

## Interpretation techniques with Cartoon and Humour elements are more effective and attract more visitors in zoos

Gone over the days when the information about the animal exhibited were a name board with species name in both English and regional language. Although names of the exhibited animal are one of the essential components of the information boards, visitors like to know some very interesting information about the animal. But, such information should be very brief and, the visitors rarely read long messages in whatever ways they are interesting. Now a days, even brief information is neglected by most of the visitors. Here, two issues are involved – firstly, the animal exhibited is not attractive to the visitors and, secondly, there is no elements in the information method that arouse interest among the visitors. In this respect the author had suggested several means of how to induce the visitors to visit the neglected exhibits and how to arouse interest among the visitors to go through the messages (Paulraj, 1992a and 1992b).

Interactive interpretation techniques are the main components of interpretive planning in many modern zoological parks. Recent developments in technology paved way to introduce advanced electrical and electronics systems in developing some interesting interactive exhibits by spending huge amounts as in the case of 'Disney world'. However, such interactive exhibits with exorbitant cost is not possible for the zoos in developing countries like India. Here, we are suggesting some simple but effective interpretation techniques that could not only attract more visitors to go through the messages but also easily understandable.

### Humourous cartoon messages as an effective interpretation techniques

Although humour component is widely used in advertisements involving business promotion (Weinberger, M.C & Gulas, C.S, 1992), it is not finding a place in any awareness and nature education programmes including zoo education. In this respect, Zoo Outreach sign boards and products are playing a significant role in using humour elements in many of its messages. The popular being the a cartoon message showing



A cartoon message near Iguana enclosure in Chennai Snake Park, induce visitors to go through the message (Concept and design by Sally Walker, ZOO)

the nature of treatment that zoo animals are facing by the visitors. Here the message is effectively communicated by a simple cartoon.

In Chennai Snake Park, we tried one such information board near Iguana enclosure, only with cartoon pictures highlighting some interesting behavioural facts. When we studied the visitor behaviour near the Iguana enclosure, more number of visitors started to read this information chart ignoring the simple routine name boards. This experiment made us to think to go for more such signage with humour elements. Here are some of such messages that the author has developed that are suited for any zoos.

Firstly, an important part of any interpretive techniques is that it must induce the visiting public to visit any particular exhibit that is often ignored due to its 'unattractive' nature. There may be some vital information on some conservation importance about a species. Yet, due to its 'unattractiveness' visitor often tend to ignore it. Examples are, sparrows and Gyps vulture. Unless we induce the visitors by employing some innovative methods, we fail to convey the important messages that are of more conservation value. In this respect Paulraj (1992a, 1992b and 1993) already discussed various ways and means. However, he missed to mention the role of humour components.

Choosing a subject to add any humour component needs creative and innovative thinking. The basic need is that the message should need a component that are widely known or read. This may be a historical, social, religious etc. facts. When we choose a message for an exhibit, we have to analyze what sort of component should be more appropriate for the chosen message and decide. We will discuss here how to decide and add humour value to our chosen messages with examples.

Firstly, humorous cartoon pictures are primary need. Secondly, the message with the humour component needs to be mixed. Both together will improve the message dissemination value. Sometimes either cartoon pictures alone or humorous message alone suffice to convey the message. However, the mixture of these two does has a higher value than the single.

### Examples of cartoon picture alone

The Green Iguana is an interesting animal that has got many amazing facts. The following are a few:

1. Iguanas have a third eye located on the top of the head. This enable them to predict the presence of predators above.
2. Iguanas have the capacity to thrive without injury even when they fall from a height of 50 meters.

Simply writing this message on the information board may not have better value for two reasons: 1. Visitors



**A cartoon message near Iguana enclosure in Chennai Snake Park, induce visitors to go through the message**

normally avoid reading any written messages on the board secondly, there is always a language barrier for the visitors who do not know the language of the message. Here, we used the local language, the Tamil, for the benefit of local rural people. The cartoonish type of information would be more appropriate.

### Example of message alone

Many times short tile messages induce interest. The newspaper media and visual media are very specific in choosing the titles for the news. We may also employ such interesting and attractive titles to get the visitors attention. For example while preparing

அரிவான் மூக்கன் பறவைகளின் காதல் கல்யாணம்!

Black Ibis / அரிவான் மூக்கன்.  
(Threskiornis melanocephalus)

அரிவான் மூக்கன் பறவைகளில் ஆண்கள் காதல் பண்புணர்வு, இனப்பெருக்க காலத்தின் போது அவை மரத்தின் மீது கூடி பெண் பறவைகளுக்காக காத்திருக்கும். ஒரு பெண் பறவை அவை வந்த உடன்தான் அவை அணைத்துத் தலைகளை நீளும் போதும் அவை துடிக்கத் தித்திப்பது வணக்கி வரவேற்கும். பெண் பறவை அவற்றில் ஒன்றை தேர்வு செய்து அதன் பக்கத்தில் பறந்து சென்று அதனை ஏற்றிக்கொள்ளும். பிற்பாடு ஒரு குஞ்சியை அதன் அலகில் வளக்கும். பின் அவை இரண்டும் சேர்ந்து சென்று கூடி கட்ட ஆரம்பிக்கும். மூட்டையிட்டு குஞ்சிகள் முழுவதாய்க் வளரும் வரை பெண் பறவைக்கு உதவியாக இருக்கும்.



#### The Romantic Ibises:

A male White Ibis is quite the gentleman.

During breeding season, males will congregate on a tree and claim a branch as their stage. When a female comes close, they will all start bowing deeply to her to try to impress her.

When she spots her favourite male, she flies over to him and he will offer her a branch in his beak, maybe a symbol of the nest and family they can build together. The male bird will assist the female in rearing the hatchlings.

**The information board the title of which is not only attractive but also with humor element**

### Mixing of cartoon pictures and humourous messages

Some animals such as frogs, monkeys etc., are often used as a symbol of humour. Signage for these animals could easily be made with cartoons and humourous messages. For example, some of the frogs are known for their amazing jumping capacity. Here the appropriate cartoon should be a picture of a comparison of an Olympic pole-vault jumper and the frog. This cartoon even without a written message, conveys the amazing jumping capacity of the frog, that too in an interesting way.

the information board tile for the bird, Ibis, we choose a title connected with its family life. Instead of giving a routine title like, "Family life of Ibises", we have chosen the following tile that surely attract the visitors attention: "The Romantic Ibises". This was suitably translated into the regional language, the Tamil. Sometimes some interesting questions also attract visitors attention. Here, after reading the question, the visitors are induced to know the answer. They are then asked to get the answer by visiting the targeted animal enclosure.

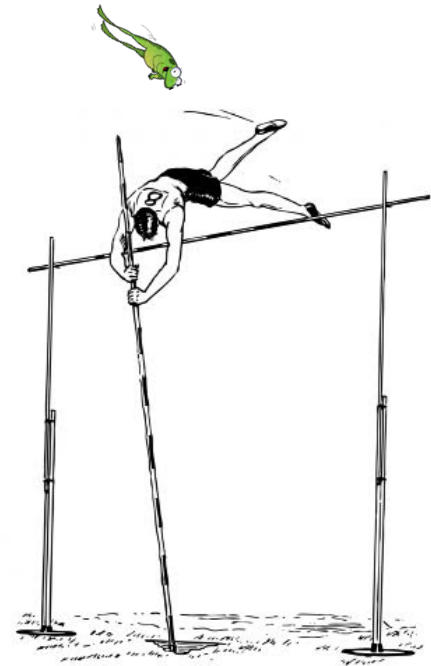


**Posing some interesting questions induces the visitors to go through the message. Here, the visitors, after reading the question, will search for the answer near the designated enclosure**



Chimpanzees are the most playful animals and many of their behaviours are comparable with that of man's. It would be therefore, appropriate to compare some of the man's behaviours with chimpanzees in a humourous way in order to express their interesting behaviours. For example, the following facts about the chimpanzees are depicted by comparing similar behaviours of man: "In the wild, female chimpanzees typically give birth only once every five years". This message not only convey an interesting fact about Chimpanzee's reproductive behaviour but also it emphasize the need for following this behaviour by man in order to lead a healthy and comfortable life.

A visitor behaviour study would bring out the real value of the signage with cartoon and humour components in the interpretive techniques in the zoos.



This cartoon without any written message conveys the fact about the amazing jumping capacity of the frog

மனிதரும் சிம்பான்சி குரங்குகளும் – சில ஆச்சரியமூட்டும் உண்மைகள்.  
**Man and Chimp – Amazing Facts**

<p>மனிதன் / Man</p>  <p><b>உண்மை:</b> "ஒரு குழந்தைக்கும் அடுத்த குழந்தைக்கும் இடது வருட இடைவெளி அவசியம்". கவனதரம் மற்றும் குடும்ப நலத்துறை. "Five years gap between the children is essential" – Department of Health &amp; Family welfare.</p>	<p>சிம்பான்சி குரங்கு Chimpanzee</p>  <p><b>Fact:</b> In the wild, female chimpanzees typically give birth only once every five years. கனத்தில் வாழும் சிம்பான்சி குரங்குகள் இந்த ஆண்டுகளுக்கு ஒருமுறை தான் குட்டி போடுகின்றன!</p>
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We follow Government's norms!

**Fact:** The best jumper among the frogs is the South American Sharp-nosed Tree frog. It has been recorded to jump over 30 feet high – which is higher than the highest Olympic record in Pole vault (6.15 m.)

The humorous message not only conveys an interesting fact about Chimpanzees but also conveys the importance of a small family as advocated by the Indian Government

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