

SEAZA and SAZARC : Sister Asian zoo associations meet one another for 2nd time on the Anniversary of SEAZA

The South East Asian Zoo Association covers most of the South East and East Asian countries. It was founded 15 years ago by General D. Ashari and some zoo personnel and well-wishers. This year SEAZA celebrates its 15th Anniversary.

In keeping with a relatively new tradition, SAZARC, SEAZA's South Asian counterpart sent a few representatives from as many South Asian countries as possible to the 15th Annual SEAZA conference, which was held this year in Saigon, Vietnam. The first time SAZARC visited SEAZA was on the occasion of its 10th Annual Conference. SAZARC members were just two years old at that time and learned quite a lot by attending the conference, with its theme of animal welfare and ethics and by meeting with the SEAZA Council for advice. This year, due to the very crowded schedule, SAZARC did not meet with Council formally but met all members and held discussions, both professional and personal. SAZARC participated as one entity in the infamous final dinner skit, which was apparently a great hit.

In the 6th Annual Meeting of SAZARC, it was decided by the group to forgo the regular meeting of SAZARC in 2006 for attending the SEAZA meeting. Unfortunately this meant that only a few representatives could attend instead of several as usual. Those few represented SAZARC very well to hear them tell it (and we will, as they have written accounts of their experience at the meeting).

There were many important and edifying presentations at this conference and when the Proceedings come out, we will make this available to our readers working in zoos.

SAZARC made its own contributions to the meeting. Sally presented her standard Substandard Zoos talk and introduced a South East Asia version what is becoming a very useful set of workshops on the topic of improving standards of zoos of the world.



ZOO and SAZARC represented the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group at SEAZA and also brought representatives from the Reintroduction SG, that is Mike Jordan, Chair of RSG Europe, and Sally Walker, Co-Chair of RSG, South Asia. Mike conducted a brainstorming session / workshop on Rehabilitation Guidelines for RSG, which he has been tasked with coordinating for SSC IUCN. Sanjay Molur, also Co-Chair, attended another meeting in Cambodia at the same time.

As Mike stated in a description of the session to be held the following day, "South-East Asia" is perhaps the most active of all regions in rehabilitation of wild animals. Many countries and regions have been conducting rehab of confiscated and otherwise captive wild animals for sometime but not according to any particular system or plan with mixed results. It is not possible to simply ban rehabilitations but it is hoped that the Rehab Guidelines currently being researched will improve the prospects of animals which are rehabilitated. And we would like to thank the sponsors of this abbreviated SAZARC meeting. Our original plan was to conduct a CBSG/ RSG meeting for South East Asia before the SEAZA meeting, in keeping with our tradition for the SAZARC meeting, but this could not materialise. Thanks to our sponsors who agreed that the abbreviated presentation of the topics would also serve a useful purpose and continued our support. They are:

**Chester Zoological and Botanical Gardens, U.K.
Universities Federation for Animal Welfare UFAW, U.K.
Thrigby Hall Wildlife Park, U.K.**

We hope our readers enjoy the SEAZA Communique which summarise the meeting as well as an article about marketing conservation in zoos which Peter Dollinger presented at SEAZA, and a brief summary of the workshops on substandard zoos and rehabilitation. A letter from SEAZA President is below.

Dear Delegates from SAZARC:

I wish to thank you most sincerely for your attendance at the recent SEAZA Annual Conference in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Your presence added greatly to the thought-provoking discussions and will help SEAZA formulate long-term plans for progress in our region. One of the topics we addressed during conference was the need for increased communication between us, and with others in the wider zoo community. I do hope you will continue your active involvement in SEAZA and its activities and that you will stay in touch with me, and the SEAZA Executive Board. I have attached the Conference Communiqué, which I hope will prove of interest to you. I apologise for it not being given to you at close of Conference, but the organising committee made several changes to the program and venue, and it therefore had to be amended. The approved version was finally received by the secretariat yesterday Please share it with your friends and colleagues.

**Yours sincerely,
Jansen Manansang President**

The 15th Annual Conference of the South East Asian Zoo Association SEAZA Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam 11-13 September 2006

Communiqué

1. **The 15th Annual Conference of SEAZA** was hosted by Saigon Zoo and Botanical Gardens, Vietnam. The theme was **“Zoos on the Fringe”**. It was attended by 230 delegates from 27 countries and territories: Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, United States and Vietnam. The opening ceremony was held at the Rex Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City on 11th September at 8am.

2. **The Vice Chairman of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City**, Mr. Nguyen Van Dua, said that the conference theme was one which was of common interest to peoples in the region, as well as zoo managers and experts. Extending good wishes to all delegates, he said that he believed all issues discussed and solved during conference would bring benefit to every zoological institution in the region.

3. **SEAZA President, Jansen Manansang**, welcomed all delegates to conference and thanked the organizing committee – including Saigon Zoo Director Nguyen Thi Hien Luong and SEAZA Executive Board member Phan Viet Lam – for their months of hard work in preparing for the event. He made particular mention of the presence of WAZA President-elect Gordon Reid, Dr Peter Dollinger (Executive Officer WAZA), Dr Jorg Junhold (Chair, WAZA Marketing Committee) and Dr Jorg Adler (Chair, EAZA Marketing Committee) and a delegation from the South Asian Zoo Association, led by Sally Walker, who also represented CBSG, while CBSG Japan was represented by Dr Hiroshi Hori. He said that the conference theme was a good indication of where SEAZA was heading, as the Executive Board had encouraged the larger, more affluent zoos in the region to reach out to those that were under-resourced and in less-developed countries. While WAZA had recently passed a motion to the effect that every well-resourced zoo had a responsibility to “engage with needy institutions”, Mr. Manansang said he was pleased that SEAZA was already doing just that. He also advised that three major issues were referred by CBSG to the recent WAZA conference, and that all had direct relevance to the South-East Asian region: Climate change, the world's amphibian crisis and sub-standard zoos.

4. **Saigon Zoo Director and head of the conference organizing committee**, Ms Nguyen Thi Hien Luong, welcomed delegates to Vietnam and to Ho Chi Minh City and said she looked forward to a successful conference. She noted that the increase in participants at the second conference hosted by Saigon Zoo was a reflection of the growth of SEAZA.

5. **WAZA president-elect, Gordon McGregor Reid** gave a keynote address: “Improving the Global Zoo and Aquarium Brand”. In it, he said that – ultimately – a zoo's brand lay in the mind of the consumer, rather than in the possession of

the zoo, so it is the visitors who would determine the global future of zoos. He suggested that only through market research could zoo managers find out what visitors think and, from the results, make plans to improve the way zoos were perceived. He outlined the results of one market research experience, in which only 2% of respondents cited conservation as the reason for their zoo visit, while 40% said they wanted a “fun day out”.

6. **During the scientific sessions, 51 papers were presented.** These were grouped under four major themes: Biodiversity and Conservation (Chaired by Dr Le Xuan Canh), Health and Exhibits (Chaired by Dr. S Jansen Manansang), Marketing and Education (Chaired by Gordon McGregor Reid) and Husbandry and Welfare (Chaired by Professor G. Agoramoorthy).

7. **There were two workshop sessions.**

The first session had four workshops:

a) **SEAZA training**, facilitated by Dr Kevin Lazarus assisted by Tan Kit Sun. Priority would be given as a follow-up to the recent first veterinary course, with a course on enrichment and conditioning husbandry for captive animals, and a course aimed at upper and middle zoo management. Sources of funding were also explored, such as the WAZA training fund and Ocean Park Hong Kong.

b) **WAZA's sub-standard zoo initiative**, chaired by Sally Walker. This group agreed that there should be a better term than “sub-standard”, as there were good and bad practices in all zoos. Perhaps zoos that “wanted to improve” was more descriptive of the overall aim. These zoos needed to support and benefit their animals, visitors and staff, and well-resourced zoos are needed to assist them in their aims. The chair undertook to bring up the participants' points to the WAZA working group developing guidelines.

c) **Golden Cat Action Plan**, chaired by Ratna Kumar Duraisingam and Pham Anh Dung. This group will build on the previous *ex situ* workshop and PHVA held in Thailand in 2005 and further valuable contacts were made and data identified.

d) **Education**, chaired by Suzanne Gendron, assisted by Joyce Kwok and Joann Chang. The workshop set the objective of making the WAZA Conservation Strategy South East Asian relevant and considered how people could work together to ensure this happened.

Concurrently, there was a meeting between members of the SEAZA Executive Board and WAZA representatives, to discuss SEAZA-WAZA relationships.

The second workshop session included two groups:

a) **The Reintroduction Specialist Group** IUCN reintroduction guidelines development, chaired by Mike Jordon and SEAZA focal person G. Agoramoorthy. This workshop looked at several topics such as social grouping, disease, human habitation, migration – timing, early

assessment of release potential, religion/cultural issues, forced translocation, identification – post release monitoring - and transport/general welfare issues.

b) Marketing: Chaired by Gordon Reid. This continued the theme begun during the chair's keynote address and the papers presented by WAZA officials and the EAZA marketing chair. Participants shared their zoo marketing experiences. Common ground was found in several key areas, including appeal to family groups, and the need to work harder at appealing to the 17-25 year old age group who says zoos as "un-cool" places. Much discussion centred around the need for exhibits to be "mother-and-child friendly

8. The Conference program included a visit to the Saigon Opera House, where participants were entertained by the Saigon Concert Group, who presented a variety of traditional Vietnamese song, music and dance. There was also a tour to Can Gio mangrove forest – a 75,740-hectare area encompassing three zones that has been recognized by MAB/UNESCO as a Mangrove Biosphere Reserve – and a visit to Saigon Zoo and Botanical Gardens.

9. The Ice Breaker was held at the Rex Hotel – the venue for the conference proceedings, while the welcome dinner

was held at the Continental Hotel,

10. The General Assembly was held at the Rex Hotel on the last day of the conference. There were reports from the SEAZA President and the secretary, and also summaries of conference workshops. New members to SEAZA were invited to make presentations about their organisations. They were Hong Kong Wetland Park, Kadoorie Farm & Botanical Gardens and Siam Ocean World. There was also a presentation from Zoo Negara, Malaysia, the host for SEAZA Conference 2007. The 2008 Conference would be held in Laos. WAZA's Gordon Reid presented the challenges facing the WAZA Aquarium Committee and said he was pleased that the SEAZA Executive Board had formed a similar group led by Immediate Past President Pisit Na Patalung.

11. During the farewell dinner, at a riverside restaurant, each country delegation performed an entertaining skit – including some inspiring cross-cultural performances – and other entertainment provided a dramatic grand finale to a hugely successful conference.

12. Two optional post-conference tours were available: One to Cat Tien National Park and another to Hoi An and Hue.

Letters from SAZARC Members about their SEAZA Experience

Greetings ! We have attended all presentations and also skits. We are thankful to you for organising this joint conference where we have learned a lot from SEAZA activities and their presentations. South Asian Zoo participants were learning every time some new things were explained of zoo managements, animal welfare, enclosure design, nutrition, education, WAZA policies, CBSG, etc. This has given a very big exposures to us to learn what other world zoos are doing, how they are performing, and -- the main thing which is very important -- is our direct/personal contacts with the well known personalities of zoos of the world. This exposure has changed our way of thinking way of zoo management and our zoos are also changing, this also felt by our organisation and visitors. We are thankful to you and all the donors who are supporting us and SAZARC activities. **Dr. R.K.Sahu, Ahmedabad Zoo, India.**

Wassalam !

I am very much thankful to you and the SEAZA Organizers for inviting me to attend the 15th Annual Conference of SEAZA at Vietnam from 10th to 14th September 2006. It was a great assembly of Zoo and wildlife experts from many parts of the world. This joint meeting of SEAZA & SAZARC is a good experienced that offered a praiseworthy opportunity for all of the participants to learn with the experiences & observations of two different regions & improve their skills in their respective fields. The presentation sessions on 11th to 13th September were very useful & informative where technically different aspects of zoo management, animal welfare, husbandry, nutrition, enclosure designing & enrichment & education were discussed by the zoo experts. The workshops on different topics resulted in brainstorming & provided opportunity to learn different

ideas of the technical scholars of different countries or regions. We learnt a great deal how to tackle the problems on day to day zoo management. It also helped us learn to improve the quality & standards of Zoos of our region & how to overcome the grey areas on our respective zoos. This conference has provided a great opportunity of exchanging cooperation & expertise of South Asian & South East Asian Zoos. Visit of Saigon Zoo provided a sight of healthy animals good management of enclosures, cages & natural habitat. This will of course enable us to improve our Zoo. I am heartily thankful to you & the donors who have been generously donating SAZARC for arranging such conferences & workshops to impart most valuable training opportunities to the participants from different countries of the world. **Muhammad Mansoor Qazi, Karachi Zoo, Pakistan.**

Namaskar :

I attended the SEAZA conference held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam from 10th to 13th September 2006. Being new to the job of Director, I gained lot of knowledge from the valuable lectures and workshops. I really appreciate the SEAZA & SAZARC joint seminars. It gave us the opportunity to meet very experienced and educated managers and Zoo administrators. I also learnt lot from the visit to Saigon Zoo. I thank all donors who have been generously donating SAZARC for arranging this conference every year. I once again thank Zoo Outreach Organization for their tireless efforts to insure a unique and useful experience for SAZARC zoo persons every year. Thanking you once again. **Brigadier P.G. Charles, Director, Dept: of Zoological Gardens, Sri Lanka.**

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