

S. Asian Network of International Zoo Educator Association and S. Asian Zoo Education

SAN-IZE (pronounced “san – easy”) is an acronym for the South Asian Network of International Zoo Educators. It covers seven countries, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. It is hosted by Zoo Outreach Organisation and Wildlife Information Liaison Development and currently supported by Columbus Zoological Garden, USA. ZOO, WILD and their own networks and partners can partner with the South Asian Zoo Association and SAN-IZE. We are members of WAZA and are guided by WAZA principles. WAZCS enjoins all zoos and aquariums to support the protection of wildlife in the wild in any meaningful way possible for them regardless of their size or budget. ***For some zoos, the most immediate and meaningful way to support protection of wildlife and its habitat is through education.*** WZACS also makes a strong argument for zoos partnering with other organizations to enhance our effectiveness in protecting wildlife and habitat.

Z.O.O. and W.I.L.D. host several important IUCN groups, taxonomically-themed international NGO's, focused on the more neglected, highly speciose taxon groups, such as Invertebrates, Amphibians, Reptiles, Bats, Rodents and Insectivores, and Primates. We use CBSG workshops to gather and assess information which we use for education.

ZOO develops much educational material for all target groups, making use of scientific facts about species and their habitats from workshops we conduct involving indigenous scientists. Due to postage and customs costs, we supply the bulk of these materials to Indian educators, but take every opportunity to load visitors from the zoos in India with materials to take back. We also send samples of everything to all in the region and give permission for them to use it as they require, in translation, modified more to their country, culture etc. The following report is a bit about each country in our region:

Afghanistan – Kabul Zoo had a very difficult winter but still conducted education programmes. Education Officer, Mohammed Fazil will visit India in September and October and spend two weeks in ZOO office developing educational material with staff assistance. Three Southern Indian zoos which have good education programmes have invited him for a day or two of intensive work with them.

Bangladesh

There are about nine zoos in Bangladesh of which two have some systematic education programme or facilities. The Dulahazara Safari Park has a museum, interpretation center and nicely painted bus to take visitors around, as well as some handout literature.

The Dhaka Zoo serves as a training center for all the zoos, very kindly inviting all of them to any useful training programme conducted at the zoo. For the past 3-4 years, ZOO has been conducting informal programmes there for several zoos. In the two years, more formal programmes were conducted. In March 2005, Wildlife Conservation Society and ZOO conducted educator training using

Teachers for Tigers techniques at the zoo for zoo personnel and some teachers as well as Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh. For World Environment Day, WTB helped the zoo conduct an elaborate programme for Hoolock Gibbon using Teachers for Tigers techniques adapted for Critically Endangered Hoolock Gibbons. In a few months, Bangladesh Zoo personnel will be invited to Assam to participate in one or two of the six educator training programmes to be organized there by ZOO and local NGOs, Centre for Environmental Education, Wildlife Areas Development and Welfare Trust, Primate Research Centre, and the Hoolock Gibbon Conservation Centre on the theme of Hoolock Gibbon.

Sri Lanka – All Zoological institutions in Sri Lanka come under the Department of National Zoological Gardens – Sri Lanka (DNZG). Last year the Government of Sri Lanka created a Ministry of Zoological and Botanical Gardens. Under this Ministry there are better opportunities for progressive ideas and actions. In the same year the zoo was awarded posts for 30 science graduates and post Graduates from the University, of which 12 are being utilized as educators. This is a singular event in the world of which the entire South Asia is proud!

Some of their activities of last year follow. The NZG Sri Lanka categorizes children by school grade, from below 9 years up through university groups. For the school children they prepared power point presentations on various topics, such as Zoo animals, The Zoo, *Ex-situ* Conservation, Bio gas Digester, Biodiversity, Adaptive Radiation, Trees, Snakes of Sri Lanka, Birds of Sri Lanka and Birds, are some topics. They take prior requests and an education assistant conducts an appropriate programme. In addition many school children who select the Zoo for their Advance Level Projects. Also, they teach about conservation and tell children about their successful breeding programmes. Recently a zoo education consultant for NZG attended a one-week intensive training at ZOO office and was offered a variety to educational packets and other materials.

Nepal

Central Zoo is the only real zoo in Nepal, administered by the prestigious King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation and, as such an excellent platform for conservation education. The zoo has an audience of over a million visitors a year, mostly from rural areas. They run 2 kinds of conservation education programmes, those for members of the highly successful (17,000 members) Friends of the Zoo FOZ and walk-in visitor programmes. The zoo has networked over 150 school of Kathmandu valleys, establishing Eco clubs in 40 of these schools. FOZ programmes include elaborate functions and even trips to wild areas. Visitor programmes include guides for school groups booking in advance, hand-outs, interpretation center, etc. The zoo also conducts teacher training programmes frequently.

Conservation education – Major programmes are Friends of the Zoo:

- Animal Feeding – maximum participation 800-900
- Night Guided Tour – maximum participation 800-900
- World Environment Day- Environmental parade on June 5th 3500–4000 students participate in the rally.

- On the spot Competitions

- Wildlife Essay
- Wildlife Drawing
- Wildlife Quiz

- Trainings

- Solid Waste management
- Bee Keeping
- Bird Identification
- Fish and Aquarium

- Friends of the Zoo Club (FOZC) in 40 FOZ member networking schools. Clubs established in 40 schools of the valley to run the different environmental awareness programme in the respective schools.

Research

- Effectiveness of vermicomposting in Management of Organic waste at Central Zoo, Jawalakhel and its relevancy to Hattisar management in Nepal. Meghnath Dhimal student of Masters of Science in Environment Science.
- Parasitological status of the Zoo animals. Prakash Paudyal (veterinary student).

Pakistan

Pakistan has about 26 wild animal facilities of which two have education programmes, Karachi zoo and Lahore zoo. Karachi Zoo conducts special visitor programmes with the schools on special days appropriate to celebrating wildlife. They have a well-furnished museum and facilities for group functions in their Mogul Garden.

In Lahore Zoo, education is divided into informal and formal education. For informal education there are keeper talks, close encounters, hands-on experience, exhibits with visitor access, exhibits with clear biological theme, signage, animal enrichment, feeding time talks, animal encounters, naming ceremonies, birthday parties, zoo patrol, zoo volunteers training and guided tours.

Formal education helps zoo to develop strong relations among educational institutions and zoo management. About 25,000 schools, college and universities visited Lahore zoo annually for different activities and from different departments. Arrangement of different educational activities like World Environment Day, Wildlife Day and Zoo outreach programme are also part of zoo formal education. As education is a critical part of building support and understanding of *in-situ* conservation project among local communities the zoo has been focusing on the need for protection of the indigenous and endangered Indus Dolphin for many years and includes a rescue project.

Lahore zoo has adapted some of the Zoo Outreach Organisation materials produced for distribution to individuals as posters which can be reused and utilized in lectures and demonstrations for students.

Lahore zoo also conducts evaluation for knowing the impact of their education and training programmes with comparative assessments, surveys and questionnaires, observation of visitor's behavior, donation records, response to pledges and petitions as well as record of media coverage and teacher feedback on formal programme.

India

India has 159 zoos all of which come under the auspices of the Central Zoo Authority. Over half a dozen zoos now have education cells and close to a dozen posts for education officer. In India the Central Zoo Authority has formed a Steering Committee to prepare a protocol for zoo education, with Master Plan guidelines, Visitor survey protocol and other helpful material. The renowned Centre for Environmental Education, the nodal government specialist on environmental education is the focal point and coordinator for this important activity.

Zoo Outreach Organisation / SAN-IZE assisted over 200 zoos and other organisations and individuals to conduct education in zoos and other public venues with our packets, posters, report summaries, drama kits, t-shirts, etc. In the year June 2005 – 2006 ZOO distributed 40,065 packets, 17,600 posters, 3200 booklets on diverse topics such as WZACS, primates, animal welfare, plants for life, herptiles, bats, rodents, hoolocks, bears, etc. Zoo Outreach organized 11 teacher training workshops, 3 refresher courses in 2 countries, and 1 advanced training, educating 243 participants in how to teach wildlife conservation better.

Compiled by Sally Walker with information from education officers from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

