World Association of Zoos and Aquariums WAZA links with Wildlife Reserves Singapore and other zoos to cope with Thailand floodwaters

Heavy flooding affecting nearly all Thailand has been in the news since beginning of November. The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) has coordinated flood relief measures for the Dusit Zoo contacting zoos within the Asian region. Help has been provided by Wildlife Reserves Singapore, the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Zoos Victoria in Melbourne, Oceans Park, Hong Kong and Malaysian zoos. Beginning 15 November, veterinarians from Wildlife Reserves Singapore arrived in Bangkok with a supply of expertise and equipment, including drugs for afflicted animals.

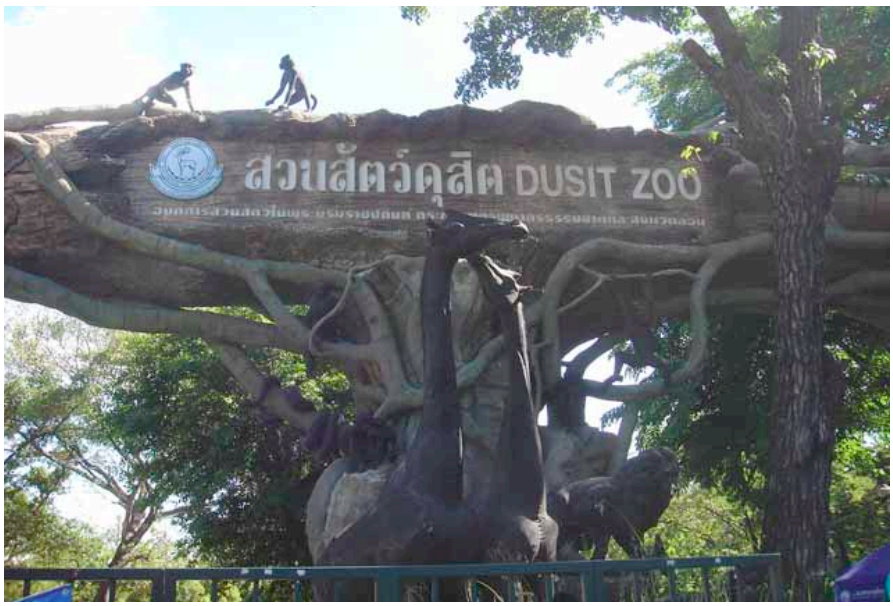
The floods have raged through Thailand from late July till the present. By early November the floods were deemed responsible for 506 deaths that are known and possibly more, and affliction of over 2 million people with damage which has been estimated in billions of dollars by mid October. It is the worst flooding ever with record water as well as property and human beings in jeopardy with six million hectares of land covered with water of which much is valuable farmland in over 50 provinces.

Fearing the worst WAZA inquired of the zoo community what damage had been done the numerous zoos of the country but were told that only Dusit Zoo, Bangkok had been seriously affected.

The zoo had prepared to move hoofstock to Khao Kheow Zoo, a large safari park about an hour from Bangkok and the remaining animals to high ground in the Dusit Zoo itself. Mr. Pimuk Simaroj of the Thai Zoological Park Organization said that they believe more translocations of wildlife will be needed in the near future.

WAZA sent an alarm call and a list supplies needed to all of the Asian Zoo Associations and WAZA member zoos in the relatively nearby area. About 30 items were identified as urgently required including such items as injection needles and nets for capturing snakes and crocodiles.

Emergency relief action was organised quickly in the wider Asian region with drugs, medical equipment and other items to insure safety to both animal and man as potentially dangerous reptiles had escaped due to flood damage.



The Dusit Zoo's striking entrance signage.

WAZA Executive Director Gerald Dick said: "In times of increased natural disasters, it is of utmost importance to cooperate within a global community and provide mutual support and assistance, I thank all our member zoos and other partners like Thai Air for their immediate support".

Isabella Loh, Director and Group CEO of WRS commented that "WRS, as a member of WAZA and SEAZA, is happy to extend assistance in the form of medical supplies and vet resources to our neighbouring partners on the Flood Relieve Mission for wildlife rescue. We will continue to assess the situation together with the Thai conservation groups, and determine further levels of assistance needed. In the meantime, WRS is committed to wildlife research and conservation especially for Asia."

Earlier in November Bangkok's Dusit Zoo Director, Dr. Karnchai Saenwongse, reported that they had prepared sandbag for sensitive areas where water could get in, such as the doors of cages. They also laid in supplies to provide animals with enough food for several weeks. Ponds around the zoo were drained so that some of the floodwaters could be accommodated without damage. Animals were split into priority groups so that they could be evacuated when necessary. The zoo officials worked around the clock to prepare for the flood damage.
vide press release from WAZA, Gland, Switzerland, Tuesday 15 November 2011 (WAZA): ***Safari World***

Another zoo just outside the sprawling city of Bangkok came under water earlier in November, e.g., the Safari World, a popular tourist choice in the country.

The park had to be closed for visitation after authorities, bending to local residents strike demanding they open a flood gate to drain their own area. Water rushed into the park creating uncomfortably damp but not dangerous conditions for the animals.

Zoo officials had to find dry ground for some of the animals as 50% of the park came under water according to authorities.

The sprawling 500 acre park draws as many as 4000 visitors a day, most of which are tourists from USA, Europe, Middle East and parts of Asia who come to see the very large number of exotic animals. A small fortune in visitor receipts had to be sacrificed for the sake of animal and visitor comfort and safety.

Had tourists visited after the floodgate was opened they would have had to wear hip boots as the media photos and television showed animals plodding through "knee" deep floodwaters. In fact even the safari park visitor buses pictured in the photo (next page) would have had been unable to operate as usual.

Large numbers of herd animals, such as these zebras are a star attraction at the Bangkok Safari Park. Visitors go around most of the zoo in special "visitor mobiles" designed for the purpose.

Note on Environmental Enrichment: Automated reconfiguration of primate zoo closures

Anthony Judge*

The purpose of this note is to share a possibility to reduce the boredom of primates, notably chimpanzees, held captive in zoo enclosures. Much has been done in some zoos to this end, but once investment has been made in an installation it becomes unacceptably costly to modify it.

Another approach would to use a system of rigging, variously attached to poles and logs, which could be used to reconfigure the structures over which the chimpanzees climb. One example is a conventional theater where rigging can be used to raise, lower and move items required for any show.

A high-tech variant for a primate enclosure would be to control such movement by program -- as is done in some theaters – perhaps adjusting the level and angle of logs/poles/ropes.

More sophisticated variants could be introduced by using programs with a variety of options and shifting sequentially (or randomly) between these options.

It would be possible to experiment with changing the configuration according to different schedules: daily/nightly, weekly, hourly, etc

Given the intelligence of primates, possibilities for their own interaction with configuration changes and their timings could be envisaged. For example, if there were five preset configurations, a primate could be allowed to push one of five buttons to trigger a preferred change possibly one which would allow for a particular pattern of movement through the space of the enclosure

The primary purpose would be to reduce the boredom of primates exposed over long periods to a predictable spatial environment through which they are able to climb. A secondary purpose might be to increase the interest of a changeable enclosure for visitors.

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