

Tributes to Sri Pushp Kumar, I.F.S. (Retd), Zoo Man Extraordinaire

■ It was indeed a great shock to learn about the sad demise of Mr Pushp Kumar, a great wildlifer and zoo man the country has lost. I met him a month back in Delhi. He was fine. Will you Pl convey (Dr Sharma/Joseph) my condolences to his berieved family. May his soul rest in peace in his heavenly abode. *S.K.Patnaik, I.F.S., Retd. Director, Nandankanan Zoo*

■ Pushp Kumar is considered one of the guru's of the Indian Zoo world - a sort of Bill Conway of India ! I recall inviting him to the WAZA (then IUDZG) conference in Singapore in 1991 where he gave a key note address along with Mike Robinson - on bioparks. I remember referring to Pusph's work in Andra Pradesh as "groundbreaking" and setting the mould for a quantum leap that Indian zoos took in the 1980's in the development of the biological park concept. His memory will live on in these parks. *Bernard Harrison, Principal Partner, Bernard Harrison & Friends*

■ We are indeed very sad to hear about the sad demise of this great man. It is indeed a great loss to the zoo community. We pray his soul rest in peace. *Geeta Seshamani and Kartick Satyanarayan, Wildlife SOS*

■ It is indeed a sad day for the Indian as well the global zoo community that we have lost a great scientist and a zoo personnel. I have met him numerous times in Malaysia and in Singapore. On behalf of the Malaysian Zoo Community we express our deepest condolences to his demises. I am very sure and confident that may of the zoo publications will carry the message sited in this e mail. With my deep condolences. *Dr. S.Vellayan, Assistant Director, Zoo Negara Malaysia*

■ I am also saddened by Mr. Pushp Kumar's passing, but celebrate his many contributions to the improvement of zoos in India and throughout the world and his steadfast defense of wildlife and wild places. I was fortunate to meet with Mr. Kumar in Coimbatore, India and later in Philadelphia, US, some years ago. I found him to be a highly principled man strongly dedicated to high standards of animal care and conservation. He was a very positive influence to us all. *Jon Coe, Jon Coe Design, Pty Ltd, Healesville VIC 3777*

■ Sri Pushp Kumar had a very good run in his professional life due to his incredible and often annoying tenacity! In relating his history in the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department and the AP zoos he told me that he simply refused to quit being a zoo man. He could have had more promotions sooner but he would not leave the zoos. He managed to stay with zoos longer than any other forest officer and the Andhra Pradesh zoos in their excellence bear testimony both to his talent and to this tenacity. Zoo management requires continuity and that was achieved by Pushp Kumar as he kept the zoos with him as he rose in the forest department hierarchy. There are many "open zoo" concepts in the world but the aspects that made Pushpkumar's vision unique are the taking of degraded land and letting natural vegetation come up as naturally as

possible, focus on indigenous species of that very area, and creating large, spacious naturally vegetated enclosures for the animals. This is the "biological park, created by the Indian Forest Service, led by Pushp Kumar which was best acknowledged by Bernard Harrison in his Master's Thesis on zoo design. Perhaps I am right that Pushp Kumar was the first to create the illusion of a safari park within a zoo, with cleverly designed roadways through a forested landscape such that visitors had a good chance of seeing animals from a vehicle. Probably many things done by Pushp Kumar were firsts, if not in the world, then in India at least.

Mr. Pushp Kumar and I were designing a zoo together at one time and we quarreled over whether zookeepers should be educated, and never quite got our friendship back in order even through agonising inspections of zoos, tormented CZA meetings and even conferences and workshops, we were always sniping at one another. I will always remember Pushp Kumar for his wonderful dry wit and "bull's eye" sarcasm. He loved only one thing truly and that is wildlife, animals and plants. He served wildlife his whole career and never moved from what he thought was in their best interests. *Sally Walker, Founder/Hon. Director, Zoo Outreach Organisation*

■ I am forwarding this for the Sad Demise of Shri Pushp Kumar, It was great shock to Indian and World Zoo Community that we have lost him, He was a great person, Shri Pushp Kumar has changed the concept of Zoo designing, We all the Indian Zoo Directors learned many new things from him in the field of Zoo Management and Zoo/Enclosures designing, He was the person who served the zoos for longest period with Andhra Pradesh Forest department, still people had been calling him for their Zoos and Enclosures designing, I will also request CZA to present him a Posthumous award as he deserve it, and further CZA can also start giving a award to the best zoo with the name of Shri Pushp Kumar, *R.K.Sahu, Director, Kamla Nehru Zoo, Ahmedabad; President, South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation.*

■ This is really a sad moment of my life having, after having heard about the sad demise of Shri. Pushpa Kumar I.F.S (Retd). The Zoo fraternity has lost the leading light. My initial interaction with him was when I was posted at Chennai, as Regional Deputy Director, Wildlife Preservation, South Zone. We were a part of task force (I was the member secretary, with Dr. J.C Daniels as president), which was assigned with a duty for looking into the matters related to delimitation of boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries of South India. I was awed with his wealth of knowledge in the matters related with wildlife and land. My interactions with him always helped me in gaining lots of professional knowledge. I salute him for his wealth of knowledge in the field of Zoo management and on the issues like Zoo architecture and designing of Zooenclosures. MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PEACE. *R. Hemanth Kumar, Director, Kanpur Zoo*

■ I am sad about learning Mr Pushp Kumar's death. I pray to the Almighty for his peace in the heaven. We lost somebody indeed who cared so much about the country's ecology and wildlife. Kindly convey my condolence to the bereaved family. Thanks. Regards. *Surojit Mahalanobis, The Times of India, New Delhi*

■ Sri. Pushp Kumar, whose sad demise took place on 3/12/2005 is a saintly figure. He was very simple man and held the post of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Andhra Pradesh, most efficiently, even though he did not hold any important territorial postings before he became Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. His stint was considered as one of the best in the annals of forest administration of Andhra Pradesh. He was a devoted wildlifer throughout his life. His services were outstanding in the establishment and management of Zoos in the entire country. He is considered as the father of modern zoos in the country. Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad is particularly the biggest loser in the demise of Sri. Puskumar, who has played an important role in establishing and nurturing this particular Zoo. His demise is a big loss to Indian wildlife in general and to the Indian Zoos in particular. Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad is permanently indebted to Sri. Pushpkumar and at Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, we pray to the almighty so that his soul may rest in peace. *V. Kishan, Director, Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad*

■ Sri. Pushp Kumar is a very simple person of Fore thought, a good learner, though from Mathematics back ground, learned a lot about wildlife. He was a good administrator. Designed many Zoo's in India. Finally a man to be remembered by the Zoo World of India. *K. Shaker Reddy, Asst. Conservator of Forests, Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad.*

■ Sri Pushp Kumar was known to us by reputation for many years before we had occasion to call him as a consultant during the early steps of planning the Coimbatore Zoological Park. Sri Pushp Kumar was kind to pay us several visits and spend hours with us advising us on zoo planning and management. He was knowledgeable about all matters wildlife and forest in addition to zoo, including administration, species, man and animal management, plantation, conservation ... name it and he knew about it if it was wildlife.

The zoo community has lost a valient solider who fought the war for wildlife almost all his life. Pushp Kumar was merciless in trying to recover forest land for wildlife and insure that it did not fall into the hands of developers. He was very proud to relate the various ruses used to corner such land. It was Pushp Kumar who salvaged the largest area for a tiger reserve in all India. It was him to founded many deer parks throughout Andhra Pradesh which served a triple purpose of giving space to surplus ungulates mistakenly overbred in zoos, of providing sylvan settings for public visitation and saving degraded land from developers. We hope that he influenced his many students and admirers sufficiently for them to carry on his principles. *G. Rangaswamy, R. Nandini and the Coimbatore Zoo Committee of Management*

Tribute to Pushp Kumar in his Lifetime from the book Zoo and Aquarium History*

(Bernard) Harrison distinguished between a menagerie and a zoological garden as "the original intention of the display. A menagerie displays its animals simply for public viewing, the enclosures being more for the convenience of the spectators than for the welfare of the animals. A zoological garden is more scientific in its approach to the display of animals, considering their physical and psychological comfort amongst other aspects."

Harrison credits the Indian Forest Service with the creation of the "biological park", and the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department was the leading state for this. In India some of the state forest departments are more "zoo and wildlife wise" than others. The Forest Department of Andhra Pradesh is one that attempts to retain officers who are trained or experienced in wildlife and zoos, rather than transferring them often (as is the common practice). As a result of this policy, Andhra Pradesh has three outstanding biological parks, each unique and exceptional in its own way. **Sri Pushp Kumar of the Indian Forest Service served the zoos for many years and can be credited with much of the success of the state's zoos.**

Nehru Zoological Park, opened in 1959 at Hyderabad, was the first and is the most traditional. However, it contains another innovation which has become a standard in large Indian zoos, the safari park. Safari parks are areas of perhaps 5-50 acres in which animals roam free and visitors see them from a vehicle. Usually the park is just forest with a path for vehicles curving around different areas of vegetation and points of topographical interest. Today Nehru Zoo has several dramatic safari parks for lions, tigers, bears, and even gaur. Other zoos have emulated this feature with varying degrees of success.

Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, opened in 1970 at Vishakapatnam, is one of the most dramatically placed zoos, being right on the coast of the Indian Ocean. Dominated by attractively undulating landscape, this zoo boasts an aviary constructed in a huge gully such that it is below ground level. The landscape of the zoo, therefore, is not spoiled with an awkward chain mesh aviary construction, and the design is such that, once inside, neither the visitors nor the birds are aware of being below ground level. Sri Venkateshwara Zoo in Tirupati is a sprawling 3,000 acre area with a religious theme to match the famous Tirupati temple, which thousands of persons visit daily. The animal consorts of the Hindu Gods are displayed beside enormous enclosures surrounded by the lovely hills of Tirupati.

In addition to these zoos, Andhra Pradesh can also boast an outstanding deer park, which the Central Zoo Authority (of India) has classified as a zoo. Most of the 100 plus deer parks in India are sorry affairs where some land was available from the forest department, municipality or industry, and a few common deer procured to fill it, or a few unwanted deer pushed off there. Sri Mahavir Harina Vanasthali Deer Park, opened in 1975, was founded in order to claim several hundred acres of degraded land a few kilometers from Hyderabad City which might otherwise have been developed into a shopping complex or factory site. Pathways for a viewing bus were carefully marked out and water holes, salt licks and feeding areas judiciously placed. A beautiful interpretation center made completely with waste timber stands just inside the entrance and a special "hide," or viewing tower, made of rough wood overlooks a salt lick where animals gather. This deer park has improved with time, instead of falling into a state of shabbiness, as have most of the other one hundred odd deer parks in India, and is a model facility.

* Walker, S. (2000). *Zoological Gardens of India*. Pp. 251-294. In: Kislign, Jr. V.N. (Editor). *Zoo and Aquarium History: Ancient Animal Collections to Zoological Gardens*. CRC Press LLC, Boca Raton, 415 pp.