

# Seminal Zoo Symposium held at London Zoo

Report by S. Walker \*



A seminal zoo symposium was held in the meeting rooms of the Zoological Society of London, London Zoo in Regent's Park on 19-20 February 2004. The symposium was sponsored by Chester Zoological Gardens and presently by the Zoological Society of London and Wildlife Conservation Society. Alexandra Zimmermann, Chris West, Matthew Hatchwell and Richard Lattis from the three institutions organised the event. Over 250 zoo experts and enthusiasts gathered for the event. Ironically 248 were from the western world with one participant from South Africa and one representing South Asia. This was, perhaps, the only flaw in an otherwise well-organised and well-intentioned event, albeit a serious one. It is not that other parts of the world were not discussed. Far from it. The animal species and habitats of continental regions of Asia, Africa and South-Central America got the lion's share of attention in presentations which focused on specific projects, but nearly always from a western perspective of western zoos helping field conservation. One exception was a refreshing review of the Disney Animal Kingdom's "backyard approach" in which Disney targets audiences which are non-traditional to zoos and aquariums, such as visitors to Disney's theme parks and diverse businesses. Beth Stevens *et al.* described examples of how they have worked to catalyse conservation in every corner of their backyard including their own guests, staff and businesses as well as the non-traditional audiences which have led to new partners and new sources of support for conservation efforts.

Another paper which deviated from this pattern was the one from Perth Zoo about their Native Species Breeding Programme, probably the most successful in the world in planning and implementing species recovery for its own native threatened species, in the case of the paper, the Marsupial Dibbler.

In the presentations for the most part, however, where specific zoos and their achievements, problems and potential were discussed, it was western zoos, not zoos from tropical and other developing regions. Dr. Lee Durrell's presentation on the Madagascar Fauna Group did provide a case study of MFG's attempts to help two zoos in Madagascar which were successful with one zoo but a dismal and frustrating failure in another. In fact, many western zoos have tried to work with zoos in what they call "range countries" (as if there were no range except in the tropics !) but found it confounding, largely due to the seeming inability to progress due to the peculiarities of developing countries' administrative systems (mandatory transfer system for directors and veterinarians, uneducated zookeepers, absence of curatorial posts, questionable animal acquisition practices, and outdated technology). Whatever the reasons, zoos in developing countries, or "the South" or whatever one calls it, could use assistance in most of the key areas -- collection planning, conservation breeding, modern veterinary medicine, exhibit design, education, marketing, and even animal husbandry. However, zoos of the western world want to contribute to "real" conservation by assisting field projects. Laudable to be sure, but missing an important opportunity to contribute in other ways.

The symposium itself was very laudable in that most of the authors of papers (all invited by symposium organising committee) seemed to make an effort to assess or inventory the direction zoos were taking with the objective of filling gaps and improving their management in every area. The education presentations were particularly apt in this regard.

The motives of zoos and particularly the zoos which participated in this conference were clearly directed towards saving species and habitats by whatever method and catalysing conservation efforts in a multiplicity of ways. Even the animal rights groups which attended seemed convinced that there was no fodder for a fight at *this* meeting with *these* zoo personnel.

A list of the presented papers follows as well as a summary of the conclusions reached in the papers and the discussion sessions which followed each session.

A further word on western zoos helping zoos in less developed regions might be in order. One of the problems is that people from the west are often simply ignorant of the tremendous potential of zoos from this part of the world. They do not know what can be done when a country minds (such as in the case of India and its Central Zoo Authority with a very strong Zoo Act, systematic evaluation process with linked financial assistance, intolerance of wrongful animal acquisition, and closing of bad zoos [ $> 180$  mini zoos, deer parks, etc have been closed by CZA since 1992]). They do not even know that there is a very large number of zoos in the continental areas of Asia, Africa and South-Central America or that the number of visitors far outstrips the most visited zoos in USA, Europe and Australia. This ignorance was well illustrated by one of the best papers entitled "Beyond the Ark: Conservation Biologists' Views of the Achievements of Zoos in Conservation". The objective of the paper was not to illustrate this lacunae -- it was a mistaken notion in the paper which stated that the number of zoos as well as visitors to zoos was significantly higher in industrialised countries than in developing countries. The statistics came from the International Zoo Yearbook, whose objective is NOT to present definitive totals of zoo presence or of visitor numbers worldwide, but to bring out an annual volume of invited scientific papers describing current zoo achievements and practices with data of different types from what zoos can be enjoined to provide it. Although the IZY staff makes a valiant effort to collect material from all zoos, it is too daunting and difficult a task to be attempted on the budget and in the time frame available. They have been forced to adopt a policy of dropping zoos which do not reply to the questionnaire for 3 years in a row.

Zoos of our region (South Asia) and others like it, need to take more responsibility for promoting themselves internationally so that their potential, problems and progress can be known by others. Individuals, such as myself and the professionals who are connected with zoos, must be more assiduous about collecting and disseminating this kind of information so that both we and the zoos which want to assist in these regions can use it for conservation action.

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## ZSL/WCS Symposium Catalysts for Conservation, 2004 : Preliminary Review of Principle Directions for 2C Zoos



Reaching agreement among zoos and aquaria worldwide to adopt *in situ* conservation as the primary overall goal of each individual institution.

### CHALLENGES

All activities of zoos and aquaria should be conceived and designed to contribute to achieving the overall goal.

Concentrate activities around a set of strengths and skills that are unique to zoos and aquaria.

Identify and put in place the alliances needed to achieve the overall goal.

Design and implement mechanisms to measure and demonstrate the impact of zoos and aquariums on *in situ* wildlife conservation

What we should do (more)...

Reaching agreement among zoos and aquaria worldwide to adopt *in situ* conservation as the primary overall goal of each individual institution.

Other goals (e.g. serving the community) should feed into achieving the primary goal

Make conservation our highest moral imperative, while embracing other ethical values such as animal and human welfare

### All activities of zoos and aquaria should be conceived and designed to contribute to achieving the overall goal.

- Design ambitious and radical professional programs as engines to fight urgent conservation concerns
- Assess animal collections against achievement of overall conservation goal
- De-link zoos and reintroduction > pursue recovery of an endangered species through integrated *in situ* and *ex-situ* activities (incl. translocations)
- Use research as part of forging a conservation identity
- Visual and cognitive messages must support each other
- Integrate collection and *in situ* activities to achieve credibility
- Reshape education to inspire
- Develop and apply stricter accreditation criteria
- Always adhere to national and international conventions and legislation

### Concentrate activities around a set of strengths and skills that are unique to zoos and aquaria (1).

- Use live animals' potential to provide an emotion-based experience, to inspire, affect, educate and reconnect people to nature
- Use your staff effectively, they are the most credible

to put the message across; use staff skills and interest to address local conservation problems

- Dedicate space for breeding, research and buying time for endangered animals
- Develop and apply small population management skills to minimise extinction
- Use unique opportunity to educate visitors and decision makers in a way so that they change their behaviour
- Create international network of extractive reserves as response to need for sustainable and transparent source of animals for zoos
- Develop partnerships with range state zoos

### Concentrate activities around a set of strengths and skills that are unique to zoos and aquaria (2).

- Explore fields where you can apply your zoo-based skills (education, professional training, fundraising, genetics, veterinary and reproductive techniques, invasive species, health issues, unsustainable harvesting, management of confiscated animals, and surplus wild populations...)
- Identify species that can benefit from management at metapopulation level ("nearly dodos")
- Develop mechanisms to become catalysts/ engines for local conservation
- Shape in-country legislation
- Communicate actively, honestly, transparently and consistently regarding the conservation message
- Prioritize applied research relevant to conservation related questions
- Maximise fundraising potential of zoos through inspiration

### Identify and put in place the alliances needed to achieve the overall goal.

- Explore all forms of alliances (with other zoos, universities, NGO's, decision makers) to be more effective and make it worth more
- Use selected individuals (champions) to build vital programs with continuity
- Work with dedicated partners
- Attract external funds for *in situ*
- Be aware charity led zoos can do more in conservation

### Design and implement mechanisms to measure and demonstrate the impact of zoos and aquariums on *in situ* wildlife conservation through...

- Research and challenge impacts of conservation research, institutions PR and *ex situ* breeding regarding its effect to minimize extinction
- Evaluate methods to measure post-visit experiences

# Catalysts for Conservation: A Direction for Zoos in The 21<sup>st</sup> Century -- Presentations

*Note : Catalysts for Conservation: A Direction for Zoos in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century presentations and discussion points will be published as proceedings by the Zoological Society of London and brought out as a book. This book will contain valuable references that people running zoos or in any way positively associated with them can use in support of their projects or to bring about catalytic change. We will announce the publication in ZP as soon as it comes out. The following is a list of articles and their first author, who in most cases presented the paper, as a preview of what is to come.*

Session I: The Evolving Roles of Zoos and Aquarium in Conservation: Where do we Stand Today?

Entering the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, by William Conway (WCS, USA)

Animal ambassadors: an analysis of the effectiveness and conservation impact of *ex situ* breeding efforts by Anne Baker (Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park, USA)

Re-introduction from zoos: a conservation guiding light or a shooting star? by Mark Stanley-Price (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Jersey)

The Changing role of education in conservation by Eleanor Sterling (American Museum of Natural History, USA)

Inspiration for conservation: motivating audiences to care by John Gwynne (WCS, USA)

Research in zoos by Dan Wharton (WCS, USA)

The conservation mission in the wild: zoos as conservation NGOs by Alexandra Zimmermann (North of England Zoological Society, UK)

## Session II: Coordinating Zoos' Conservation Efforts

How do national and international regulations and policies influence the role of zoos and aquarium in conservation? by Bengt Holst (Copenhagen Zoo, Denmark)

The Madagascar Fauna Group: what zoo cooperation can do for conservation by Lee Durrell (Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Jersey)

Zoo coalitions for conservation by David Field (ZSL, UK)

## Session III: External Perspectives on the Conservation Impacts of Zoos

Beyond the ark: conservation biologists' views of the achievements of zoos in conservation by Nigel Leader-Williams (Durrell Institute of Conservation & Ecology, UK)

Measuring zoos' contributions to conservation: a proposal and trial, Georgina mace (ZSL, UK)

Message received? Quantifying the conservation education impact of UK zoos, Andrew Balmford (Cambridge University, UK)

## Session IV: The New Niche of Zoos – Opportunities and Limitation

Catalysts for conservation: making the local connection Beth Stevens (Disney's Animal Kingdom and Animal Programs, USA)

Conservation Medicine, John Lewis (International Zoo Veterinary Group/ZSL, UK)

The Masoala Rainforest: a partnership for conservation in Madagascar, Matthew Hatchwell (WCS, USA)

Zoo-based fundraising for conservation – and why big cats are an ideal fundraising focus, Sarah Christie (ZSL, UK)

## Session V: The Future of Zoos

Balancing *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and population management strategies, Bert de Boer (Apenheul Zoo, Netherlands)

Attitudes and attitude change among zoo visitors: findings and recommendations, Richard Reading (Denver Zoo, USA)

The animal rights conservation debate: can zoos and aquariums play a role?, Michael Hutchins (American Zoo and Aquarium Association, USA)

Advocacy and policy, Richard Lattis (WCS, USA)

The world zoo and aquarium conservation strategy, 2004 Jo Gipps (Bristol Zoo Gardens, UK)

Session V Discussion (summary of discussion and conclusions on next page).



# Abstract of a Presentation from ZSL/WCS Catalysts for Conservation, The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy, 2004

Jo Gipps<sup>1</sup> and Miranda Stevenson<sup>2</sup>

The first World Zoo Conservation Strategy was published in 1993, the result of collaboration between members of the Captive Breeding Specialist Group of IUCN/SSC and the World Zoo Organisation (WZO). Its main conservation focus was on cooperative breeding and reintroduction programmes, with little reference to conservation activity in the field.

The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA, formerly WZO) is in the process of producing a new 10-year Conservation Strategy, under the auspices of its Conservation Committee.

The new document will be significantly more wide-ranging than the 1993 version, with particular emphasis on the ways in which zoos can undertake and support the conservation of animals and plants in the wild. It will aim to provide individual zoos, regional zoo associations and WAZA itself with a set of strategic conservation aims and objectives, the methods that each can use to implement the strategy, and time-bound action plans for that implementation

The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy will be presented in four parts:

## 1. A Foundation Document

This will be an articulation of the Strategy's philosophy and ethical position and will be the direct equivalent document to the 1993 Strategy; it will be complete in late 2004. This document is divided into nine sections, covering:

- Integrated Conservation
- Conserving Wild Populations
- Education and Training

- Science and Research
- Population Management
- Communication: Marketing and Public Relations
- Partnerships and Policy
- Sustainability
- Ethics and Welfare

## 2. A Toolkit Document

This document will describe how individual zoos, regional zoo associations and WAZA itself will implement all the elements of the Strategy; it will be developed in 2004, for publication in 2005.

## 3. Action Plans

This document will contain deliverables and timescales for all elements of the Strategy, again for zoos, regional zoo associations and WAZA it will be developed in parallel with 2 above, and will be published at the same time.

## 4. A Marketing 'Document'

This (multi-media) document will promulgate the Strategy and its implementation to the widest possible audience. This marketing activity will occur first when the Foundation Document is published in 2004, and later when the Toolkit Document and Action Plans are published in 2004, and later when the Toolkit Document and Action Plans are published in 2005

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## Note on a meeting of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy Steering Committee

Taking advantage of the well-attended ZSC/WCS Catalysts for Conservation symposium when many members of the Steering Committee would be present in London, and also in view of the importance of this event in zoo directions and philosophy, the Steering Group of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy decided in one of its meetings in Costa Rica to conduct a one day meeting in London, on 18 February.

While this meeting missed a few members of the Steering Group, it was enhanced by the presence of other members and chapter authors who had not been able to attend one or more of the several past meetings. The members gathered in the HQ of ZSL for a buffet lunch and started the meeting soon after.

There were some chapters which had encountered difficulties such as not being entirely liked by a whole country or association which had rewritten and submitted the entire document! These problems were discussed and solved to everyone's satisfaction.

The schedule of printing was discussed and it was noted that the WAZCS final version would run a bit behind schedule. The final Draft will be ready for the November meeting of the World Zoo Association, which takes place in Taipei this year. It had been thought that this could be completed in May and the final version presented in November, but it is not possible due to delayed deadlines by individual authors and other difficulties. Instead, at the meeting in May, which coincides with several other international zoo (CIRCC, CBSG Steering Committee, ISIS, WAZA Council, etc.), the Steering Group will review the completed portions of the Draft primary document and discuss the other components of the project, e.g. the Toolkit, Action Plans and Marketing document, and decide how best to implement their production.

Submitted by *Sally Walker*, ZOO/CBSG, South Asia, Member WAZCS Steering Group.

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