

provide it for all animals where needed.

4 Work with these advisors to provide bear park keepers with comprehensive animal husbandry training.

5 Stop breeding, so allowing for a natural reduction in the numbers of bears with time.

6 Stop public feeding and provide balanced nutritious diets (advice available).

7 Stop circus shows and implement an education and interpretation program which supports conservation of bears in the wild.

Action Note: Move to keeping bears in open, forested enclosures.

While recognising that the smaller bear parks do not have the attendance and net income that they might once have had, all the evidence is that the two larger parks visited (the JAZA members Aso and Noboribetsu) are generating sizeable net profits. Both of the authors have considerable experience of operating large zoos over long periods of time. Our estimate, given the entrance prices, sale of food to throw to the bears, retail operations and food service operations are that they generate a net profit of at least \$3.5 USD/million a year at Noboribetsu and at least \$2.5 USD/million in the case of Aso. Overall running costs are relatively low. Animal management, including staff and other feeding costs are almost certainly covered by the sale of food bought and thrown to bears by the public. The high entry cost (\$25 for Noboribetsu and \$20 for Aso) combined with supplementary income from retail and catering operations produces a very healthy gross annual income. We believe that it should be possible for both these parks to invest at least \$1 million a year each from these profits in

new, large, mainly forested enclosures. Such an annual commitment would finance a \$10 million capital program of building suitable enclosures for each of these two parks. These would either be off-show to the public or designed in such a way that they could become an attractive new form of 'bear park'. A wealth of advice is available to help with such a move, both in terms of design, materials, visitor handling and facilities, animal management, keeper training, interpretation and other needs. The existing bear parks would then either be used for different purposes or the current spaces occupied by concrete pits turned into a limited number of large, high quality modern bear exhibits designed to show these animals to the very highest standards and with a strong education and conservation message. We believe that it should be possible within one year from the date of this report for each of these parks to come up with a comprehensive plan of action which would cover a five year period of change. We project that this would not only resolve the severe welfare issues with these animals, but would also produce exhibits far more attractive and appropriate to future visitors and Japan's international image.

These parks have made a great deal of money from the bears that they hold. It is high time that some of that money was re-invested in the proper care and welfare of these animals.

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Rescue and Rehabilitation Facilities for Bears in India

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The history of the dancing bear is an old and savage one. The exploitation of bears has long since existed in countries where there is a wild bear population. The tradition spread throughout the world, remaining fashionable into the Middle Ages, where traveling performers displayed dancing bears, and bears performed at market-places throughout the renaissance.

In India, dancing bears can be traced back to the 16th century. The problem continues despite the capture and trade of bears being made illegal. In 1997, by World Society for Protection of Animals (WSPA), an investigation was launched. The audiences questioned displayed a mixture of ignorance, socio-economic concerns and a reluctance to abandon an ancient custom. 90% of rural audiences didn't think it was cruel, presuming the bear got pleasure from being petted and fed. This figure went down to 73% amongst the more educated urban crowds. 40% of tourists considered it cruel and 5% strongly objected but most people agreed that in a monetarily poor country like India, a man could not be faulted for trying to earn a living in any way he knows how.

The Indian bear wasn't always used purely for entertainment; it was seen as a protector, with the magical ability to ward off illness and bad spirits and was touched and

ridden because of its supposed supernatural powers. Rural parts of India still hold this belief. Ironically, because the bear is seen as such a magnificent and admired animal, it has the potential to earn much more money, resulting in more bears being trained. But in urban areas, especially with the arrival of tourists wishing to savour the 'colour' of Indian life, the main focus is on entertainment. It's not certain how bears are affected by dancing, but the life they lead in order to do so far outweigh any justification. During their first year, bears will undergo at least two nose piercing and will have their canine teeth barbarically removed. For the rest of their life, they will be tethered to a short rope, and made to spend long days in heat, dust and noise, waiting for an audience to gather, their health aggravated by pollution and car fumes. Their diets are inadequate; they eat irregularly and are often visibly stressed and hungry. The hunting and poaching of wild bear cubs of Sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*), Himalayan black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) and Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*) are causing a decline in the wild, and there are also reports of destruction of the eco-system

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and its habitat. In India there are only three organized rescue centres especially for housing the bears: The Centre for Conservation and Rehabilitation of Bears (also known as Agra Bear Rescue Facility, Agra) for Sloth bears, Bannerghatta National Park, Bangalore for Sloth bears and the Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation, Pakke, for Himalayan black bears.

1. Centre for Conservation and Rehabilitation of Bears, Agra

The Centre for Conservation and Rehabilitation of Bears has been set up by Wildlife S.O.S®, New Delhi with all efforts by Geeta Seshamani and Kartick Satyanarayan with the help of Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, the Central Zoo Authority and Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India on 15 acres area inside Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Keetham, Agra, in Uttar Pradesh in India (180 km from Delhi on National Highway 2), which started functioning in December, 2002. The facility aimed to rehabilitate the Sloth bears (*Melursus ursinus*) primarily on the streets on way to Agra-Fatehpur Sikri Road and other parts of the country. Till today, the centre has rescued from 'kalandars' (a type of tribe) and others, and rehabilitated more than 80 bears. The 'kalandars' are being endowed with a generous rehabilitation package by Wildlife S.O.S. Upon arrival at the facility, the bears are provided with medical surveillance and treatment for infectious diseases, parasites and occasional injuries at the well-equipped veterinary hospital with a laboratory. On arrival all animals are quarantined and subsequently housed in socialization units.

At the rescue centre, Sloth bears have been rehabilitated in large, open naturalistic enclosures, provided enrichment outfits to encourage/ perform behaviours and activity as they would in the wild. While working as Rescue Facility Manager at the facility, I studied the behaviour of animals and provided elevated wooden platforms and other enrichment artefacts for climbing, a dimension to their environment and enable them to escape from potentially aggressive interactions and stimulate natural behaviours among them. Many of the bears appeared to enjoy getting off the ground, resting over and viewing their area. The studies were also made on designing of environmental enrichment models for the ultimate welfare of the animals.

The bear enclosure included a water pool and many trees and wooden logs which helped the animals to feel more secure and helped to cut down on stress and aggression and heat during the summers. At the centre, the bears have been provided natural substrates to enjoy digging and removing barks from tree trunks. Bears are also given straw/hay to sleep on and form the bedding/nesting material, which they modified, interestingly, in their own individual pattern. Trees and good planting in the enclosure also helped to break up lines of sight for the bears, this made the animals feel more secure and helped to cut down on stress and aggression. At the centre the bears have been provided with varied diet. A natural diet (fruit) and scattering the feed all over the enclosure had a positive effect on activity in that all three groups of Sloth bears and resulted in more active behaviour. It is anticipated that these animals spend the rest of their life in this rescue/

rehabilitation centre cum life time care facility as if they were in the wild and with full freedom, performing their natural behaviours, and free of the torture and trauma of dancing on tar roads.

2. Rescue Centre, Bannerghatta Biological Park, Bangalore

The rescue centre at Bannerghatta, located at a distance of 28 km from Bangalore City, is situated on 30 hectares of land adjacent to Bannerghatta Biological Park.

The centre is maintaining 25 Sloth bears rescued from street performers and various sources in the region. It is located adjoining to the rescue centre for hybrid lions and tigers rescued from various circuses after the ban on the performance and exhibition of these animals in Indian circuses.

3. Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation at Pakke Tiger Reserve in Seijosa

The Wildlife Trust of India with the help of the Department of Forests and Environment, Arunachal Pradesh, has established a Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation (CBRC) at Seijosa, Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh. The Centre's main objectives are:

1. to mitigate man-animal conflicts in rural and urban areas and to control such bear rescue emergencies.

2. to provide food, shelter, veterinary care and rehabilitation measures to the Himalayan black bears (*Ursus thibetanus*) rescued from the local areas.

The CBRC, established in the year 2002, is situated in the Seijosa Range of Pakke Tiger Reserve in East Kameng District at a distance of 120 km from Kaziranga. The centre is spread over an area of approximate one acre. At the time of my visit on 13.12.2004 to the CBRC, the centre displayed 6 (1:5) Himalayan black bears of two of which will be rehabilitated back to the wild. The report on the rehabilitated bears is awaited.

