

Seoul Grand Park Zoo celebrates 100 years by hosting SEAZA conference



Seoul Grand Park Zoo, located in Gwacheon, in the South of Seoul ... it is the World's 10th Largest Zoo. The zoo houses hundreds and thousands of animals and plants from all over the world to display for the countries visitors and tourist from around the world.

South Korea is very proud of the Seoul Grand Park Zoo which is, in addition to being Korea's largest animal facility, sited on 9 million square meters of lovely landscaping. A beautiful botanical garden, a fun-park, an art museum and other physical exercise facilities complement the zoo. The zoo has been constructed along modern lines and is dominated by beautifully landscaped enclosures appropriate for the animals. The Zoo is a member of SEAZA, the South East Asian Zoo Association, the International Species Information System ISIS and WAZA the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Seoul Zoo put on a grand show for SEAZA delegates at the 17th Annual Conference of the South East Asian Zoo Association. The conference was conducted August 05-09 and was the 17th Annual conference of SEAZA. Mr. WonHyoLee, Director General of the Seoul Grand Park welcomed the gathering announcing the theme, management of the sustainable zoo, and the intention of SEAZA conference to draw public attention to species and habitat conservation, as well as to strengthen the network of South East Asian zoos and their international colleagues. We wished that all delegates enjoy the culture and tradition of Seoul with its many attractions. Mr. EuiWonMo, Seoul Zoo Director, also welcomed the gathering stating that animal conservation was the concern of the Pan-Asiatic zoo community as a whole. He thanked delegates for coming and relayed his expectation that the zoos would continue to cooperate and be carried forward to strengthen their conservation efforts.

Jansen Manasang welcomed everyone and thanked our hosts, announcing his goal to focus energy towards the goals established in the SEAZA. Futures document and urged members to focus their energy on SEAZAs vision, mission and values.

The conference opened with Registration and a Board meeting followed by an Ice Breaker to meet and greet. The grand opening ceremony was followed by special speeches and a coffee break after which there were a series of presentations, workshops, eating and drinking session and special dinners and nightly entertainment, such as going to an aquarium and theatre.

At the General Assembly the last day the major topic was to report discussions and the decision to set up a Secretariat and a newborn association called ZoosAsia which would welcome all zoos and zoo associations in the Asian region. Afterward the entire conference was taken on tour of the beautiful Seoul Zoo with a lavish lunch. Afterwards there was a cultural tour to a traditional house and interpretation centre. The following day there was a visit to the Demilitarised Zone which took the whole day followed by a rollicking farewell party with lovely food, entertainment and vulgar skits. A good time was had by all !

A little history -- The first zoo in Korea was set up in 1909 by imperialist Japan during their occupation. After the Japanese withdrew the Koreans maintained the zoo at the former royal palace Changgyeongung. In 1984 the zoo was shifted to Makgye-dong, Gwacheon-si south of the city limits of Seoul and is still in the same place now.

Three hundred thousand animals live in the zoo with a total of 350 species. There are exhibits to demonstrate the animals of almost every part of the world, Africa, Australia, a Marine complex and an amazing Botanic Garden. All the exhibits are beautifully furnished with attractive and educational signs as well as displays of native cultural items in small attractive kiosks. The zoo maintains a number of threatened species which are carefully accommodated on grounds which are as close as possible to their natural habitats.

The hospitality and hosts made everyone feel welcome. The academic programme on zoo management stimulated all delegates. It was a wonderful experience for all. Many thanks to the hosts for all their work which was obvious due to the convenience and smoothness with which every event was conducted.

