

# BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

Letters from our Readers

Editor:

My thanks for the copy of the November 1996 issue of Zoos' Print, which I discovered on my return to Guwahati a couple of days ago.

However, I was quite surprised to see that this included an abridged version of the First Annual Report of the Pigmy Hog Conservation Programme, especially as neither Goutam or I were consulted on this matter prior to your publication of this. Indeed, this report was not intended for publication, or even for general circulation. Rather, it was a progress report produced for the information of the collaborating (ICMRA signatory) partners (as per the terms and conditions of that Agreement), and relevant sponsors, technical consultants and other selected individuals and agencies. Had we been informed that you wished to include news of this Programme in Zoo's Print, we would doubtless have done our best to produce an article for this purpose, or asked that you utilise any material already published. Like you, we are keen to disseminate news and information which we would hope to be of some value or interest to a wider readership, and we are quite proud of the progress made to date on this Programme.

Nonetheless, I am sure you will appreciate the untenability of the situation in which we may be forced to omit any potentially sensitive (or confidential) information, simply because you (or anyone else) may decide to publish any such reports without prior consultation, approval, agreement or authority; as per normal courtesy and practice. In this instance, this would also have enabled us to: a) avoid the several ambiguities, errors and inconsistencies resulting from extracted version of the report you published; and b) overcome certain contractual obligations we have concerning 'first rights of refusal' on publishable material, which you have thereby compromised (albeit unwittingly, I am sure).

In any event, I respectfully suggest that you had no right to publish this report without our advance agreement and approval of the edited text, let alone offer copies of the full report to anyone who cares to send Rs 28/- in stamps to your organisation. Accordingly, I must ask that you refrain from doing this with any similar reports we may produce in future; or any others which may already be in your possession. This request applies especially to any unpublished reports (and it therefore includes the "Progress Report" you referred to as being omitted for lack of space, or any other reports which may already be in your possession), but it must also extend to any existing or future published material if these are 'edited' in any way. Whilst we would be the first to respect your editorial responsibilities, discretion and good intentions, we would also ask you respect our similar responsibilities, discretion and intentions as project implementors and authors.

Please understand that we have no objection to information on this Programme being published in Zoo's Print or other magazines and journals. On the contrary, we are anxious to disseminate any relevant information, as previously indicated. However, that does not mean we are willing to waive all normal authorship rights or allow progress reports unintended for publication to be published at anyone else's discretion. I would be most grateful, therefore, if you do not to allow this to happen again. Many thanks.

With all good wishes. Yours, etc.

William L. R. Oliver  
Project Director, and Chairman,  
IUCN/SSC Pigs and Peccaries Specialist Group

*Oops! We thought that was for publication! Please, Readers, if you don't want something published, please either don't send it or indicate same on title page. We get many such documents which the senders intend us to use as news, an article, etc. If it is addressed to the Editor, ZOOS' PRINT, we consider it fodder. Very sorry, William and Goutam.*

25.1.97

Dear Sally,

Ref. Editorial, Feb '97

1) I continue to uphold my views about ZP: it has very well served as a medium for communication about anything related to wildlife (*ex situ* or *in situ*). It has created many authors. It has greatly improved over the years. It is perhaps the most widely circulated animal (wildlife) magazine of the country (12 issues X how many copies and going out of India too!). Regarding NVK's contribution - it is visibly prominent in the pages of ZP. He deserves all praise and encouragement. He must keep going, irrespective of what others say. ZP is now with an international label. Its coverage is very wide - ranging and none else have matched it. It has reinforced and promoted the zoo movement in the country and we now talk about Zoo Authority, IZDA, etc.

Recently people from Universities have appeared in the pages of ZP. During the last nearly 12 years of ZP there have been numerous original research papers/notes and very few review type of articles. So, I fail to understand what the critics want. Perhaps they want the names of some celebrated scientists in the Editorial Board, most of whom will perhaps be living abroad and considering the range of topics, the Ed-Board will have to have a hundred names!

The whole concept of publishing one's research findings/field experiences needs to be viewed without prejudice. People have often asked me why I don't send my papers to overseas journals. My reply has been, "if I have improved the tiger census technique, it is for the forest guards to use it under the guidance of their DFO/Ranger etc. Then, 'Indian Forester' in the right journal for that kind of material. Similarly, when I am talking about color of tiger, contrary to what other may feel, ZP is the right place because it reaches many people (most people) who deal with tigers more often. When I am talking about feed of the animal, ZP is still the best because almost Indian all zoo personnel will benefit from it.

Therefore, while writing a paper/article the decision has to be made about the people who will require most the contents of the paper. Then the journal has to be chosen for publication. Not that, I will publish feeding prescription of Gharial in a specialist journal of USA which my own people will never see a benefit from.

Considering all these, I value each article in ZP as a PUBLICATION !!! Please keep continuing your Editorial policy.

If you can, please arrange 2 Research Fellowships for some young biologists to go through all major articles/notes in ZP from Vol. 1 No.1 and prepare a Bibliography with Abstracts. Let it take one year or more. But, I am more than 100% confident that the Bibliography will be a treasure of information. You have already done 50% of the job by listing out the publication under different subject heads.

L.A.K. Singh,  
Similipal Tiger Reserve