

## Devra Kleiman and Zoo Outreach Organisation

Sally Walker

Devra Kleiman passed away on 29 April 2010 (see Obituary on pp. 1-2) but she is very much alive in my memory and all of those people who knew her and her conservation contribution, who read her articles and books, and who enjoyed her feisty, funny personality.

Devra entered my zoo life even before Zoo Outreach Organisation did. I knew of her and the National Zoo, Washington, D.C. even before ZOO was established. It was the days of Friends of Mysore Zoo FMZ and I knew of Devra from ZOOGOER, the Friends of National Zoo (FONZ) magazine. ZOOGOER was being sent to Mysore Zoo thanks to a National Geographic photographer, who was a member of FONZ, and enjoyed taking photos in the National Zoo. A friend of mine knew him and when he visited India, my friend brought him to Mysore Zoo to see and photograph me in action with my tiger cub project. That day he convinced me (AND the Divisional Commissioner of Mysore District, Sri M. B. Prakash AND the Director of Mysore Zoo) to found a Friends of Mysore Zoo. He sent the magazine of FONZ to give us ideas of things a "friends of the zoo" could do. This was in the very early 80's and I did start the Friends of Mysore Zoo Society ... in a very short time, thanks to good offices of the Divisional Commissioner, and it was modeled on FONZ.

Devra Kleiman, then Assistant Director of National Zoo, appeared often in ZOOGOER as she was involved in many conservation projects (Giant pandas, carnivores, Golden Lion Tamarins) and used members of FONZ as volunteers to help her with research. So she was one of my zoo heros even before I met her.

After FOZ had been established, John Wakefield, Director of Jungle Lodges and Resorts, Ltd. sent word that a tour group from the Friends of National Zoo would visit Mysore and the tour leader, Devra Kleiman, would bring them to Mysore Zoo. I was thrilled and immediately began making plans for Devra to give a public lecture on Saturday night, 26 Jan 1984. As it happened there was a farmer's agitation and the tour bus could not pass so we had to cancel her talk. The FONZ group was able to visit the Mysore Zoo the next morning, however, and a good number of our most active FMZ members and zoo officials accompanied them around the zoo. They were extremely happy with Mysore Zoo and particularly with the Nilgiri langurs (not seen before, the Four-horned antelopes, three species of rhino and the Karanji Lake which was a 100 acre area that had just been added to the zoo. Devra was interested to obtain some Four-horned antelopes for the National Zoo and negotiations were planned.



**From GNU's LETTER: Devra Kleiman presents a FONZ t-shirt to Divisional Commissioner & Chairman, Karnataka Zoo Authority.**

After touring the zoo, the FONZ group joined our Karnataka Zoo Authority Chairman, Divisional Commissioner, P.G. Puranik, zoo officials and FMZ members for refreshments in the Meeting Hall. Devra, there, gave a very informative and useful talk on how FONZ functions. She congratulated Mysore zoo on being the first zoo in India to have a Friends of the Zoo. She also praised the Mysore Zoo on its excellent management and particularly congratulated our Director, Shri C. D. Krishne Gowda.

After our meeting at Mysore Zoo, Devra became a wonderful friend to me and to the FMZ. If I needed advice on an animal or a book, she never let me down. When I visited National Zoo, she introduced me to everyone. When email became available I could more easily exploit Devra's generosity, and never failed to do so. Whenever anyone from National Zoo visited Mysore, Devra reminded them to get in touch with me and because of these visits I made some good friends like Chris Wemmer, John Sidensticker, Steve Monfort ... and others. All of those people made some special contribution to ZOO's work there. John Sidensticker taught me so much about keeping a studbook in long talks on the verandha of the Metropole Hotel in Mysore. He is the one who taught me how to make a studbook with no information (almost) and I made a "Studbook-like listing" for the Indian population of Manipur Brow-antlered Deer using old notes, common sense, the process of elimination. Steve Monfort came to our first PHVA in India for Manipur Brown Antlered Deer (*Cervus eldi eldi*), locally called Sangai, and with his team stayed and gave a three day training for Indian veterinarians and keepers in management and veterinary aspects for these animals. Mysore zoo had a very good breeding record for Sangai. Steve and team were the first to reproduce another subspecies, *Cervus eldi thamin*, the Burma Brow-antlered deer, using high tech

reproductive techniques. When she edited a modern version of *Wild Animals in Captivity* she permitted us to copy it and make it into three issues of ZOO ZEN.

Devra introduced me to Jon Ballou and he was a tremendous influence and help with my interest in Sangai, taking many many hours to help me make a poster presentation for that highly endangered species for a conference in Washington. He, along with Bob Lacy came to India and taught South

Indian foresters and zoo personnel population biology with particular reference to Lion-tailed macaques.

It is only now with her passing that I troubled to inventory Devra's immense influence on me, ZOO, and others that knew her ... in India and many other parts of the world also. She lived a fulsome and generous life. Her innovations and advances in conservation will be remembered and appreciated for a very long time to come. ■

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## Loving Remarks about Devra Kleiman by Colleagues

### **Steve Monfort, DVM, PhD, Director**

Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute  
National Zoological Park

Dear Colleagues,

Devra was a pioneer in the fields of Zoo and Conservation Biology, serving with distinction as the head of the National Zoo's Department of Zoological Research from 1978-95 but remained active till her recent demise.

Devra was hired at National Zoological Park as a reproductive biologist in 1970. She quickly established research programs on social and reproductive behaviors in white tigers and golden lion tamarins, with the aim of improving captive management and reproduction. She established active collaborations between research and collection management staff, which was a defining moment in Zoo Biology. It was the integration of research and exhibit collection programs that today is the standard of practice and excellence for all modern zoos. Thus Devra helped to launch the modern era of science-based zoo biology and animal management.

Throughout her career, she was an unrelenting champion for conservation, especially for her beloved golden lion tamarins. She was someone who believed that she could make a difference in making the earth a better place for having walked upon it, and she had high expectations for those around her to do the same. Devra understood that the best hope of securing a future for the earth's biodiversity was to ensure the success of the current and next generation. And so, it is fitting that Devra's greatest legacy is that she was a terrific mentor, friend and colleague to dozens of conservationists whose careers she helped to advance. Their work over the decades to come will serve as a fitting testament to her impact as a conservation biologist and champion for the planet.

### **Robert C. Lacy, Chair**

IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group  
USA

Devra made major contributions to conservation biology, and especially to the integration of field and zoo research, zoo management, reintroduction science and practice, and wildlife conservation.

She had a huge impact on many people around the world, helping to train and mentor many of the leaders of conservation biology and zoo animal science.

She was a leading participant in many CBSG workshops and activities. Devra's enthusiasm, wisdom, and friendship will be greatly missed.