

SAZARC and the WAZA Data Base*

SAZARC, South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation

In SAZARC and its unique methodology, every zoo in South Asia is a WAZA associated zoo via the Membership of SAZARC in WAZA and also Zoo Outreach Organisation in a sense as ZOO is an Affiliate Member of WAZA and many zoos in South Asia are subscriber members of Zoo Outreach.

Invitation to South Asian Zoo Association

WAZA and EAZA have invited SAZARC to become involved in this project by jumping on board and supplying 4-6 people who could provide technical support to start the project in this region. SAZARC, as a matter of policy, is interested in anything that would forward conservation of wildlife.

There are, however, some differences in the way the regions do their zoo business. The developed nations seem to have more flexibility and organisation in terms of the core of the conservation database described above, e.g., raising money, providing expertise, etc. for *in situ* conservation. Some regions and many countries' zoos do not have this perspective and would find it difficult to put it up some of the activities to their governments. This may be solvable if even a few of the South Asian zoos are interested. If there are interested zoos we in SAZARC can discuss with the WAZA Database management and technical boards a variety of creative ways to go about achieving the same objectives. Zoos that are interested please write to SAZARC c/o sallyrwalker@zooreach.org or zooreach@zooreach.org stating their interest and any ways they may be already assisting *in situ* projects in direct and positive methods, aside from breeding for reintroduction.

Why SAZARC and all well-established and forward-looking SAZARC zoos should participate in the WAZA database.

"...we need to make known a new zoo vision ... captive propagation and reintroduction and last resorts. Zoos must increase support for studies essential to sustaining wildlife in the wild."

Dr. William G. Conway

Former Director of Bronx Zoo and Former President and Director General of Wildlife Conservation Society, WCS, New York, USA

This quote is the first information in the WAZA publication **Building a Future for Wildlife: Zoos and Aquariums Committed to Biodiversity Conservation**, edited by Gerald Dick & Markus Gusset and published by World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), Executive Office, Gland, Switzerland. Please note that this book is not the same as the World Zoo Conservation Strategy which also includes the phrase 'building a future for wildlife.'



Gerald Dick, Executive Director, WAZA, commented in his Preface to the book:

"the world's zoos and aquariums are committed to biodiversity conservation, not only within their own institutional boundaries (called *ex situ* conservation), but also of wild species and habitats (e.g., *in situ* conservation)". Further, he wrote that zoos and aquariums today are some of the important conservation organizations on the planet, ... as leaders in public education and also sponsorship of conservation projects.

Many people (both public and professional) think of zoos as being primarily or exclusively devoted to breeding animals in their institutions, with a forward dream of reintroducing them when their wild relatives have reached dangerous declines. This is not the case with the leading zoos in the world today, however. The leading zoos use their institutions not only to breed and exhibit threatened species but also to raise significant funds and friends for *in situ* projects involving threatened species in the wild. This may include projects to aid human communities which are a threat to wildlife because their own survival depends on it.

These projects, often involving a number of zoos clubbing together to provide a larger amount of

***Sally Walker, Editor Emeritus, using compilations from various sources.**

financial support and a greater pool of expertise to insure its success, can actually start saving species in the wild, without having to wait till they require complicated, more expensive and risky reintroduction projects using live, captive born animals. While there are successful or promising projects involving zoo born reintroduced animals, the process of breeding, training, release and monitoring is indeed cumbersome and expensive at best and carries a large component of risk. Failure in such projects is a double tragedy, e.g. money and manpower may have been wasted and the species may be no better off, or even worse off than before.

Using funds and friends to step in before the end is near, is a better game plan, with a higher probability of success. Also, not to be minimized, this kind of cooperation is a boon to conservation in the sense of public relations and commitment to involve more people and institutions (both in situ and ex situ) from around the world in such projects.

Referring back to the Preface of the book Building a Future for Wildlife: Zoos and Aquariums committing to Wildlife Conservation, Gerald Dick has written:

"The ultimate question of all conservation efforts globally is: can we halt the loss of biodiversity or divert the current negative trends into another situation where the environment is used sustainably and still worth living in?"

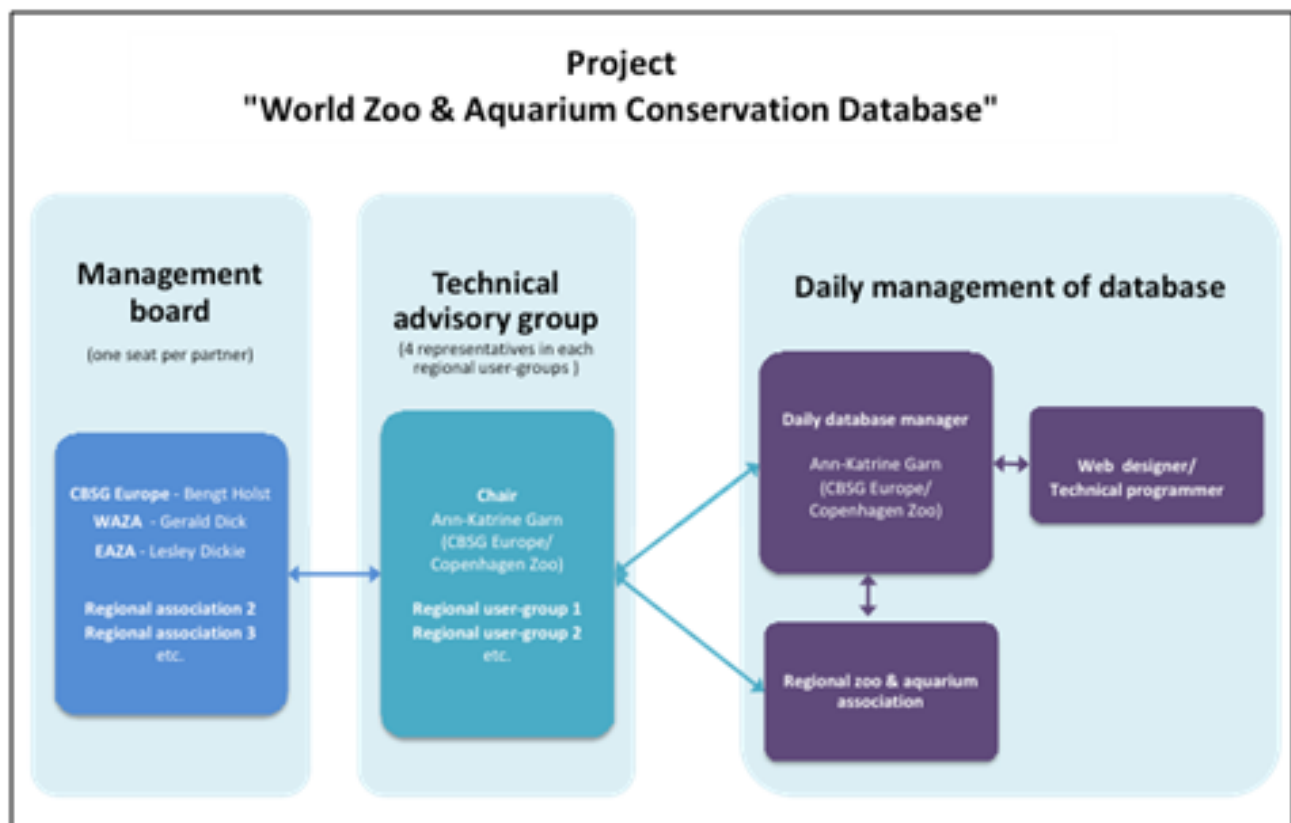
You will not, he confesses, find the definitive answer to this very complex issue in the book, but you will find ways to achieve the goal and the role of the world zoo and aquarium community.

This is a new and different way of working (to us in South Asia) which has proved itself effective in myriad ways in other countries and regions. Its time we got on board. Interacting with the WAZA Database will help us with this task.

The World Zoo & Aquarium Conservation Database (WZACD)

The World Zoo & Aquarium Conservation Database (WZACD) database started as a project of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria in 2001. The vision, or intention, was always to make the database into a global tool however. Much of the initial work of the database was done in CBSG meetings and CBSG working groups. The database was handed over to CBSG Europe as its project-holder in 2009 and in February 2010 an MOU between EAZA, WAZA and CBSG Europe was finalized.

A global database will strengthen the global zoo community with coordinating conservation efforts. It will help in making valuable project searches and analyses across regions, with coordinating various conservation activities, and with background information on conservation activities for public relations purposes. The current structure of project is diagrammed below.



Project mission

The Project mission is to create a tool in the form of a database that could provide reports, analyses and synthesis of the zoo community at an institutional and associational level. The aim is also to increase networking between EAZA members and encourage members to get involved in conservation. In summary, goals of the database are:

1. Public Relations for EAZA, WAZA etc.
2. Networking between member zoos by using the project search tool
3. Encouraging member involvement in conservation by evaluation, implementation and setting of standards.

Project History

The database was made available online for membership in September 2007. Later, its daily management changed from EAZA to CBSG Europe. In May 2009 the database was given a new "look" which was more inclusive of all regions. It has also been renamed from "EAZA *in situ* Conservation Database" to "World Zoo & Aquarium Conservation Database".

Very recently an MOU between CBSG Europe, EAZA and WAZA was signed (February 2010) and the new structure of the project was outlined in March 2010. In June 2010 invitations to regional associations were sent out and replies have been received from 10 out of the 12 regions. Five regions have agreed to participate in the technical advisory group. Three additional regions will most likely join soon.

Currently the database includes 779 projects entered by 115 members of which 528 are listed as ongoing projects. The last board meeting was held during the CBSG conference in mid-October 2010. So far the following regions have signed up

- ALPZA (Latin American Zoo & Aquarium Association)
- ARAZPA (Australian Regional Association of Zoological Parks/Aquaria, Inc.)
- EAZA (European Association of Zoos & Aquaria)
- EARAZA (Eurasian Regional Association of Zoos & Aquariums)
- PAAZAB (African Association of Zoological Gardens & Aquaria) and are likely to be joined by
- AMACZOOA (Mesoamerican & Caribbean Zoos & Aquaria Association)
- AZA (Association of Zoos & Aquariums)
- CAZA (Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums).

Of three major regions left

- SAZARC will discuss with their membership in late Nov. 2010 at the annual conference, and
- SEAZA and
- JAZA will respond in due course.

Governance

The management board will oversee the project whereas a technical advisory board will provide support to the further development of the database. So far it is a stand-alone entity but the idea is to develop it further so that it meets the needs of all regions. A website platform will also be created which will be the initial face of the project with the database integrated in to the website.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) is intended to create a collaboration that will describe and monitor the contribution of WAZA-associated zoos and aquariums to *in situ* conservation, through the database. Some time ago EAZA developed a prototype Conservation Projects Database for EAZA members, populated with more than 750 projects to date, but wants to enable this database to be further developed and used together with all WAZA. Now the database will become a global zoo organ called the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Database using EAZA logo and website www.eaza.net, a joint project and product of the two organizations and ultimately linked to WAZA member regional associations as well as CBSG Europe.

The development of a management board including WAZA, its member regional associations and CBSG Europe will be initiated to do the following?

- monitor media and other marketing use of the database by WAZA, CBSG Europe and RAs.
- facilitate establishment of a Technical Advisory Group TAG, to oversee the technical maintenance, future development and as well as generate regular meetings
- bring about agreement between member RAs to collaborate, using the Database to facilitate its populations with knowledge of genuine conservation projects by individual WAZA-associated zoos and aquariums;
- fund the same groups to see to ongoing development and maintenance of the Database; and finally
- generate financial support for the Database, in conjunction with its member regional associations, at levels to be agreed.