

This month - That age" - ZOOS' PRINT 25 years ago

Sally Walker

We are indebted to Sri Manoj Misra, who has written the first "Test-orial" to ZOO (see next pages) for the suggestion which drives this feature, which will appear in every issue this year. He said :

"I think this celebration is not as much for the number of years completed but the huge impact that ZOO and all its 'offsprings' have made on the nature conservation scene in this country and beyond. It also goes to show as to what one person's vision, dedication and 'never say impossible' attitude can accomplish.

One suggestion. 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. With warm regards and hearty congratulations. Manoj"

Never one to take a suggestion without taking it a step further, we are going to allocate a couple or more pages to Manoj's excellent idea. This is the first and will cover two months, since it is already February.

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The titles in bold types were our monthly features, or that was the intention. **This is your page** was a bust ...nobody wanted to write personal opinions, yet. **zoonooz -noozoos** was intended to announce new facilities coming up and that was done occasionally when we were told about them. Sick Line was easy as there were always people who would contribute something about animal health and plenty of literature to poach if not. **Z.O.O. book**

review was to feature books of interest to zoo personnel so they could procure them. There was no medium at that time to find out what was out there. However, in this first issue, we reviewed a published Report of the Indian Government's Expert Committee entitled *Management of Zoos in India*, published in 1975! This was the output of an inspection of major zoos with the idea of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of Indian zoos so that some policy could be constructed to assist them. This thick document was filled with information such that just reading the report would be helpful to zoo but, like many government initiatives, when the limited print run of copies ran out, that was the end, and few directors of the current year had even heard of it. Our reviewing this report and later reprinting as an issue of ZOO ZEN set the stage for the role of nagging wife the ZOO played with the concerned government ministries until a Zoo Act was passed. We reprinted many out of print government documents, without permission, but with the best of intentions and all gave a good result.

Birth and Hatching Update was to let zoo personnel know what was going on in breeding in the rest of the zoos. Again it was kind of a bomb because it was so hard to collect that information.

Herp Help was specifically for helpful hints on accommodating, display and caring for herptiles, and for that we had none other than Romulus Whitaker to provide material.

Interview with ... in this issue Reuben David was meant to be monthly, so that the experienced zoo men of India could speak without being afraid their words would be twisted, as in the press. We did get some great interviews with some of the great zoo men of India. Some of the, like Reuben David, have passed on and it is good to have a record of some of their heartfelt thoughts.

Just "fur" laughs was a humour input about zoo management and animal/human relationships as well as MY relationships with wildlife departments. A popular column but not everyone thought it was funny. **Matrimonial column** was dedicated to Sri Samar Singh, then Director, Wildlife, GOI who was very interested in zoos exchanging animals and pairing up singles for scientific management. Zoos contributed to this but had to be reminded a lot.

The rest of the features were articles or reports about some aspect of zoos or wildlife that might be of interest to readers or which would improve zoo management, or educate people in what others around the world and in the country were doing.

It is significant (to me) that the very first of these articles were about the *International Species Inventory System*, ISIS, about to become ZIMS, and

has been finally taken up by a number of zoos in India by the good offices of the Central Zoo Authority. Quarter century of nagging = success, not bad.

Are zoos a drain on wildlife was by Moi, me, playing Devil's advocate by asking the question but making a good case for the opposite, at least in India at that time, on the basis of my admittedly scant hard facts and bias toward zoos. I had a lot of opinions and always made room for them in ZOOS' PRINT ... even now, but now I am not so biased.

GIB Captive Breeding Efforts was about Great Indian Bustard and the efforts of the Late Y.D. Singh of Jodphur zoo to propagate this sensitive and rapidly declining species. It also included my early efforts, well-intentioned but doomed to failure, to promote exchange of single animals or single sexed groups as in the case of Mysore Zoo and Jodphur Zoo.

A Century Old Zoo featured the Trichur Zoo, whose director, Sri P. R. Chandran, was trying deliberately to keep it looking as awful as possible because it was Chandran's intention to convince his government to shift the zoo to a spacious, well-vegetated piece of land away from the crowded city. Here we are 25 years later. Mr. Chandran is no more and the Trichur Zoo is still in the city, a pity.

The key article in this first issue is almost last, because we couldn't get the report in time for publication to complete, so we published what we had and added this. It was a report of the Silver Jubilee of the National Zoological Park, New Delhi which was a gala occasion indeed. The trouble we took to get this in the first issue is indicative of our determination to promote Indian zoos and their successes. ZOOS' PRINT made a point of recording any event that had to do with the zoos.

We included several quarter and half pages bit in support of easy and effective educational techniques. Finally, there was usually an agony column as in "Dear Abby" where people could write in with problems, but of zoos, not lovers. It was called **Calling Dr. Zoo**. It was managed by the famous **Dr. I. Zooalovit** who, I can tell this NOW, was both the writer of the problems and questions as well as the expert responder. Nobody ever questioned Dr. I. Zooalovit, despite the obvious name. It was a combination of a little good advice and a lot of sarcasm, strikes against one of the concerned departments, and sass. I might include one of these somewhere in this issue.

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S.S.P. Report : Gaur -- refers to the Species Survival Plan for Gaur of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria (now named The Zoo Association). Publishing these Reports on species

which occurred in India was a means of drawing attention to coordinated management, which was well established in most western zoos in the mid-eighties but not in the detail and complexity it is today. Today, the zoos under CZA are beginning to undertake these kinds of programmes but none are truly established yet.

Zoo and Conservation, an article by Sri Pushpkumar, a very much respected zoo director who managed to spend his whole career in zoos by the sheer force of his will, led off the issue. This article was delivered at the 2nd Zoo directors meeting in New Delhi in 1985 but not circulated widely, so we requested permission and established another trend in ZOOS' PRINT, which enabled much good information to be shared with zoo personnel of all levels.

Our interview of the month was with K. S. Dharmakumarsinji who was one of the Indian princess who made wildlife his avocation. He also had a real job as Wildlife Preservation Officer in Bombay. He travelled and because he was interested he visited all the zoos both in India and abroad. He advised Indian zoos and had a store of knowledge to be envied by anyone.

An feature article was the Origin of White Tiger in Mysore Zoo by Dr. A. K. Roychoudhery or Arun. Arun had delivered this article at the zoo directors conference. He was a geneticist, an excellent scientist, who was technically interested in white tigers. I encouraged him to make a studbook for white tigers so zoo personnel would know how to get them if they want them and also how to breed so as to avoid them. I had also published an article from an American zoo magazine called White Tiger Genetics which complemented Arun's article. Another paper from the zoo conference was on the Snow Leopard by Helen Freeman, Founder of the Snow Leopard Trust.

Sick Line feature an article by Murray E. Fowler (who permitted us to use anything he published) entitled "How to Clean a Zoo". Many zoos I visit today need to read that article. The feature Herp Help by Rom Whitake carried an article on Crocodile Ranching as a Animal Husbandry Opportunity for Tribal People.

An article on India's first travelling zoo education exhibit related how Mr. Ramakrishna, Director of Hyderabad Zoo, created a beautiful school bus with huge dioramas showing different biomes around his state and taxonomy models of the animals they held. This was a first for India and is still probably the best example of a mobile exhibit.

Finally, we featured Reuben David's Nature Library which he opened to young visitors of the zoo in Ahmedabad.

Is this interesting? Want to see some of the articles? We can scan and send if you write to at zooreach@zooreach.org, giving this reference.