

Challenging, interesting, vibrant, fulfilling . . . my three years in Kanpur Zoo

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When I got my posting orders in March 2005 as Director, Kanpur Zoological Park, I had mixed feelings, as I had been briefed by friends that the Kanpur zoo was plagued with many problems like lack of funds, irresponsible staff, court cases, etc. At the same time I was happy to get the posting, as I am getting an opportunity to work at a place that does conservation breeding of endangered Indian Wildlife, and offers an attraction educates and entertains a half-million people a year. It was an opportunity to work where the entire staff stays busy and there is always something new going on.

As time went on, I found that my co-workers were highly talented, but were working in an environment that did not provide any motivation for them. Another opportunity, although a great challenge was to live up to the vision of Kanpur Zoo, that is to successfully breed endangered Indian wildlife. I felt that instilling a sense of belonging, enthusiasm and self-realization in my co-workers to propagate imperiled Indian wildlife would not be a difficult task.

The measures which I adopted brought in splendid results, which made my job ever challenging, interesting, vibrant and fulfilling.

I. Motivating the staff

The answer for a number of niggling problems in institutions is to put in place an effective two-way communication process. A communication process helps staff understand that their views are respected, and that they are valued. It brings a sense of belonging among staff and they begin to feel that they are very much needed by the institution. Thus I am a firm believer that communication is a critical determinant of individual, team, and organizational performance. In turn this helps in the exchange of information and further, knowledge exchange and knowledge creation. Communication helps establish the knowledge management units which, helps in creating an atmosphere of positive "vibes" for group members. where the members of the group will be with positive vibes.

The internal and external communication frequencies are linked to team performance. Open communication helps in creating an environment with mutual trust which will further staff willingly engage themselves in positive and productive organizational behaviours. Many believe that social interactions facilitate resource exchanges among employees which can lead to the generation of new ideas and enhanced organizational performances.

• **Further, my experience has indicated that:** The development, management, and transfer of knowledge **are critical for the success of the zoo**

• Knowledge management goes beyond the generation and acquisition of knowledge as such; it also includes the **management and sharing of information**

• The success to knowledge management is communication

• In the zoo setting, knowledge management has many potentially important implications, such as:
- It is critical for ensuring that employees have **the most current knowledge and skills** in animal care and management

- A focus on knowledge-sharing will ensure that advances in animal care and management practices generated in one part of the zoo are transferred to otherparts.

• **Managing institutional knowledge can also prevent the loss of knowledge** that typically occurs when individuals leave an organization, and thereby ensure that animal care and safety are not compromised by staff turnover

• Knowledge is essential **for providing high-quality animal care and management**

• For achieving it, the following measures were adopted:

- That we have a defined and specific method for achieving our mission

- That there **is a platform wherein people can express their ideas** whether pioneering, stupid, stereoscopic, or stereotypic)

- That the zoo management promotes full expression of ideas, feelings, worries, etc. by employees (an example for such an initiate is "Hamaare yaaden")

- That we have an **in-house Zoo Advisory committee (a two-way communication channel)** comprising people from all levels, including sweepers, keepers, gardeners, etc. apart from officials. The committee meets once in a month and discusses the following issues

- Animal Care
- Sanitation in the zoo
- Security issues
- Educating the zoo guests
- Positive, polite attitude towards the guests

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- The staff are exposed to the concepts like Kaizen and CAN DO—A STEP TOWARDS TQM?
- We celebrate the successes together and create challenges from the failures
 - Active involvement of the staff is ascertained by the following

- Set up a short-life working group to review how well the Zoo can communicate well internally and externally
- Turn the group's findings into a simple action plan, which are implemented over the course of a year
- By developing the concept of 'communication champions' asking team members to act as a champion for each area of communication activity
- Share knowledge and learning
- Celebrate success, Communicate every success

This entire process helped in diverting staff attention towards fulfilling their self-actualization needs, e.g., developing pride and recognition in as a result of their work. This culminated in splendid results and, in addition, reduced court cases, minimized wastage, and generated spectacular results in breeding animals in the zoo.

II. Breeding successes

Kanpur Zoo, set in a spectacular sylvan setting, once was famous for successfully breeding both Indian and exotic wildlife. These included Orangutans, Chimps, Red Pandas, Hippos, Zebras, Emus, Lions, Rhinos, Tigers, Pheasants, a variety of deer, and Himalayan black bears. Despite past successes, there has been a lull of late in breeding of animals in the zoo.

Why the scientific breeding of animals is needed?

The ever-increasing human population is impacting our natural ecosystems for food, farmland, fresh water, and firewood, and for raw materials. When habitats come under threat, it is invariably the wildlife that goes first because their demands upon natural environment are the greatest (other than that of human beings).

Thus, the importance of zoos, for zoos, working together, can preserve genetic diversity in small populations of wild animals with systematic, scientific captive management, all the while in hopes that the source of the problem, habitat destruction or over-exploitation of natural resources can be rectified.

Zoos can maintain a reservoir of diverse genes for species in peril. Breeding animals scientifically—removing inbreeding, and establishing management protocols resulting in genetically diverse and healthy zoo animals is the quintessence of zoo management.

Curiously, populations often can survive even if they all derive from a very small number of founding parents but after some time they lose fitness leading to a low conception and birth rate, low survival rate of neonates leading to decline in numbers and ultimately extinction. This phenomenon is directly related scientific management of zoo animal populations with good breeding records and infusion of new genes in to the population.

This was recognized by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) in their "*Concept paper on In-situ ex-situ linkage - Conservation Breeding of Endangered Wild Animal Species in India*". A relevant portion of it reads "it was felt that Indian Zoos have to have at least 100 properly and scientifically bred and physically, genetically and behaviorally healthy individuals of each endangered wild animal species in captivity to act as insurance cover in case of population loss of the species in the wild. Three objectives i.e. having proper captive stocks to continue display, have properly bred animals to act as insurance and for reintroduction or release in the wild in case needed, form very base of planned coordinated conservation breeding programme in Indian Zoos".

In this context, I was fortunate to be welcomed by a pair of newly born Himalayan Black Bears and by 8 Emus, when I joined the zoo as Director in March 2005 and later a number of important animals were born in the Zoo such as Indian Rhino, Swamp Deer, Chousingha, Brow-antlered deer, Pheasants, Red-Jungle Fowls, etc. In the last three years the number of endangered animals went up 77 individuals. Comparative figures are given below:

| S.No | Year | Scheduled and Non-Scheduled Animals | | Total |
|------|---------|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| 1 | 2004-05 | 190 | 424 | 614 |
| 2 | 2005-06 | 214 | 810 | 1024 |
| 3 | 2006-07 | 270 | 880 | 1150 |
| 4 | 2007-08 | 267 | 953 | 1220 |

(Upto Dec 2007)

Some of the spectacular results which show the important role played by Kanpur zoo in breeding of animals are shown in Tables found on the website of Central Zoo Authority. For example the Swamp Deer (Barasingha) *Cervus duvauceli* in Indian Zoos, Source of date is www.cza.nic.in. Births of swamp deer in Kanpur Zoo have been steady since 1997 and in my tenure I could experience the satisfaction of seeing 15 more animals born. Also Red Jungle Fowl, Silver Pheasant, Manipur Brow-antlered deer, Himalayan Black Bear and Kalij Pheasant. See box on next page.

Statistics indicate the important role played by Kanpur zoo in breeding wild animals on its premises. It high on the list among the other related institutions in its endeavor. Kanpur Zoo feels special as it was chosen up by CZA in its

Some Outstanding birth records in Kanpur Zoo - 2003-05

Source: www.cza.nic.in for species Tables

- I. *Cervus duvauceli* -- Swamp Deer (Barasingha) in Kanpur Zoo
Births of swamp deer in Kanpur Zoo from 95-96 to 04-05 = 20; from 2005-08 = 15
- II. *Gallus gallus* -- Red Jungle Fowl in Kanpur Zoo
Births of Red Jungle fowls in Kanpur zoo from 2003-05 =4; from 2005-08 = 42
- III. *Phasianus colchinus* -- Ring Necked Pheasant in Kanpur Zoo
Births from in Kanpur Zoo 1995-to 04-05 = 2; from 2005-08 = 19
- IV. *Lophura nycthemera* -- Silver Pheasant in in Kanpur Zoo
Births in Kanpur zoo during 2007-08 are 13; from 2005-08 = 18
- V. *Cervus eldi eldi* -- Deer Brow-antlered - Sangai in Kanpur Zoo
Births in Kanpur zoo from 04-05 to 04-05 =10; 2005-08 = 7
- VI. *Selenarctos thibetanus*-- Himalayan Black Bear in Indian zoos
1 Births each zoo - Alipore; Nehru ; Biol pk, AP; Jaipur; IG, Vizag; Banerghatta
2 Births each zoo- Lucknow; Rohta; Maitriabaag; Natl; Gandhi; Kamala Nehru; Arignar Anna; Renuka
3 Births each zoo - Bhivani; Nandankannan; Mysore; Chatbir Zoo; Himalayan NP Kufri
4 Births each zoo - Bhagwan Birsa Munda Zoo, Jharkhand
5 Births zoo - Sepahijala zoo
6 Births zoo - Kanpur Zoo
- VII. *Lophura leucomelanos* — Kalij Pheasant in Kanpur Zoo
Births of Kalij Pheasants 94-95 to 04-05= 32; 2003-05 = 8

ambitious programme which aims at linking *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation measures, especially for the taxa like Swamp Deer and Rhino.

In addition, during the last three years, revenue went up from Rs. 42,77,677.00 in 2003-04 to Rs. 53,43,764.00 in 2006-07 and in this year also, it is expected to be near Rs. 54,00,000.00, an increase of Rs. 11,22,323.00. In the corresponding period the number of visitors to the zoo also has gone up by about 87,000.

All this could be achieved only because of our dedicated, motivated co-workers who are ever ready for showing continuous improvement.

My experience with my co-workers proved that beyond a certain point money doesn't mean as much as personal satisfaction, and a sense of being needed and wanted. Similarly communication with our staff helped us to resolve issues of polarity, reducing figures and projections, which ultimately helped us to achieve our goals. Meaningful communication helped us in the skill of "Losing one's mind and coming to one's senses" and in nullifying "skilled incompetence" of the peers. Active involvement of the staff could be accomplished by making them feel that they are very much needed in the system through meaningful communication.

Thus my last three years in the zoo as Director have been *challenging, interesting, vibrant and fulfilling*.



Red jungle fowls hatched on 26 January 2008 in Kanpur Zoo, Kanpur