

## **"This month-That age" - ZOOS' PRINT 25 years ago - March 1986**

Last month, in this space I hailed Manoj Mishra for his creative idea for celebrating ZOOS' PRINT and ZOO anniversary, only to find that I misunderstood what he said !

Instead of reviewing the contents of each month of the first year of ZOOS' PRINT, Manoj suggested reprinting some 25 year old articles ... "

*" Now that ZOOS PRINT has completed 25 years, let each issue now carry a one or half pager devoted to "This month - That age" - ZOOS' PRINT 25 years ago which may reproduce news, views from the 25 year back issue of the month. I am sure this generation would welcome such a page. Manoj"*

So we'll try again but there are very few "one or half pagers" -- whole article will be more interesting anyway. Sorry Manoj ! Thanks for pointing that out. We hope you like the modification!

Sally Walker  
Founder & Editor Emeritus

### **Note :**

***Since we are in March issue we will run one article for each month and catch up starting with January which is a report about an appropriate and a most interesting article entitled SILVER JUBILEE-NZP. As National Zoological Park will be celebrating "50" this year or next, it will be interesting to read about their "25".***

***For February we have an Interview of the well known (if you are over 60 anyway) "Birdman of Bhavanagar" Sri K. S. Dharmakumarsinji who was a great supporter of zoos and wildlife as you will learn in the interview.***

***For March we'll wait till April issue.  
Ed.Em.***

**From ZOOS' PRINT, Vol. 1, No.1 January 1986  
SILVER JUBILEE-NZP  
C.D. Krishne Gowda and Sally Walker**

No doubt the zoo event of the year was that the National Zoological Park, New Delhi celebrated the closing of their Silver Jubilee with a Zoo Management Seminar and an All India Zoo Directors meeting on November 5th and 6th. Throughout the year various activities for school children had been conducted to mark the event winding up with a gala valedictory function.

ZOO'S PRINT will publish selected papers and the extemporaneous talks given at the symposium throughout the coming year (1986) and a feature report next issue but here are some of the highlights.

The Zoo management symposium was held for two days and divided into four parts: Zoos and Conservation, Breeding Endangered Species, Zoo Veterinary medicine and Education and Interpretation. Afterwards there was a meeting of Indian Zoo Directors. The Symposium and Meeting was attended by more than three-fourths of Directors and Zoo Veterinarians from all over the country.

Lt. Col. Fatesingh Rao Gaekwad of Baroda, President of World Wildlife Fund India and Chairman, Expert Committee on Zoos IBWL chaired the session on zoos and conservation. Sri Gaekwad outlined how many zoos abroad are successfully experimenting with sophisticated techniques such as embryo transplant and artificial insemination in exotic animals for assisting the conservation of endangered species. Theme speaker Sri Pushpkumar's talk contained numerous points and will be reproduced in full in the next issue. Dr. M.K. Ranjitsingh, Director (WL), Dept. of Forests and Wildlife Govt. of India, who chaired the session on Captive Breeding of Endangered Species emphasized the importance of Indian zoos focusing on native species rather than succumbing to what he called the "giraffe-zebra syndrome". Dr. Ranjitsingh also expressed the hope that zoos would breed some fast-disappearing small animals such as Malabar Palm Civet, Indian Pangolin and species of land turtles and tortoises, while cautioning against indiscriminately taking these animals from the wild even for captive breeding. See next issue for a summary of his remarks.

The following day Dr. N. Sharma, Veterinary Consultant to NZP, chaired the session on Zoo Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Sharma related some of his own experiences to emphasize how a zoo vet has to be prepared to transcend normal techniques and improvise new methodology for treating captive wild animals.

Dr. H.M. Nair, Director of the National Museum of Natural History chaired the session on Education and Interpretation. Dr. Nair highlighted the importance of the zoo as an educational tool and a sort of "living museum". We will produce the full text of Dr. Nair's remarks in the next issue.

The second meeting of Indian Zoo Directors was held and important decisions taken regarding formation of an Association of Zoo Directors,

exchange of animals with foreign zoos, minimum standards for zoological gardens, among others. We will publish a more detailed report by Mr. C.D. Krishne Gowda next issue.

To round off the Symposium Ms. Helen Freeman, President of the International Snow Leopard Trust gave a very interesting slide show on the Snow Leopard and the current research being done by the Trust on its habitat.

A delightful social hour at Lt. Col. Gaekwad's residence made a perfect end to a very constructive, informative and exciting two days.

The Silver Jubilee function was held on November 8th at NZP. Although the Minister for Environment and Forests Mr. Z.R. Ansari could not attend, Mr. T.N. Seshan, Secretary to Government read his very inspiring talk, distributed prizes for essay and painting competitions and released the new book on Plants in National Zoological Park.

A voluntary association called the Zoo Wardens was inaugurated and official armbands distributed. Zoo Wardens assisted with the Jubilee educational programmes and symposium throughout the week and will be part and parcel of the comprehensive Interpretative Programme for NZP in preparation by the Centre for Environmental Education, Ahmedabad and a product of Indo-US collaboration.

The Zoo Wardens concept was the brainchild some five years ago of Sree Duleep Matthai, Trustee and Chairman, WWF, Western Region and member Expert Committee on Zoos, IBWL. Director of NZP, Dr. J.H. Desai has now reorganized the group to function within the context of the new Interpretative Programme. We at Z.O.O wish the National Zoological Park a happy anniversary and the Zoo Wardens continued success.

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**From ZOOS' PRINT, Vol. 1, No.2 February 1986**

## **Birdman of Bhavanagar**

**Interview with K. S. Dharamkumarsinji  
Sally Walker**

**SW—**Just for introduction, would you tell us a little bit about the posts that you have held as Wildlife Warden and what you have had to do with the zoos and the wildlife in India?

**KSD—**I was holding the post of Wildlife Preservation Officer-Bombay State in the Forest Department. It was under the administrative control of the Chief Conservator of forests. He was then Mr. J. Singh and with the Wild Animals and Birds Protection Act in 1951 which I had to exercise, there was a provision for supervision over the zoos and their licences and to see how they were working. I could be a sort of adviser. I did not interfere in the administrative matters in the zoo because the Superintendent was

the main Officer. In 1955, when I was there as an Officer, I used to visit all the zoos in Bombay State which was rather an extensive state. It went right up north to Mt. Abu and right down Jog falls in N. Kanara.

So the main zoos then were the Victoria Gardens, the Peshwa Park at Poona, the Sayaji Rao Zoo at Baroda and the Ahmedabad Zoo. Among the private zoos there was one with the Maharajah of Kholapur. It was not much of a zoo actually, but he had many varieties of deer and it had to come under the category of a zoo because of them. Mostly sambar chital and antelope, mouse deer and some others. So during my tour programme, I made it a point to visit these zoos for a day or so and prepare a note of their progress from what I knew about animals in zoos. Apart from this position, I was also serving as Honorary Regional Secretary for the Government of India on the Indian Board for Wildlife and also as Vice-Chairman of the Board of non-officials. The Inspector General of Forests was the official Vice-Chairman and the Chairman was the Maharajah of Mysore at that time. I was then put on the Zoo Wing.

We had a Zoo Wing and a Bird Wing. I was also in the Bird Wing of which the Chairman was Dr. Salim Ali. The Zoological Survey of India was in charge of the Zoo Wing. So in the western region my jurisdiction covered the whole of Madhya Pradesh, the whole of Rajasthan, the whole of Gujarat and the whole of Maharashtra-then Bombay State. I was also the State Wildlife Warden in these days, so that I saw other zoos also, in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and in the Bombay State. During my term of office, periodically when I revisited these zoos, I used to look up my notes to see whether some of the elementary things had been checked, such as wrong labels for animals. Instead of writing Langurs they would write some other variety of monkey and I would say that the label was wrong. It should say Langur monkey and its scientific name *Presbytis*. About the conditions of animals, I would make remarks on individuals and say these animals were not in fine fettle and proper care should be taken. Then the cages: some of them had very large holes in them. On things like that I used to make remarks and present copies to these zoos and the government. In my next visit, I would check up to see.

None of the zoos except Ahmedabad Zoo used to make a note and take notice of these things and that is how I came in touch with Reuben David who was then the Superintendent. I congratulated Reuben. I said "it's very good that you've made these changes as they are important". And he would say "No, Dharamkumar, I am very glad you made these notes". I said that it was one of my duties and that it was not an exception for his zoo. It was for all the Bombay zoos. But he used to ask me over, call me into the office-offer me tea and then ask me, "What should I do. What should I

think of having here...add books to my library. "Do you recommend any books?" So I used to make suggestions. Sometimes I would point out that the sexes of these birds and animals he had, not mammals, he knew more, but birds I knew and he would make notes about the things I said about birds and tell his keeper "Dharamsinji says like this so you should do it." He would tell Babubai and whoever was incharge to make the changes and he was very fast with it. Once he realised that something like this had to be done, he had it done immediately, on the spot almost. He would not wait for me to stop to inquire after it. He would say, "Are you staying on tomorrow? Because I would like you to see that the change has been made."

He was a veterinary officer and he had a little hospital where sick animals were kept and this area was not for the public. He kept on collecting a lot of good animals and breeding them. He bred quite a number of birds which had never been bred in Bombay State. I have not got a list of all of them. Then he started a natural history museum.

My other visits were all over India to visit zoos — not on duty, but as a general interest of having kept birds and mammals in Bhavnagar where we had our own menagerie. I used to visit Calcutta Zoo, Madras Zoo—Madras after independence, because my brother was Governor of Madras. He wanted to improve the Madras Zoo. It was in a very bad shape. Then also the Delhi zoo was coming up and forest officers were given charge of the Delhi zoo and also many donations were given by foreign embassies. So they had more rare animals than anywhere else in India. It was well thought - the planning had been done well - but it was too big. But then, the Directors of the zoo were not zoo men at heart and I remember a case in Delhi zoo when a rare consignment of black-necked storks had come. I received a message asking me if I would like to see the new storks that have arrived. I had a look at them; I saw that they were all males. There was not a single female among them. The Superintendent asked me how I knew. "Well", I said, "to a person like me, a birdman, it is very obvious. The female black-necked stork has a yellow golden eye whereas a male has a black eye. So with the eyes you can immediately make out that this is a female and that is a male. There is no problem." Then he showed me two cheetahs. Those were also males.

**SRW**—They had cheetahs in the zoo?

**KSD**—Yes. So I said "Had not you ordered a pair from abroad. A male and a female?" He said he found that when they came they were both males and he complained to the dealer and the dealer told him that he had ordered a pair and a pair meant 2 cheetahs-like a pair of shoes. So he had sent a pair. I said, "Why don't you clarify these things? Why do you write pair? Why don't you split it and say that you want one male and one female." They were held up with two males all the time. They could not get a female. These are they very obvious things

that I saw there in the zoo. Some of the zoos were not even worth talking about-Nagpur Zoos, Madhya Pradesh Zoo and a few other zoos were so badly managed that it was hardly worth going to see one.

Then I insisted-when I was in the Zoo Wing on an entry fee. You see, most of the zoos then did not have an entry fee. So I insisted on a nominal entry fee. You can't have the Zoos free. Then the education departments in various states said that they were giving free education about animals. And they did not want any charge, which is not good. Another thing-uniforms and badges should be given. Zoos have hooliganism and other trouble makers and to check them, the keeper should be authoritative. He should have uniforms. Some zoos had them-some did not. There were some petty changes and some insisted on an entry fee, like Ahmedabad Zoo. Mysore Zoo has and so do many zoos. But a number of zoos in Rajasthan have no fees at all.

I also suggested exchanges to which the government agreed. I brought in that there are so many animals and birds which require to be exchanged because of lack of pairing and this should be done. Now what I found later on while doing my rounds as the regional secretary was that all the useless types of non-breeding animals were being palmed-off in exchange to other zoos and they would also give useless animals,

**SRW** —That is still happening.

**KSD**—But there were zoos like Jaipur Zoo which bred crocodiles and there was also the private zoo at Baroda. The Maharaja there had introduced hog deer and Wart hogs from Africa and some African Antelopes.

**SRW** —How do you compare Indian Zoos with foreign zoos?

**KSD**—Well, I found the U.S. Zoos, the British zoos and the West German zoos the best. These 3 countries were the best. There were certain zoos in Sweden, Norway of local fauna. My earliest recollections are of the London Zoo because I was a boy of 8 or 9 years when I visited England. I saw the Regent's Park Zoo and then very much later Whipsnade and I also saw the New York Central Park Zoo in 1938 and some of the zoos in Los Angeles. We saw more zoos during our halt in 1980 and I found the San Diego zoo the best in the world.

There is nothing to touch the San Diego Zoo although the Bronx Zoo is also good. I know William Conway who is the Director there and I knew his predecessor in 1930 who was Brandon Lee. They had the giant panda in 1938 in the New York Zoo. I think I have got a photograph in my zoo collection of that panda in New York. At that time New York zoo interested me very much. But the London Zoo which we saw in 1980 was not that good. The number of

animals were reduced and then of course Whipsnade is there. But I found Frankfurt Zoo in Germany a very good zoo and even these in West Berlin. The Germans are very good in breeding animals because they are giving certain types vitamins and food other zoos are not aware of Kaiser and Mark and all these German medical men have produced the best medicines for breeding birds and mammals and the private bird collection which I have seen there beats even San Diego.

This park has the best collection in the world that I have seen. That is in West Germany and I was the guest of honour of the Republic of Germany in 1963 and at that time this private zoo created by Dr. Bren had not yet started. When I was visiting Germany as the guest of honour. I made a point of visiting all the zoos in Germany as well as the museums the Art treasures, paintings and the Orchestras. In Germany I visited the Munich Zoo, the Hamburg Zoo and the Frankfurt Zoo of course where Gzimeck worked...that is the famous Gzimeck

It was marvelous and I talked with the Director. When I went on an official visit I had discussions with all the Directors in Germany and at San they treated me very well, Then the zoo and museum at Denver, the museum at Milwaukee and we went to the Everglades in Florida. But of course America is far above the other countries in the world. We went to Japan but did not visit zoos, but apart from this, we found the American zoos and museums far above the standard of European.

**SRW** —What do you think is the reason for that?

**KSD**—One is the public-people with money. They are ready to donate money for the zoos, paintings or museums or other matters, National parks and so forth. There is a tremendous knowledge amongst the public to encourage the conservation of wildlife, for helping private zoos. Most of the zoos in America are private zoos and not government zoos. Those in charge of the zoos are themselves experts who are selected on merit. That is one of the crucial things and the Americans like to say that this is the best we have got. This is the best in the world. They are proud of having things in the best manner and the Germans also to that extent. But I found that money in America —if a man really makes money and there are charities, benefactors, they will give it for animal life and bird life and art. They will encourage causes and such, and not just go to cinema houses, women and all these things.

The private collections in England are very many on Aviculture. Now safari parks have taken over and some of the best safari parks are in England. In America also we saw the wild animal safari park in San Diego about 25 miles away from San Diego and there are quite a number of safari parks in California-Lion Safari Park and so on. But the national parks are famous in America. In India we are now better in our parks. There is a tremendous

upheaval. . . they saved the wildlife, because we established the national parks in time.

**SRW** —15 years ago, approximately, one issue of 'Illustrated Weekly of India' magazine came out during wildlife week. I read an article in that by you. Since 15 years ago, do you think very much has been done to improve the condition of our forests and to try and save the wildlife?

**KSD**—Wildlife in the wild or in captivity? In captivity, there is no improvement, its been an absolute loss .... But in the wild there has been great improvement, because now people are studying the ecology of wild animals in greater detail-scientifically specially after George Shaller came to India and wrote the book "The Deer and the Tiger". Foreigners who have come- have encouraged our people and by coming in touch with them also, our Indian people—Biologists, Zoolo-gists have taken to scientific studies. Some of it is highly academic for their Ph.Ds. But people are now studying the life history and ecology not only of the animal life, but also wildlife, the habitat-much more now than 15 years ago. That improvement has been on the rise now and our parks now, some of them, if you go to Ranathambor in Rajasthan, you have got a good manager there in Fatah Singh and Khanda in Madhya Pradesh. They were all creations during my time, when we started the ball rolling in 1952 and now, for example the Great Indian Bustards, they are increasing and so many more animals. So I do think that in the wild state, though in general wildlife has been wiped out, the parks have improved in 15 years.

Unfortunately the work is often lopsided, I think. Now take the World Wildlife Fund. They are spending a lot of money on what they call endangered species. All are not endangered. Well some schemes and projects, which I have seen of the World Wildlife Fund are absolutely useless. The protection of the Shahin falcon in the Himalayas-well there is no survey, there is no reason to think that, the Shahin is becoming endangered and there are a number of sanctuaries like the Himalayan Sanctuary here. That itself is useless and much of the money is being spent just for surveying. There is no implementation after this project. They will suggest certain things. Some of the recommendations even in S. America, they have been turned down by their own countries. These surveys had been done by expert people to save habitat and birds. But they have failed in their attempt. So that the practical application of the project is more important than the survey to my mind and I think that it is very lopsided. But I am very much in favour of developing National Parks and Sanctuaries and research centres-creating safe pockets.

**SRW** —Well, animals in captivity in zoos-what about this?

**KSD**—I tell you I don't like to visit a zoo now.



**SRW** —No, let me ask you now. Some of the wildlife experts that you talk to today, not the older people like you who have kept animals and birds and who know something but some of the new people, they don't see the value of zoos. They treat zoos like unwanted step-children or like criminals. Other countries seem to think the zoos have a very positive value. What is your feeling about that? Do you feel that zoos have a positive value in the wildlife conservation movement? Philosophically are you in favour of having zoos?

**KSD** - Yes I am in favour of having, I have always been a man for the zoos. Whenever I say we should scrap all zoos, I am talking because of the present circumstance. It is a disease. You can't blame the zoos for it. They need more assistance.

One of the most important things of the zoo is its educational value because people see animals of different types living, not dead ones in museums, they will have some affection for these animals. Not only that, but they may develop interest studying animal life. They will also learn the different species, which is sort of visual education. So the greatest importance, I think is of educational value,

**SRW**—What else do you think makes the difference about the zoos? What about the ZOO keepers?

**KSD**—There also, USA Europe, they are knowledgeable. A man who keeps animals himself is knowledge able. He does not have a man to look after them alone. They have very good men in charge; and their main interest is their work. But in India, the laws are too strict for any kind of animal keeping. In India I think animal keeping is out of question now in this country. The laws are too strict and the laws are wrongly implemented, and harassment occurs because the officers themselves do not know how to deal with the matter.

You see when I was selected as Wildlife Preservation Officer, I was selected on merit. I was the only Officer in charge of Wildlife in India who was selected on merit against retired forest officers, retired Indian civil service officers who were also applying, and many others. There were 36-38 candidates for the post, but I was supported by the Bombay Natural History Society. Mr. Humayun Abdullali had given a very strong note and I got letters of introduction from different parts of India. The Maharajah of Mysore himself wrote a very nice letter and some others.

**SRW**—There has been a proposal that the government form a separate zoo authority of India and that all the zoos should come under this zoo authority of India. There is another way of thinking that says all the zoos should come under the Forest Department. Then another group of people think all the zoos should come under the Department of Environment, but with a separate zoo wing.

What do you think would be the best way of administering all the zoos in the country?

**KSD**—The entire provisions of the Act of 1972 have to be changed to be conducive for maintaining and keeping zoos and to capturing the necessary animals in the wild. Unless that is done as a precaution for any new type of authority or society that is formed, it cannot be successful. The implementation of this Act has to be enforced in lieu of the new organisation or authority.

The zoos should be private. There are a lot of rich people in India. I think that private zoos should be encouraged and government. Private land should be given, private facilities should be permitted for those people really interested in keeping birds and animals. The rules should accordingly be made framed to suit the people as it is being done in some other countries and yet certain endangered species or whatever they would should be prohibited. It is not only rare animals and birds that should be kept. But, you take Ahmedabad Zoo, it is a very rich city with millionaires and others. They won't give money for the zoo. In fact I had suggested to Reuben David that like the London Zoological Society, there should be the Ahmedabad Zoological Society or Gujarat Zoological Society, entirely separate from every thing . . . Autonomous with the encouragement of benefactors millionaires who have got lot of money to give lakhs and lakhs of rupees and have the right men and they run the show like that.

This is the only answer for India if they want to go in for zoos, otherwise scrap the Zoos. Scrap them in the sense let the government run them nationalise them or whatever they want to do with them. But it will not be a success, unless the country itself gets merited people onto it and the public will not spend in a national zoo. They will say it is run by the state. So why should we give money?

**SRW**—What about your brother? You said that you and your brother kept a menagerie at one time? What was that like?

**KSD**—We had a very good collection. We had lions, tigers, panthers in a zoo as well as in private. We had cheetahs, the king of animals. We had falcons for sport. That is nothing to do with zoos — but we kept them. We had private birds also. I had my own aviary, where I kept my Birds of Paradise given by the Empress of Germany. The first successful breeding of the Bird of Paradise was at my aviary. It was a world record. And that was published by American Zoologica — the editor was a friend of mine. He is 94 or 95 now. That man when he heard about my Birds of Paradise, he said "please write a note on this. I will have it published in the Zoologica." And many Indian research students who go to America on scientific research work—this paper is shown to them as a world record from India and from their country to add to their knowledge.

**SRW**—You have given much useful information. Thank you.