

Executive Summary of SAZARC Conference, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

We have taken an Executive Decision to spread the CBSG/RSG meeting and SAZARC Conference over several issues of ZOOS' PRINT rather than have one issue devoted to the same event. It is also convenient because it is easier! You should check our website frequently as we will be putting more and more photos and highlights up from time to time. Now if you go to www.zooreach.org nice photos illustrating the highlights on page 1 of this issue dominate our Home Page.

The 8th Annual South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation was held at Greenwoods Resort in Ahmedabad, Gujarat from 30 January-3 February 2008 for five days. The conference was organized by ZOO and WILD and hosted by Kamla Nehru Zoological Gardens, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation.

Dr. R. K. Sahu, President (now Immediate Past President), SAZARC made all arrangements and as a result, everything was fun and nice. All participants seemed to have a wonderful time and there was much praise for Dr. Sahu. Dr. Sahu has several distinctions, not the least of which is that he has been President of SAZARC for three years instead of the usual one year. Some of his other distinctions are that he reads palms, makes insufferable jokes, and never says any serious thing if he can help it. Dr. Sahu is serious about his work however, as we saw when we visited his zoo. It is an old zoo but perfectly managed which is no small feat. In this Executive Summary, we would like to thank Dr. Sahu for arranging such nice events, many of them unique in our experience (such as horse dancing and meeting India's most dynamic Chief Minister within two days of one another. Who else could have arranged that!

This year, twenty eight participants including resource persons from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom participated in our conference.

During the two days before the zoo conference, the Forest Department of Gujarat and GEER Foundation hosted a two day meeting which has accompanied SAZARC conference for the last five years, that is the meeting of CBSG, South Asia and RSG, South Asia. Following the conference all the foreign delegates visited Gir Lion Sanctuary-the last home for Asiatic Lions and the famous Sakkarbaug Zoo, also hosted by the Forest Department of Gujarat.

The CBSG RSG meeting theme was Reintroduction/Release of Large Mammals. There were presentations on Reintroduction by Mickey Soorae, Executive Director, IUCN SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group and Mike Jordan, Curator, Chester Zoo and Chair, RSG Europe and Central Asia. Officials of the Forest Department, Shri Pradeep Khanna, PCCF Wildlife, Gujarat and Shri C.N. Pandey, Director, GEER

Foundation also gave very interesting presentations. There were working group discussions for Building a Prey Base for Large Carnivores, the Critically Endangered Gharial and the Human/Animal Conflict with Leopard. The tour of Gir included the beautiful forest where we saw wild lions mating, a lovely safari park, a Maldhari dwelling, the lovely Sakkarbaug Zoo and some monuments of Junagadh, including the famous Asoka Tablet relating to veterinary medicine and animal welfare. More detailed write ups of these events will be included in subsequent issues.

The SAZARC conference theme this year was "Zoo Legislation". This theme follows several years of themes having to do with zoo standards and encouraging zoos themselves to lobby their own governments for regulation of zoos for their betterment. The conference was inaugurated by the Mayor and attended by the Deputy Commissioner, by Mr. Pradeep Khanna PCCF (WL), Forest Department, by the Director, Animal Husbandry department and others. Dr. R.K. Sahu, President, SAZARC welcomed the gathering. After this there was an elegant tea.

After introduction of participants, Ms. Sally Walker introduced the workshop theme explaining the importance of improving zoo standards with zoo legislation and inspections. She called upon country representatives to give a presentation on what kind of legislation or regulation they have at present in their respective country. These presentations set the tone of a discussion of how SAZARC could help all of its zoos to improve their standards and become more consistent with the conservation aspirations and activities of the international zoo community.

On the second day Mr. Brij Kishor Gupta of CZA covered Indian Zoo Legislation and the Central Zoo Authority. Brij gave detailed and engaging presentations on 1. Policy, Legislation, Rules; 2. Implementation of Zoo Legislation; and 3. Problems and issues of Indian Zoo Legislation which held participants spellbound and generated many good questions. Afterwards Indian Zoo Directors from Nandankanan zoo, Sakkarbaug Zoo, Sepahijala Zoo, Chhatbir Zoo and Sri Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens spoke about their experience running their zoos with CZA and Indian Zoo Legislation. There was a good discussion from all participants throughout which set the tone for working groups of the countries the following day.

Third day theme was zoo regulation, how and what kind. The day started with an excellent presentation by Mr. Dave Morgan, Executive Director, PAAZAB on "operational standards in African Association of Zoos and Aquaria". Then working groups were formed with respective country members to discuss on strategic actions relative to operational zoo standards for countries. Then working groups presented their reports.

In the afternoon all participants went to the Gujarat secretariat for a rare honour of meeting the most dynamic Chief Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi. He interacted with the delegates and asked their opinion to improve the government efforts of *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation in his state. The meeting was held for one hour although the initial time given was 15 minutes. After this, Dr. Sahu took the group a tour of the Kamla Nehru Zoo after which we visited another Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation facility, the Water Park right beside the zoo, followed by a gala dinner with dancing.

The fourth day theme was "New Challenges and Conservation effectiveness". The speakers talked about the different conservation issues prevailing in South Asia and other parts of the world. At first, Dr. B.A. Daniel of Zoo Outreach Organisation gave a presentation on "Climate challenges and what zoos can do". At the end he interacted with participants and asked their views how zoos could contribute to mitigate the problems. Some good suggestions were contributed by participants.

Mr. Sanjay Molur, Dy. Director, of ZOO gave a presentation on "Status of Amphibians in South Asia with special reference to emerging diseases". He talked at length the status of amphibians in South Asia and about the amphibian crisis due to diseases.

ZOO staff R. Marimuthu, Education Officer, and B.A. Daniel, Scientist, conducted an amphibian education programme with activities using the ZOO amphibian education kit. These kits were made available to participants in numbers sufficient for them to conduct a programme when they got back to their place. Several participants left with luggage filled with educational material as well as Gujarati shopping.

Dave Morgan of PAAZAB screened a video on amphibians which tells about the current global

"amphibian crisis". Following to this, Sanjay Molur talked about the present Gharial situation in the South Asian countries and what zoos can do.

Mike Jordan, Curator of Chester Zoo, UK and small mammal expert gave two very interesting presentations 1. Species management planning at Chester Zoo and 2. The world of rodents and their display.

On the fifth and the last day, groups were formed to discuss on 1. SAZARC norms; 2. WAZA inspection questionnaire format; 3. Dangers of release of zoo animals in the wild; and 4. Capacity building through SAZARC zoo personnel. The SAZARC Norms group discussed the desirability of having a set of norms and standards under the auspices of SAZARC which can be used in low-key goodwill inspections to generate interest in the public about zoo standards. The WAZA norms group worked on reviewing the WAZA complaint tool assessing its applicability and suggesting minor corrections. Release of animals in the Wild Release Group discussed, listed and suggested reasonable solutions for releasing captive animals into the wild by following Guidelines of the Reintroduction Specialist Group RSG. The SAZARC Capacity Building Group zoo personnel group worked on the mechanism for organizing capacity building by sharing expertise from zoo managers in the regions. After their prolonged discussion, the groups presented their reports.

During the business meeting Mr. Herath, Mudiyansele Bandula Chandralal, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Sports and Public Recreation, Sri Lanka has been unanimously selected as next President of SAZARC. The 9th SAZARC meeting will be hosted by Sri Lanka.

Submitted by R. Marimuthu, Education Officer, ZOO, Coimbatore and Sally Walker, Director, ZOO.

8th Annual SAZARC Participants list

Alahakoon, Jayanthi
Veterinary Surgeon
National Zool. Gardens of Sri Lanka

Aryal, Ravi Sharma
Wildlife CITES Lawyer
Ministry of Law & Justice
Kathmandu, Nepal

Bhowmik, Ajit Kumar
Director, Sepahijala Zoological Park
West Tripura

Chowdhury, Md. M.M.
Curator, Chittagong Zoo
District-Chittagong, Bangladesh

Dissanayake, Herath Banda
Additional Director
Dept. of National Zoological Gardens
Dehiwala, Sri Lanka

Haque, Quazi Fazlul
Curator, Dhaka Zoo, Bangladesh

Herath, H.M.B.C.
Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Sports and
Public Recreation, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Hussain, Marzhar
Member, Environment Capital
Development Authority
Islamabad, Pakistan

Jnawali, Sarita
Curator, NTNC/Central Zoo
Kathmandu, Nepal

Kacha J.B.
Kamla Nehru Zoological Garden
Kankaria, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Malsinghe, Dammika
Assistant Director,
National Zool. Gardens of Sri Lanka

Marata, Bharath
Kamla Nehru Zoological Garden
Kankaria, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Mia, Md. Abdur Razzaque
Retd. Director General
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Pattnaik, Ajit Kumar, IFS
Director, Nandankanan Zoological
Park, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

Qazi, Muhamamd Mansoor
Director, Karachi Zoo and Safari Park
Karachi, Pakistan

Rahman, Zahed Md. Malekur
Veterinary Surgeon
Dulahazara Safari Park, Bangladesh

Rana V. J.
Zoo Officer, Sakkarbaug Zoo
Gujarat

Saha, Arabinda Kumar
Curator, Rangpur Zoo
Rangpur, Bangladesh

Sahu R.K.
Zoo Superintendent
Kamla Nehru Zoological Garden
Kankaria, Ahmedabad, Gujarat

Savtariya N.K.
Kamla Nehru Zoological Garden

Shahriar, Jillur Rahim
Deputy Secretary, Ministry of
Fisheries and Livestock
Bangladesh Secretariat

Sharma, Dharminder
Director, Chhatbir Zoo
Chandigarh

Singh, Vijay Ranjan
Director, Sri Chamarejendra
Zoological Gardens, Mysore,
Karnataka

Sinh, Bharath
Kamla Nehru Zoological Garden

Sinha, Shrawan Kumar
Conservator of Forest
Bhubaneswar, Orissa

Wijesinghe, Chandani Ganga
Veterinary Surgeon
National Zool. Gardens of Sri Lanka

Resource Persons
Jordan, MiKe
Chair, IUCN SSC Reintroduction
Specialist Group Europe & North Asia
Chester Zoo, England, UK

Morgan, David Richard
Director, African Zoo Association,
PAAZAB, Pretoria, South Africa.

Organisers
Sally Walker, Founder, Director
Sanjay Molur, Deputy Director
B.A. Daniel, Entomologist
Manju Siliwal, Research Associate
R. Marimuthu, Education Officer
Latha G. Ravikumar, Finance Officer
B. Ravichandran, Office Executive
S. Kumar, Sr. office Assistant
Zoo Outreach Organisation