

The WAZA Heini Hediger Award 2009 : KAREN ANN SAUSMAN, Founder Living Desert & Living the Zoo

Editorial (EE) Note:

Many of our readers might have heard me speak of the books which influenced me in my very early zoo years at the Mysore Zoo. There were three basic zoo books that had a profound influence on me. One was Man and Animal in the Zoo by Heini Hediger which taught zoo psychology, and philosophy and zoo science, or conservation biology. Another was The Stationary Ark by Gerald Durrell in which he explained the "real purpose of a zoo."

*The third book that influenced me was more about the nuts and bolts of zoos and in fact it was called Zoo and Aquarium Fundamentals. The Editor of Zoo and Aquarium Fundamentals was Karen Sausman. I worshipped her from afar and came to know her in WAZA. You can, then, appreciate how delighted I was when she was given the Heini Hediger Award this year at the 64th WAZA meeting. Bill Conway, her long term friend and colleague wrote a beautiful nomination for her which I have proudly reproduced here. All of us zoo people should aspire to be even a fraction as prolific and versatile as Karen Sausman. **Sally Walker, Ed.Em.***

Nomination of Karen Sausmann for the Heini Hedigger Award

William Conway

Karen Sausman is a zoo director, artist, author, naturalist and conservationist all at once and unique in the breadth and depth of her contributions to the zoological park field. She has been editor, multi-committee chairperson and AZA board member (twice), desert antelope expert, computer programmer, ISIS planner, naturalist and president of WAZA. When, after volunteering and working with several zoos, schools and related organizations, she decided that her concerns about nature would be best fulfilled as a zoo director she created a new and exceptionally imaginative institution, The Living Desert, and focused on the wildlife of the world's arid lands. She designed, found ways to fund the new institution and ran it from 1970 until 2009 and has won countless citations and awards while helping to lead a panoply of national and international zoo projects.

Karen Sausman has devoted her distinguished professional life to the institutions and purposes for which WAZA stands and her commitment has extended far beyond the boundaries of the remarkable institution that she founded and led for thirty-nine years. Within her many contributions to the zoological park profession, detailed in the attached resume, we wish call attention to her special role in helping the AAZPA (AZA) become an independent professional association upon its separation from the American Institute of Park Executives. She personally edited the fledgling association's Newsletter from 1971 through 1976 and became editor of AAZPA's first major professional publication after its independence,

Zoological Park And Aquarium Fundamentals (356 Pages) published in 1982.

Seemingly unable to say "no" to a call for aid from the zoo field, Karen Sausman has helped important zoo programs of all kinds get started. These range from SSP studbooks to the tasks of reorganizing faltering efforts and starting new projects, advising zoo and species planning programs and introducing aspiring zoologists to the inner workings of the zoological park field. Her work on the original development of the International Species Inventory System was outstanding and, most recently, she has worked with CBSG's Bob Lacy and others to organize the critical AArk (Amphibian Ark) conservation effort and to get other institutions to commit to the AArk concept, programmatically and financially. As Jo Gipps summarizes, "Karen is a great diplomat, with a deep-seated and caring passion for her zoo, for conservation and for WAZA."

Karen Sausman has chaired or headed countless zoo-wildlife conservation efforts including the CBSG Captive Antelope Management Group, Arabian Oryx SSP Group (Co-Chair), Desert Antelope Group (Co-Chair), International Species Inventory System (ISIS) Management Committee and Policy Advisory Group of which she was subsequently Secretary and Treasurer. Karen has also served WAZA with distinction as its president, 2005-2007. She has a special interest in the desert antelope and has become one of the zoo world's authorities on this particularly beautiful and threatened taxon group. However, she has also held a variety of posts with related organizations and zoo operations including Board Member and Secretary of the Desert Protective Council, on the Advisory Board of the Desert Bighorn Research Institute, and as both an Institute of Museum Services Field Reviewer, and AZA Accreditation Field Reviewer and as an active participant in a score of SSP programs.

In addition to these activities, Karen Sausman has been both a prolific writer and wildlife illustrator and a promoter of nature education through study tours. She has led tours in nine nations in addition to the Southwest United States, often providing special programs in the desert regions that are her specialty. Not least among her works, of course is the creation and development of one of the world's most unusual and most admired zoological exhibits, The Living Desert.

It is a privilege to recommend Karen Sausman to the WAZA Council as a recipient of the Heini Hediger Award. In view of her accomplishments, we believe that a Hediger Award to her would do both Dr. Hediger and our Association honor. Because of her efforts, zoos are better and zoo animals are better off.