

Mohanty, Dr. Robert Lacy, Dr. Gorden Reid, Sh. S. C. Sharma, Sh. S. K. Patnaik, Ms. Sally Walker & Dr. B. R. Sharma on the dais. Working group presentations were given with discussion & recommendations drafted earlier were read out. There was an overwhelming view that reports and recommendations should be circulated to all participants for comment and before 24 hours was up, it was done by email.

A gala farewell dinner hosted by the Indian Zoos Association was held at Orchid Hotel, New Delhi where guests were presented with an attractive souvenir gift and enjoyed an excellent meal and good conversation with their new friends and colleagues.

Following the conference, many participants with special interests visited the zoo and natural habitat of their species of interest. Dr. Robert Lacy, Chair, CBSG wrote a very nice report which is included here. Hopefully we will get some trip reports for further publication in ZOOS' PRINT in course of time.

From this reporter's perspective, much was achieved. I represent South Asia on the Committee for Inter-Regional Cooperation in Conservation and one of my tasks has been to find an International Studbook Keeper for three Studbooks of endemic threatened species that have been lying idle for some time, e.g. Lion-tailed macaque, Asiatic Lion and Sloth Bear. In fact, these Studbooks were officially retired at the end of the year. I had felt that the appropriate place to get this done was India, home of the target species, and had been waiting for an appropriate time or event. This conference provided both plus people, who could

be encouraged to attend for the sake of the species. In the end the meeting as a whole recommended that these Studbooks be resuscitated with experienced Studbook Keepers who volunteered to apply and also to mentor or train an India designated by CZA in Studbook theory and practice so that after some time Indian can be Studbook Keepers at least for their endemic, threatened species. This concept has been a dream for some years and the conference made it possible to make a realistic beginning. The idea was suggested also by no less than WAZA President, Gorden Reid in the Inaugural address as well as during his Keynote presentation.

For the time being, Dr. Scott Carter, Conservation, Detroit Zoo, Dr. Neil Dorman, Curator, Twycross Zoo and Drs. Jose Kok, Director, Alertis, based at Owehands Zoo and Lydia Kolter of Koln Zoo will apply for the position of LTM, Lion and Sloth Bear respectively. These requests have been sent to CIRCC by the Regional Representative and will hopefully be approved by mid-April when the next meeting of CIRCC will take place. Watch this space for further news of the output of this conference.

Another achievement which can be mentioned now is that the Central Zoo Authority has decided to sponsor most of the Large, Medium and Small Zoos to become Members of ISIS, obtain ARKS, SPARKS and MedARKS immediately and ZIMS whenever both the new programme and the zoos are ready.

All in all, it was a most worthwhile event. Congratulations to Central Zoo Authority and the Ministry of Environment for its creative and timely action and new perspective.

International Conference on India's Conservation Breeding Initiative, New Delhi, Dr. Robert Lacy*

At the 2007 Annual Meeting of CBSG in Budapest, Dr. Brij Sharma, Member Secretary of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) of India described an ambitious and praise-worthy plan for India's zoos to establish conservation breeding programs for many threatened Indian species. Some 61 candidate species were identified for the program, with the recognition that the initiative might start with fewer or somewhat different species, and more species might be tackled as the zoos gained experience with the first set. For each species: a studbook would be maintained; a zoo near the wild habitat of the species would be identified as the Coordinating Zoo; a conservation plan would be drafted in conjunction with managers responsible for the wild populations; other zoos willing to participate in cooperative breeding would be identified as Participating Zoos; the CZA would provide funds to assist with ISIS membership, training, and development of needed facilities; and CZA would request that CBSG and WAZA consider making the breeding program into a recognized Global Species Management Program. To start this initiative, the CZA convened an international conference to which were invited the directors of all of the major zoos of India, some colleagues from the Wildlife Institute

of India and a few universities in India, a handful of "resource persons" from overseas to provide global perspectives and information on programs in other regions, and zoo professionals from zoos around the world who are involved in breeding species from India. The conference was held at the National Agricultural Science Center in New Delhi – a very nice facility with excellent meeting rooms and audio-visual equipment. The meeting was sponsored by the Central Zoo Authority, which paid all costs for the resource persons and the within-India costs for other overseas participants. It was co-hosted by the Wildlife Institute of India, and the National Zoological Park (in New Delhi).

The conference was attended by about 50 zoo directors and other senior officials from Indian zoos and by foreign participants from France, UK, Sweden, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany, Netherlands, Hungary, Russia, Finland, Estonia, Kazakhstan, USA, Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, UAE, and probably some other countries that I am forgetting. Organizations represented at the conference included ISIS, WAZA, CBSG, EAZA, JAZA, AZA, Thai Zoo Organisation, World Pheasant Association, Peregrine Fund,

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, International Rhino Foundation, Turtle Survival Alliance, and many individual zoos. It was a great opportunity for sharing of ideas among colleagues from around the world!

I travelled to New Delhi straight from the SSC Chairs meeting in Abu Dhabi, which saved me a lot of travel time (the flight from Abu Dhabi to Delhi is only about 3 hours), saved the CZA some travel costs, and gave me two days to relax and see the wonderful wildlife (Asian jungle cats, mongoose, sarus and common cranes, kingfishers, storks, spoonbills, ibis, nilgai, sambar, jackals, scops owls, and much more!) at Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur (4 hours south of Delhi) before the conference began.

The first two days of the conference consisted of presentations made by the resource persons to the Indian zoo directors, with follow-up discussions. In day 1, the morning was focused on opening talks about wildlife conservation in India, zoo legislation and CZA policies, and presentations on biotechnological research at the Laboratory for Conservation of Endangered Species (a university-based lab that provides zoos with DNA and reproductive technology research and services) and on veterinary services at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute. In the afternoon David Shepherdson and Valerie Hare made presentations and led discussion on environmental enrichment. During that day, the foreign visitors not involved in the above talks (including me) were taken to Agra where we visited the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is spectacular and well worth even the long drive to get there and back. (We got back to the hotel in Delhi for dinner at about 11 PM.)

Day two had a session on record-keeping (studbooks, ISIS, and ZIMS – led by Nate Flesness) in the morning and a session on population management (led by Jon Ballou and Bob Lacy) in the afternoon. In the evening, there was a very nice ice breaker and dinner, hosted by the Honourable Minister for Environment and Forests and the Chairman of CZA. It was notable that several parts of the overall conference were attended by high officials, such as the Minister – evidence of the importance that the Indian government places on the conservation breeding initiative of the zoos.

Day 3 began the full conference including all the overseas delegates. After opening sessions, Brij Sharma, Gordon McGregor Reid, and Jon Ballou gave presentations in a Technical Session on conservation breeding. For the last half of the afternoon, participants moved into working groups divided into taxonomic groups to begin discussions of each species proposed for inclusion in the conservation breeding initiative. The working groups reviewed what Indian and foreign zoos were working with the species, the status of the species in the wild, the reasons for (or against) including that species in a cooperative breeding program at this time, and the needs of Indian and overseas zoos related to the species. Recommendations were drafted. Perhaps the most valuable part of these sessions was the opportunity for colleagues from around the world to discuss needs and opportunities to assist each other in the conservation of the species.

The day ended with another very nice dinner, hosted by the Indian Zoo Directors Association, and including wild

dancing by Gordon McGregor Reid with the local dance troop and fire eating by Sally Walker!

Day 4 started with another Technical Session, with talks by S.K. Patnaik, retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Orissa, on breeding programs in India, and me on a global overview of conservation breeding programs. The participants then moved back into the working groups for discussions on more of the species. At the end of the afternoon, each working group presented its work, and the main recommendations of the overall conference were presented to all. I then had to dash off to the airport for the long flights home, while the conference concluded with what was undoubtedly another wonderful dinner.

The Powerpoint presentations for my talks are available for downloading at www.vortex9.org/ConBreedChallenges.ppt and www.vortex9.org/ConBreedGlobalOverview.ppt.

My overall impression was that the conference was an important, transformational event for the Indian zoos and all of the participants. Everyone met a lot of new colleagues, formed many partnerships and started collaborations, shared ideas and concerns, and made promises to share data, protocols, and a few animals when needed for coordinated conservation breeding programs.

The conference has the promise of initiating major changes for India's zoos, with collaborations both within India and globally on behalf of species conservation. However, the transformation won't become real until the actions that were identified in the recommendations and the individual promises made by many are carried out. Such changes won't all occur immediately, but they need to start right away if the rich biodiversity of India (and elsewhere) is to be safeguarded.

***Chairman, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, USA**

Special Announcement - PETA Award to Zoo Man

PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, an organisation known to be not very friendly to zoos and zoo associated persons, has awarded their Most Friendly Scientist Proggy Award which is given every year for exceptional, animal-friendly, achievements in 21st century culture and commerce to **Dr. Brij Kishor Gupta**, long term employee of the Central Zoo Authority. In the award they said: "You are noted for your inputs as a member of CZA to improve the conditions of animals who are kept captive throughout the country. Your innovative and progressive contribution sets the gold standard for others to emulate and we commend you for your foresight, initiative, creativity, and kindness. Congratulations! Thank you for your ability to enhance compassion and ethics in the marketplace.
Anuradha Sawney, Chief Functionary, PETA