

One World One Zoo – Int’l Congress of Zookeepers Vision - from President’s keynote

Advancing Professional Animal Care

- Quantify animal care and knowledge
- Standardize the skills of zookeeping
- Increase access to continuing education materials
- Increase credibility and professionalism
- Recognize professional achievement
- Establish best practice and the highest standards of animal care

Animal Welfare

- Every animal in every zoo have better quality of life
- Zoos will turn a critical eye upon our industry
- Standards in the developing world addressed

Safety

- Proactive collaboration
- Written safety policies, safety training
- Job hazard assessment of all facilities
- Quick and complete responses to safety issues
- Zoo Keeper workloads will be considered

The Future for zoo Keeper Associations

- Strategic planning
- Best practice/highest standards of animal care
- Improve marketing, visibility, credibility
- Expand professional development
- Conservation
- Expand networking for global community of zoo keepers
- Develop partnerships
- Education
- Establish priorities; areas of greatest need
- Promote sustainability
- Inform Inspire Facilitate, Mobilize Empower

Professional Development

- Conferences
- AAZK Advances in Animal Keeping
- Certification
- Curriculum-based workshop tracks
- Online resources
- Special workshops (e.g. Venomous animals)
- AAZK/PBI Leadership camp
- Publications

Education

- Science based
- Current
- Informative
- Memorable
- Action-shaping
- Fun
- Efficient

Conservation

- Zoological institutions as conservation centers
- Zoo Keepers as lead advocates and ambassadors
- Active in contemporary conservation issues

My Vision (Author’s)

Zookeepers will increase their LEADERSHIP roles in the zoo industry, conservation, education, and research.

Editor Emeritus’ Rant

This insightful list of vision items was lifted from the Power Point presentation of ICZ and AAZK President, Shane Good. Shane was generous to permit us to publish his full Presidential Address in this issue. It includes some of his personal history with zoos (from age of 5) and is instructive, inspiring and eminently readable.

The fact that this list of ideals could be put forward at all may give an idea to South Asian governments and related bureaucrats as well as zoo directors, what our zoos are missing by NOT having educated and seriously conservation-committed zookeepers.

In western countries, and in some other parts of Asia, zookeepers will go in and clean cages, handling garbage, waste and even the animals and go from there directly to their office where they catch up on emails from around their country and the globe. Then, they enter information into the zoos daily record, on computer. They may be a Studbook Keeper or keeper-contact who informs the Studbook keeper of a species if there have been birth, deaths or transfers. Keepers in western zoos perform many of the tasks of Directors, Vets and Curators in our zoos.

That leads to another reason why South Asian zoos in particular ought to have an educated, dedicated cadre of zookeepers... that is because in South Asia most of the higher posts (higher than zookeeper) are under the tradition of transferring officials from a few months to five years from their taking the post. The officer is not transferred to another zoo where he could take his hard earned expertise or experience...he is transferred to another discipline entirely and whatever he learned in this period at the zoo is gone. Management Plans are no cure or substitute for this. Zoo Management Plans can play a role but they alone will not guarantee good zoos.

The only staff in our zoos in South Asia who have continuity of experience and familiarity with routines and animals are the zookeepers. They could be an immense help even in such an antiquated system, and invaluable when a senior officer was transferred if they had more education and technical skills.

There are reasons why the transfer system is difficult to change but there are also reasons why inducting college graduates or higher as zoo-keepers is difficult.

The absence of the tremendous benefit of educated and committed zookeepers is one of the reasons why South Asian zoos are very much lagging behind the global zoo community. No matter how difficult, this must be rectified. Governments are pouring money into zoos hoping to rectify problems that will continue to exist unless these two problems -- arbitrary transfer of zoo officials and uneducated, uncommitted zookeepers -- are addressed and solved. **Sg. Sally Walker EE**