 2013: IZW Berlin (Germany); External appraiser in the framework of the evaluation - research activities within the WAZA community

30 August 2013: Opel Zoo Kronberg (Germany); WAZA welcome address at the opening ceremony of new elephant enclosure.

8 - 13 September 2013: AZA Annual Conference; Kansas City Zoo (USA)

24 - 28 September 2013: EAZA Annual Conference; Edingburgh (UK)

10 - 17 October 2013: CBSG and WAZA Annual Meeting and Conference; Orlando (USA)



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