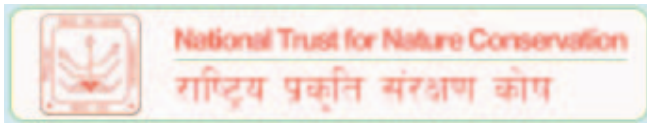


Kathmandu Zoo - NTNC / Central Zoo getting a makeover Sally Walker

In 1932 Judha Sumser Janga Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister of Nepal, established the Katmandu Zoo using his personal collection of birds. Later the zoo was named the Central Zoo. In 1951, the zoo came under the administrative control of the Nepal government and was opened to the public in 1956. The zoo was constantly transferred to various government departments and had many short term directors, it did not fared well. December 29, 1996, the zoo was transferred to the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, a private, non-profit environmental organization. The Trust made a commitment to develop the zoo as a center for conservation education and wildlife research. Short term changes, such as cleaning, painting, repairing, new labels, new staff positions and keeper training were carried out as well as for long term changes. A Friends of the Zoo group was started and also an educational program. An aquarium was added.

In 1995, Government of Nepal entrusted the management of Nepal's Central Zoo to the National Trust for Nature Conservation for 30 years. It was transferred to NTNC on the Golden Jubilee Birthday Celebration of the Late Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah in December 1995. The Trust aims to develop the Central Zoo as a center for *ex-situ* wildlife research and conservation education. The Central Zoo, with an area of about 6 ha., provides shelter to a total of 870 individual mammal, bird, fish and reptile of 109 species. It also serves as recreational center for the visitors. Central Zoo uniquely serves as a historical cultural site for diverse groups of people. The annual visitation of the zoo is 11,00,000. The budget is 4.5 crores.



Friends of the Zoo has grown exponentially since inception with over 100,000 members. The Education Department can't keep up with the demand for programmes despite their levying charges for some of them as do the western zoos. A million people visit the tiny Central Zoo every year. The revenue from ticket income supports the zoo. The zoo set up a modern animal hospital and an animal management unit which is constantly improving and enriching enclosures and improving the lives of animals.

Although improvements have been consistent for some years now, after hosting a very successful SAZARC Conference NTNC-Central Zoo embarked upon a drastic makeover for the zoo. It is not a total replacement as it is not possible to increase the space and also NTNC and Nepal government have plans for a large open zoo in lushly vegetated area on the fringe of the city. Nonetheless, the makeover is transforming the zoo into a much more beautiful and modern site, using innovative methods to get around its small size.

The gate area has been completely renovated and many ticket counters added to keep up with the ever increasing numbers of visitors. Some time ago the zoo took up jihad on plastic bags in the zoo, as they were gradually killing off the animals. Today no one is permitted to take plastic into the zoo. Instead there is a "plastic bag counter" which will take visitors plastic bags and sell a cloth bag to replace it. The deaths from impacted plastic bags are a thing of the past.



Plastic Bag Centre - Saving the Animals!

Also at the entrance are huge colourful signs encouraging visitors to Many unsightly enclosures and crowded areas have been replaced with simple landscape with lovely plants and trees which creates the impression of spaciousness even though the zoo area has not been increased.



How long does waste take to decompose ?
Don't waste ...
Recycle,
Recycle,
Recycle!

Other old fashioned enclosures have been taken down or renovated, using plants and landscaping to cover not so beautiful bits.

A new play area has been added to let school classes kids blow off steam before the serious business of seeing the zoo. It works great as teachers themselves take part in the total chaos.

A major viewing area for ungulates, one of the first encountered by visitors is in a state of vast improvement. This area is adjacent to a residential street where the two or more story houses overlook the enclosures and can be dangerous for the animals if any stray items should be carelessly tossed. This area is under improvement but you can see the changes and the direction of its evolution. Bamboo shields have been put up around some of the important vegetation so that it can be seen by the public but not eaten by the always browsing ungulates.

For vegetation outside these area, certain plants not liked by the ungulates have been planted, some recognizable by their thorny leaves.

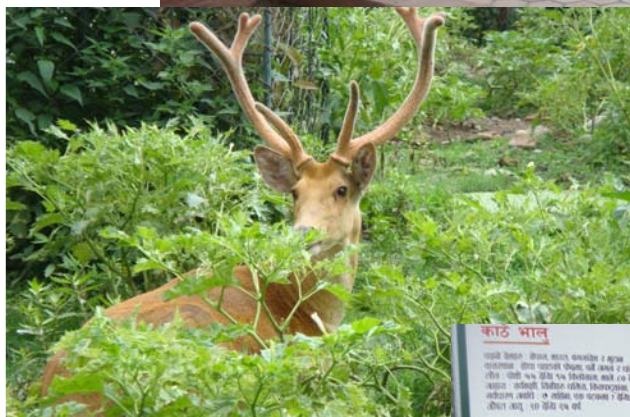
A completely renovated tiger enclosure is 100% improved and now one can see the tigers wandering at will throughout the many hills, crevices, bushes, trees, caves, etc. without stereotypic behaviour. One doesn't climb steps to over see the tigers in a distant well-like enclosure but can see them almost at eye level. There is chain mesh which is a pity and should be replaced by unbreakable glass if possible.

The sloth bear enclosure has been vastly improved although you can't really make out from the photo. You would have to see the earlier enclosure which was a typical draconian thick iron barred cell with little light and virtually no natural substance.

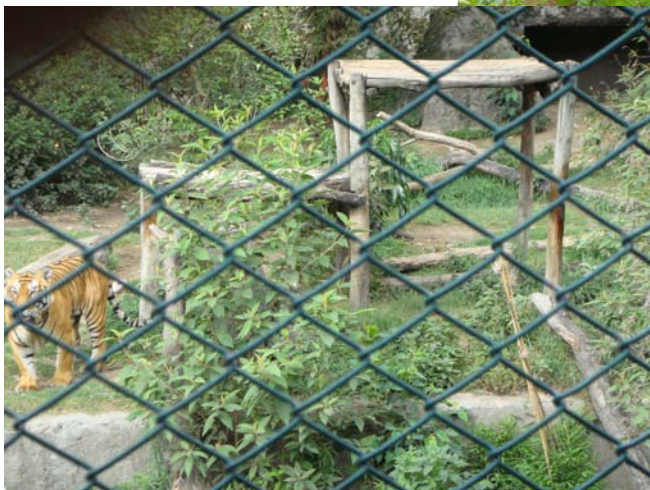


Once an unattractive area this clear pool surrounded by trees is now home to gharial and a nice way to start a zoo visit.

New play area enjoyed by teachers as well as their wild students.



This well antlered deer enjoys the cover given by the thorny plants and the enclosure looks great behind greenery that the deer won't eat.



Both bear and tiger enclosures are vastly improved but the chain mesh ruins the view of the animals. Now modern zoos are using unbreakable glass in such enclosures.



The chain mesh enclosure includes a natural floor, plants, sunshine, light, and blessed space for the bear to run around.

Amenities for visitors have been added such as vastly improved pathways to enclosures which are wide and level and made with attractive stone bricks.

There are also occasional non-occupied spots of land which have been nicely planted up and will give the impression of a larger facility such as the land next to this beautiful and practical walkway.

Tin roofs have been added to visitor areas of many of the open enclosures so that visitors can stand and watch the newly active animals run about in their more naturalistic environment.

Altogether it is a great effort and good practice for the new zoo which will come up in due course.

Congratulations to Sarita Jnawali, Project Manager, her brilliant and passionate team, NTNC Officers and all the rest who help in running and renovating a zoo.

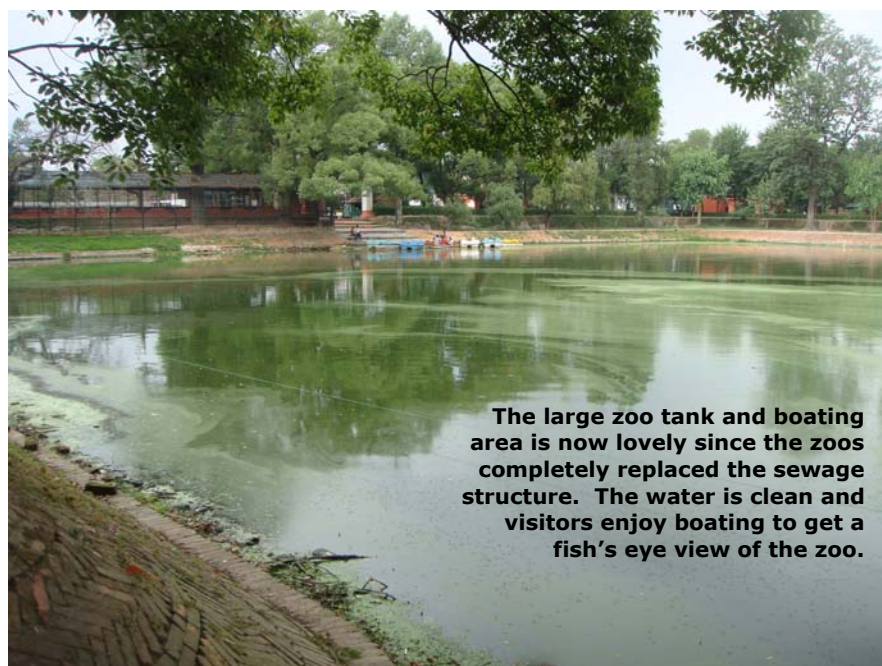


Vastly improved pathways to enclosures which are wide and level and made with attractive stone bricks. Tin room over viewing area permits visitors to observe in hot sun or driving rain.



Readers will have to look carefully to see and understand this very clever innovation done for the sake of safety of animals, visitors and staff of the zoo and also of neighboring houses.

Although it cannot easily be seen, there is a double wall around the zoo area adjacent to private dwellings. In case of an earthquake or certain severe weather situations. The double wall will create a stronger protection for both zoo and houses. If you look in between the bars of the gate in the picture above, you can see the double wall!



The large zoo tank and boating area is now lovely since the zoos completely replaced the sewage structure. The water is clean and visitors enjoy boating to get a fish's eye view of the zoo.



Examples of cane and stick structures to protect the trees from browsing ungulates. Ungulates are fed plenty of green grass and fodder and don't need this browse. They will appreciate this gesture next summer when they are luxurating under the shade of fully grown trees ... well, maybe.