

Overview

of the

5th Conference of the S. Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation, SAZARC



held in Lahore, Pakistan
1-5 December 2004



Participants and Resource Persons both were interviewed by the Press at the Lahore Zoo tour. Dr. R.K. Sahu, who was elected President of SAZARC at the end of the meeting was particularly popular.

Sponsors

2004 SAZARC



The South Asian region is dominated by governments with administrative systems which may not permit them to provide funds for foreign travel, foreign conferences, or the kind of human resource development which comes along with building a network of enthusiastic zoo professionals. Also, government institutions such as what control zoos do not provide much flexibility to heads of zoos in terms of finance or travel.

Therefore, a regional zoo association in South Asia could be a "bear" to fund. Or it would be, if not for our generous international and local sponsors.

We would like to pay a special tribute to our sponsors for the Fifth Annual Conference of the South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation.

International sponsors covered airfares, accomodation, briefing material and some miscelleaneous planning costs. Local sponsors covered all meals, local transportation, briefcases, and dozens of attractive Pakistan souvenirs featuring the Lahore Zoo logo.

Thank you to both International and Local Sponsors !



Raja Javed, Director, Lahore Zoo, Qadeer Mehal, Director, Punjab Wildlife Department and staff display and put the many souvenir items into participant bags, including a very attractive gold plated Lahore Zoo pin which will be treasured always.

Local sponsors

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Mr. Najam Latif, Non-official Member, Zoo Management Committee, Lahore Zoo, Pakistan

Mr. Rana Hameed, Contractor, Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Allah Yar Hira, Conservation Breeder, Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Tariq Bashir Cheema, District Nazim, Bahawalpur, Pakistan

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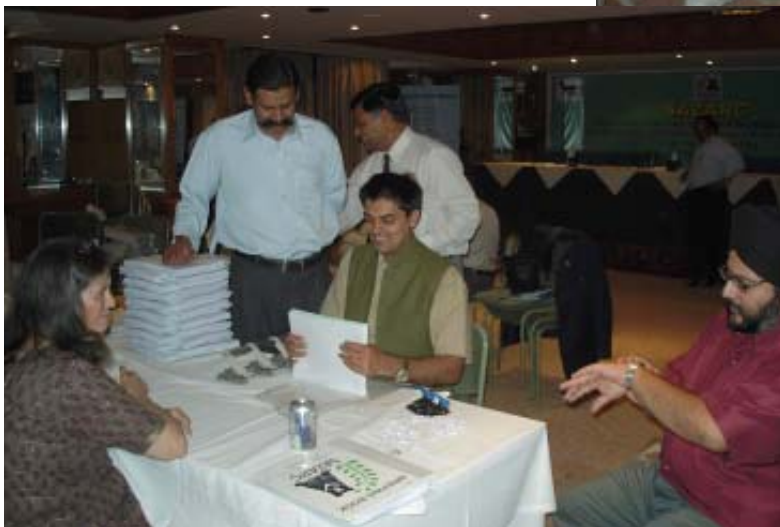
East Midlands Zoological Society Ltd., Twycross Zoo, U.K.

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Above : Greeting old friends and meeting new ones -- Host Raja Javed meets R. K. Sahu in a "room conference" before the first official event.

Right : Uzma Khan (front) flanked by Raja Javed, Host and Qadeer Mehal Host and SAZARC President in the meeting before the meeting in Hotel Sunfort.



Some final touches before the first day of SAZARC. Micky Soorae nervously looks at his watch wondering when it will all be over so he can go to bed.



Dignitaries on the dias at the Inaugural function of the 5th Annual Conference of the South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation. Audience is below also with plenty of dignitaries.



Audience at the Inaugural function of the 5th Annual Conference of the South Asian Zoo Association



Bob Lacy, Chair, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and Resource Person for the SAZARC Training on Zoo Population Management gives a "glad to be here" speech to the assembled inaugural audience.



All officials and officers gather for a photo after the Inaugural. The Inaugural was well attended by both officials and non-officials.

South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation SAZARC 5th Annual Conference



Today, zoos have an enormous responsibility because these institutions are the only places where most of the public can see, hear and smell living wild animals. Although there are myriad wildlife programmes on television which are very educational, there is no substitute for being in the presence of wild animals. The wild animals which are kept in zoos are ambassadors for their wild counter-parts and zoos are their theatre. The public learns what they see, and if they see animals being kept badly, they learn the wrong attitudes toward them. Also, some of the wild animals being kept by zoos are highly threatened species listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals. These animals hold valuable genetic material which might be required for strengthening wild populations via reintroduction, or translocation. Conservation scientists can learn a lot from the animals kept in zoos if they are managed well. If they are not properly managed in their breeding, health care, nutrition and housing, they will not be fit for aiding conservation. Therefore, zoos must be run as a scientific institutions. That is, in reality, what they are – wild animal laboratories, but laboratories which allow the public to come and inspect !

Hence the zoo director's and other staff's jobs are not easy – imagine running a hospital, or space station, or research laboratory with thousands of people coming in every day to see your work, bringing their lunch for a picnic and in a holiday mood ! Add to this other problems of management the zoo director and his staff have !

SAZARC is intended to give the zoo personnel a forum to discuss their problems and find solutions.

Today, because of the immense responsibility of zoos, the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums WAZA has requested the zoos to organize themselves into national and regional associations, and to apply for membership in the world zoo organisation. This year, SAZARC, applied for and was almost unanimously elected to membership in the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. This is a great honour but also a tremendous responsibility. WAZA has a very strict Code of Welfare and Ethics and membership is contingent on a zoo association requiring high standards from its members. There is no doubt that the zoos of South Asia can rise to this challenge and SAZARC will help them.

SAZARC in brief

The South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation (SAZARC) - pronounced "sah-zark" was founded by a group of zoo directors from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in 2000 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The meeting was organised by Zoo Outreach Organisation and hosted by the Central Zoo/ King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation and was a pioneering event in that zoo personnel from five South Asian countries met together for the first time. SAZARC has met every year since 2000 in different South Asian countries and also once in Malaysia to join with the South East Asian Zoo Association. SAZARC applied for and was awarded membership in the prestigious World Association of Zoos and Aquaria in the summer of 2004. SAZARC is administered from the offices of the Zoo Outreach Organisation and Wildlife Information Liaison Development which also hosts several IUCN Species Survival Commission specialist groups and regional networks, providing valuable linking, training and educational advantages for the South Asian Zoo Association.



After Inaugural a special lunch at the venue was enjoyed by all.



Every year, training is organized during the SAZARC conference. Topics have ranged from Zoo Education, Welfare and Ethics, Zoo Management for Welfare and Conservation, Nutrition and Zoo Design. This year it was Zoo Population Management and Zoo Nutrition. In addition to the training there were participants presentations about the problems and potential of their zoo and discussion of SAZARC business including the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy.

In Taipei, Taiwan, during the meeting of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, a new World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy was approved by the World Zoo Association. In the SAZARC meeting, several working sessions were devoted to plan how SAZARC, individual zoo associations and even individual institutions can use this Strategy to create an Action Plans for the next few years. This was the first regional zoo association to meet and discuss this strategy since its passage, and we got a very good output from this exercise which is included elsewhere in this issue.

Preceding this conference, there was a two day meeting of the IUCN SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and Reintroduction Specialist Group led by the Chairs of these groups. They have come out with some useful recommendations which have also been included in a Report in this issue. Sponsorship of this workshop was from both local and international sources equally which is another step towards SAZARC sustainability.

Despite great inconvenience and even hardship due to weather conditions and delayed flights representatives from 8 countries gathered for the meeting, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, UAE, UK and USA without complaint. Participants and Resource Persons were just happy to have come.

Resource persons for the SAZARC training were: Dr. Miranda Stevenson, Director, British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Dr. Bob Lacy, Chairman, Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. Dr. Ellen Dierenfelt who was to lead the Nutrition component of the training was unable to come, sadly, but the training went on with local resource persons, e.g. Ms Uzma Khan who gave an overview of Zoo Nutrition in order to insure that people who were not present in the previous workshop could catch up and also served as a review for others. Also there was Dr. R. K. Sahu speaking on the handrearing of carnivores, Dr. Jayanthi Alahakoon, speaking on how she used the Nutrition training to make various diets for her zoo animals in National Zoo, Dr. Geetha Seshamani who spoke on the nutritional plan used for the Agra Bear Centre in India. We will be publishing a special issue on these presentations and the output of the research done by participants from last SAZARC meeting to the present SAZARC meeting in April or May. Ellen is in touch with us and will help us put the information collected into the Zoo*trition format so that an ongoing Nutrition Handbook for South Asia can become a reality.

Report -- day by day

Generally the Programme of 5th Annual SAZARC Conference conducted from 1-7 December 2004 by the Lahore Zoo/Punjab WL Department at the comfortable and elegant Sunfort Hotel, Lahore went as follows.

First December, 2004 (Wednesday – Day 1)

Inaugural Session,, Registration and seating of Participants, Recitation from the Holy Quran, Welcome Address by Abdul Qadeer Mehal President, SAZARC, Addresses by Capt. (Retd) Iftikhar Ahmad Rao, Director General, Wildlife & Parks, Punjab, Raja Muhammad Javed, Director, Lahore Zoo, Sally Walker, Director (SAZARC) & Founder, ZOO, Address by Secretary, Forest, Wildlife & Fisheries and Chief Guest Address. The training began right after tea consisting of presentations on Zoo Population Management Systems by Dr. Miranda Stevenson and Species Management by Dr. Robert C. Lacy. After lunch and some participant presentations there was a visit of Lahore Zoo, shopping and a gala dinner at the zoo.



A tour of Jallo Park , just outside Lahore included a visit to the animal enclosures, the museum and a night of dancing (for the men , anyway!)

Qadeer Mehal, who developed Jallo Park, which is both a zoo / safari and a breeding centre, explains some of its points to participants.



Zoo Directors dancing. No ladies allowed ! which irritated some of them to no end. Nonetheless, a good time was had by all listening to the popular Pakistani music and eating the excellent food provided. Photos by ZOO.

On the 2nd December, 2004 (Thursday - Day 2) Dr. Miranda Stevenson kicked off with a presentation on Ethics and Welfare followed by Dr. Bob Lacy on Genetic Concerns in Species Management. Miranda also presented on Regional, National, & Institutional Planning and after lunch Bob explained Demographic and Genetic Methods of Management. The rest of the day was devoted to participant presentations with dinner at the beautiful Shalimar Gardens.

The third day, 3 December, 2004 (Friday - Day 3), Dr. Miranda Stevenson presented on Studbook Management with a Case Study of Sloth Bear. Bob gave a presentation on ISIS and ZIMS, Record Keeping which, along with the Primate Taxonomy presentation given later by Sanjay, inspired participants to select Record Keeping and Taxonomy for next year's training theme. More work was done on studbooks and there was a working group session on the World Zoo & Aquarium Conservation Strategy, led by Miranda Stevenson.

After lunch we went to the Jallo Park just near to Lahore and saw both on site and off exhibit breeding facilities followed by an excellent entertainment and dinner in a huge tent at the park.

On 4 December, 2004 (Saturday – Day 4) Miranda led working groups on species coordination and collection planning with groups on mammals, birds and reptiles. This was followed by another session of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy and participant presentations. Participants enjoyed more shopping after closing the session at 7 pm and a gala dinner on the roof of Cuckoo's Den, a unique and excellent restaurant in Lahore.

The last day on 5 December, 2004 (Sunday - Day 5) the whole morning was spent on the Nutrition component of the training with presentations by Uzma Khan, R.K. Sahu, Geetha Seshamani and Jayanthi Alahakoon. This was followed by the final participant presentations and a long business session including Committee Reports and discussion of new committees, Resolutions, etc. after lunch. An emotional Validictory was conducted with many compliments and thanks. The owner of the Sunfort presented each participant with a beautiful plaque in honour of their work for their zoo community. Participants presented Sally Walker a lovely engraved tray for her work in assisting SAZARC get membership in WAZA. Participants were given beautiful colour certificates. The final dinner of the conference was held at the elegant Gymkhana Club.

The planned tour to Lal Sonhanra National Park could not be held due to a conflict of appointments at the park itself and some participants travel schedules which would not have allowed sufficient time to return. Instead, the morning of the 6th December, participants were taken on a tour of the many historical places in Lahore itself which was most exciting and worthwhile. Lunch was at the Lahore Zoo where participants could spend the afternoon if they chose to do so or go for more shopping or sightseeing. The 7th December the whole group took a field trip to the amazing salt range near Islamabad, a home cooked lunch at a government guest house, and some historical sites of Hindu temples. A tired but happy group returned the same night, too tired for dinner, and flew out the following day. Many participants flew through Karachi where Mansoor Qazi entertained them at the Karachi Zoo and the Karachi Safari Park.

We are highly indebted to our gracious, resourceful, creative, generous, patient and above all humourous and affectionate hosts, Mr. Qadeer Mehal and Raja Javed. We also thank superior officer Capt. (Retd) Iftikhar Ahmad Rao, Director General, Wildlife & Parks, Punjab, without whose cooperation and good will, the conference could not have taken place. A special thanks also to the World Wide Fund for Nature Pakistan and its Director, Dr. Ali Habib and Conservation Biologist Ms. Uzma Khan who were involved in the conference from the start and provided much cooperation, sponsorship and assistance.

Note : For details of Working Groups, presentations and discussions described in this Overview Report, please refer to the other files which contain the Working Group Reports and Power Point Presentations.



World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy WZACS provides fodder for a SAZARC Action Plan on Education and Training Chapter. SAZARC was probably the first regional zoo association to use the strategy for action planning. It hadn't even been printed ! The WZACS was approved in the World Zoo Association meeting held in Taipei, Taiwan in November. Qadeer Mehal, Brij Raj Sharma, (Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, and HANT Perera attended the meeting and contributed to the review of the strategy.

Miranda Stevenson, who coordinated the writing of the WZACS was a primary resource person for the SAZARC Training and introduced the WZACS topics to be covered in the Working Groups. Miranda was Resource Person in the SAZARC meeting held in Bangladesh also and is a popular resource and friend for SAZARC members.



Sally Walker, who authored a Chapter of the WZACS (Chapter 9: Partnerships and Politics along with a team of zoo personnel from all over the world. explains the idea of using the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy to make an Action Plan for SAZARC to follow, chapter by chapter. See the output of the Working Groups for each chapter and as a combined document edited by SAZARC Administrative office in the next section of this report .

**5th Annual Conference & Workshop of the
South Asian Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation
01-07 December 2004
Lahore, Pakistan**

List of Participants

Afghanistan

Mr. Mohammed Fazil
Education Officer
Kabul Municipality, Cultural Department
Kabul Zoo, Deh Mazang
Kabul, Afghanistan

Bangladesh

Dr. Md. Salim Iqbal
Veterinary Surgeon
Dhaka Zoo, Mirpur
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Mr. Md. Abdur Razzaque Miah
Silicon Palace-6B
8/3 Block A
Lalmatia, Dhaka
Bangladesh

Mr. Md. Mafizur Rahman
Curator
Dhaka Zoo, Mirpur
Dhaka, Bangladesh

India

Dr. Bishan Singh Bonal
Director, National Zoological Park
Mathura Road
New Delhi
New Delhi 110 003, India

Dr. B.A. Daniel
Scientist
Zoo Outreach Organisation
No.29/1, Bharathi Colony, POB 1683
Peelamedu
Coimbatore 641 004, T.N., India

Dr. Ganesh Kumar Dubey
Sr. Veterinary Officer I/c Education
Maitri Baag Zoo, Sector 8
Bhilai 490 008, Chhattisgarh, India

Mr. Brij Kishore Gupta
Scientist, Central Zoo Authority
Bikaner House, Barrack No.4
Shajahan Road, New Delhi 110 011, India

Mr. Sanjay Molur
Deputy Director, Zoo Outreach Organisation
No.29/1, Bharathi Colony, POB 1683
Peelamedu
Coimbatore 641 004, T.N., India

Dr. R.K. Sahu
Zoo Superintendent
Kamala Nehru Zoological Garden
Kankaria, Ahmedabad, Gujarat 380008,
India

Mr. Kartick Satyanarayan
Chairman & Field Worker, Wildlife S.O.S.
D-210, Defence Colony
New Delhi 110 024, India

Ms. Geeta Seshamani
Chairperson, Wildlife S.O.S.
D-210 Defence Colony
New Delhi 110 0024, India

Ms. Sally Walker
Patrol and Administrator, SAZARC
Founder/Hon. Director
Zoo Outreach Organisation
No.29/1, Bharathi Colony, POB 1683
Peelamedu
Coimbatore 641 004, T.N., India

Mr. S.K. Sinha
Director, Nandankanan Zoological Park
Mayur Bhawan
Janpath, Saheed Nagar
Bhubaneswar 751007, Orissa
India

Mr. C.S. Yalacki
Director, Museums & Zoos
Thiruvananthapuram 695 033, Kerala
India

Nepal

Mr. Ravi Sharma Aryal
Wildlife CITES Lawyer
Ministry of Law & Justice
Ga-2-411, Dhobidhara
Kathmandu, Nepal

Pakistan

Ch. Shafqat Ali
Deputy Director
Wildlife Rawalpindi
Pakistan

Mr. Zulfiqar Ali
District Wildlife Officer
Bahawalpur
Pakistan

Mr. Riaz Ahmad
Assistant Director
Wildlife Breeding Farm
Lahore, Pakistan

Mian Muhammad Ajmal
Deputy Director
Wildlife Bahawalpur
Pakistan

Ch. Muhammad Akbar
Deputy Director
Wildlife Sciences
Gatewala Faisalabad
Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Naseem Akhtar
Deputy Director
Wildlife
Lahore, Pakistan

Dr. Amir
Deputy District Officer
Safari, Karachi
Pakistan

Dr. Muhammed Arif
Assistant Director
Hyderabad Zoo, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Irshad Arshad
Assistant Director
Wildlife Gatewala Faisalabad
Pakistan

Mr. Aurangzeb
Deputy Director
Capital Development Authority
Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr. Hussain Bukhsh Bhaagat
Deputy Director
Wildlife Sukkla
Pakistan

Mr. Zahid Farooq
District Wildlife Officer
Vehari, Pakistan

Mr. Anwar Hussain Gill
Curator
Bahawalpur Zoo, Pakistan

Mr. Mazhar Hussain
D.G. Environment
Capital Development Authority
Islamabad, Pakistan

Agha Ezaz Ibrahim
Deputy Director
Head Quarters
Pakistan

Mr. Safdar Khan
District Forest Officer
Wildlife, Mansehra
Pakistan

Hana Shahbaz Khan
Deputy Director
Wildlife Research/Gujranwala Region
Lahore, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Kazim
Deputy District Officer
Karachi Zoo, Pakistan

Ms. Uzma Khan
Senior Education Officer
World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan
60 Bazar Road, Sector G-6/A
Civic Centre, Islamabad
Pakistan

Miss. Bushra Khan
Education Officer
Lahore Zoo, Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Mazhar Imtiaz
Assistant Director
Wildlife
Gujranwala
Pakistan

Mr. Nasar Hayat
Assistant Director
Murree Wildlife Park
Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Latif
V.R.I.
Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Abdul Shakoor Manj
Assistant Director
Wildlife
Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Anwar Maan
Assistant Director
Planning
Lahore, Pakistan

Malik Muhammad Mumtaz
Conservator
Wildlife Peshawar
Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Yousaf Paul
Deputy Director
Publicity Cell
Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Mansoor Qazi
Director, Karachi Zoo
Nishter Road
Karachi 3, Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Nadeem Qureshi
Assistant Director
Wildlife Sali Range
Jehlum, Pakistan

Mr. Sharif-Ud-Din
Assistant Conservator
Forest Balochistan
Pakistan

Syed Zafar-Ul-Hussain Shah
Deputy Director
Woodland Wildlife Park
Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Muhammad Azhar Saeed
Assistant Director
Wildlife
Faisalabad, Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Nasir Saleem
Deputy Director
Lahore Zoo, Pakistan

Mr. Naveed Tariq
District Wildlife Officer
Rahim Yar Khan
Pakistan

Sri Lanka

Dr. (Mrs.) Jayanthi Alahakoon
Vet. Surgeon
Zoological Gardens of Sri Lanka
Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha
Dehiwala, Sri Lanka

Mrs. Renuka Bandaranayake
Asst. Director
Zoological Gardens of Sri Lanka
Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha
Dehiwala, Sri Lanka

Mr. Athulath Mudaliga Nadun Kyshan
Asst. Curator
Zoological Gardens of Sri Lanka
Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha
Dehiwala, Sri Lanka

Resource Person

Dr. Miranda F. Stevenson
Director, Zoo Federation
Regent's Park
London NW1 4RY, U.K.

Dr. Bob Lacy, Chairman
Conservation Breeding Specialist Group
12101, Johnny Cake Ridge Road
Apple Valley, MN 55124-8151
USA