

could get on with the project, picking an authoritative source for each group and finish the website before each source became hopelessly outdated.

Fred's reasons for creating the website and even for being a zookeeper are indebted to his life long fascination with wildlife. He says "Working as a zookeeper gives me a unique opportunity to know some of the world's most spectacular animals as individuals with all their own personality quirks. It also has made me care on a much more personal level that their wild relatives have a future in a world where the threats to their survival seem to be constantly increasing."

The popularity and availability of the World Wide Web made it possible to make the information on what animals and plants were dependant on a single nation for their survival available to a large audience, which served as a further stimulus and incentive for Fred.

Much of this data had either never been assembled or was not in a format accessible to the general public.

Fred has written each country overview page with an audience of that nation's citizens in mind. He has, he

says, also tried to provide abundant links to some of the spectacular resources on the Web – this is the understatement of the year !

Fred says he has always felt that a nation's living things are at least as important as its cultural treasures such as the Platypus as opposed to the Sydney Opera House ! The Living National Treasures website is Fred's way of trying to share that vision. He has done all of us, both human beings and non-human species a great service and to say that is also a tremendous understatement.

This project is just the tip of an iceberg of intellectual pursuits and tasks devolved upon Fred Swengel. I don't claim to know even a fraction but I do remember one particularly horrible one which was Fred's mandate (another task for Dr. Seal and CBSG) to compile a Directory of the world's zoos. Fred did a wonderful job on this and continued to add to it for some time.

You can write to Fred at [fbswengel@yahoo.com](mailto:fbswengel@yahoo.com) if you have questions or thanks.

---

## Note : Opportunistic Scavenging by Lesser Bandicoot *Bandicota bengalensis* (Gray & Hardwicke) in Gulab Bagh Zoo, Udaipur, Rajasthan Satish Kumar Sharma\*

On May 12, 2008, while inspecting cages of the zoo, amidst Gulab Bagh, Udaipur, Rajasthan, I found that some nocturnal, Lesser Bandicoots (*Bandicota bengalensis*) were freely sharing food in broad day light with caged animals. They were pilfering grains of maize and *bajra* from the "walk in aviary" and *pakshi-ghar* (bird house). While observing birds of the *pakshi-ghar* through wire mesh, I noticed a fullgrown *Bandicota bengalensis* lifting and carrying a big piece of flesh of a fish towards its hole. After lapse of few minutes, I noticed one more rat pilfering a big piece of flesh in the same manner. A third rat was seen feeding on a big piece of flesh in open space. Since the piece was heavy, hence it was not possible for the rat to pull it to its hole like others.

Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*), Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*), Spot-billed pelican (*P. philippensis*) and Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) are the species kept in the *pakshi-ghar*. Besides grains and leafy material, fishes and fish pieces are also offered to the birds everyday. Lesser Bandicoot share both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food with resident birds. The caretaker of the exhibit told me that Lesser Bandicoots regularly feed on flesh of fishes in *pakshi-ghar* and also the flesh of buffalo in cages of carnivorous animals.

The Lesser Bandicoot is normally a nocturnal rodent which feeds on grains, succulent shoots, roots, leaves, tubers and fruits (Roberts 1997).

Though, primarily the Lesser Bandicoot is a vegetarian rodent, it also feeds on Fiddler Crabs *Uca* spp. and Fresh Water Crab *Paratelphusa spinigera* (Roberts 1997). Feeding on flesh of fish and buffalo is an addition to its known diet. In Zoos, this rodent behaves like a diurnal creature (Sharma 2006) and becomes an opportunistic flesh eater.

### References :

- Roberts, T.J. (1997). *The mammals of Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.  
Sharma, S.K. (2006). Diurnal feeding behaviour of Lesser Bandicoot Rat *Bandicota bengalensis*. *Rat- a - tattle, RILSCINSA Newsletter*, 6(1):6.

---

\*Zoo Superintendent, Gulab Bagh Zoo, Udaipur, Rajasthan.  
Email: [sksharma56@gmail.com](mailto:sksharma56@gmail.com)