

Zoo Legislation Working Groups

Introduction :

Since inception, SAZARC has promoted the importance of specific regulatory and directional legislation for zoos in the South Asian region, following the lead of Zoo Outreach Organisation with India. In the early to mid-80's, the (then) Department of Environment, Government of India published a booklet listing 44 zoos which were believed comprised the total number of zoos operated by local, state or national government. . First, Zoo Outreach Organisation (1988) and the Nandankanan Biological Park (1989) published lists of zoos discovered in their search which more than tripled the 44, and predicted as many as 300-400 active zoos in the country. These Reports sounded an alarm which precipitated a process culminating in the first zoo legislation in Asia, e.g the Zoo Act (1991) which came into being relatively quickly as an Amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act.

The topic of zoo legislation using India as a model came up at the founding meeting of SAZARC and has been a consistent thread running through all SAZARC training and conferences. In the third meeting, organised in Bangladesh, offered training on general animal management led by Miranda Stevenson who covered zoo legislation and standards, the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare and the "C.A.R.E.R." acronym for the essentials of a good zoo, e.g. Conservation, Animal Welfare, Recreation, Education, Research. This led to Bangladesh participants convening a working group to formulate principles for a national zoo association and a Bangladesh Zoo Act. This could not be realised due to some political problems but in the last two years, using the WAZA Assessment Tool and other references, the Dhaka Zoo and Ministry of Animal Husbandry have drawn up a detailed draft zoo act which they could work on at the current meeting.

In Pakistan in 2004, a meeting was conducted in Lahore inviting all the zoos and SAZARC Director, to discuss and work on a proposal for zoo legislation which was followed by more work in 2004, when Lahore Zoo and the Punjab Wildlife Department hosted the SAZARC conference and zoo legislation was a strong theme, again with Miranda Stevenson as lead trainer.

Last year, meeting in Ahmedabad, India, SAZARC conducted a training specifically on zoo legislation with Dave Morgan, Mike Jordan and Brij Kishor Gupta which was highly inspirational and led to much progress for Nepal and Bangladesh. At that meeting SAZARC adopted the WAZA Assessment Tool as a model for the standards they wished to include in zoo legislation. The WAZA tool leaned heavily on the Indian and South African Zoo standards and legislation.

This year with Kris Vehrs from AZA, Miranda Stevenson and Mike Jordan we could make more progress with increased interest and commitment from Pakistan, a new country (Bhutan) represented, progress reports from Bangladesh and Nepal and impressive working group input from Sri Lanka.

Zoo legislation for each South Asian country or in some instances (such as Pakistan) every Province, is particularly important due to their administrative systems which, for many,

involve frequent transfer of officials, and various environmental, economic, cultural and educational reasons. SAZARC is increasingly encouraged with the progress made in this area.

Following are the Reports of various working groups :

Pakistan Working Group

Group members: Abdul Qadeer Mehal, Punjab Wildlife Parks, Lahore; Muhammad Yousaf Pal, Director, Lahore Zoo; M. M. Qazi, Karachi Zoo; Miranda Stevenson, Facilitator.

Background

There are three provinces in Pakistan which have zoos, e.g. Punjab with Lahore Zoo & others; Sindh has Karachi Zoo and Karachi Safari Park; and the Federal Controlled Territories – Islamabad. Therefore, in order to be accepted and effective, any zoo legislation would have to be provincial legislation and would be passed by the relevant Provincial Assemblies within each province.

The advantages of having zoo legislation would be:

- Improved husbandry, enclosures and welfare environment of the animals would be improved
 - breeding problems and surplus stock problems
 - should make animal exchange easier as currently a director needs to go to government to get permission to transfer animals, legislation should allow the director to make the decision
 - Perhaps stop staff transfers i.e. problem of transfer of skilled staff
- Should make decision-taking easier and less bureaucratic
- Make training of staff compulsory and encourage staff progression
- Encourage financial autonomy – this is essential for the progression of the zoos in the country
- Environment of the animals would be improved
- Breeding problems: may assist with deposition of surplus stock but there was some debate about this but agreed that exchange of animals should be easier

Punjab

The Punjab Wildlife Protection Act has been amended to include captive wildlife; this is all wild animals, not just exotic kinds. This is the first step. The second step is, through an amendment to the Act, to attach a zoo act to the Wildlife Protection Act with standards of care included. Draft standards have been written but were not available at the meeting. These encompassed Welfare, Conservation and Education. Help had been supplied from both India and South Africa. These were with the relevant government legal department. Unfortunately security is the highest priority of the present National Government and Punjab Assembly, but it is hoped that in about a year's time the Zoo Act could be added to the Wildlife Protection Act.

Sindh

Qazi felt that it may be possible to amend the Sindh Wildlife Act once the Punjab had zoo legislation. However there is not a great will with the City authorities to do this at present. Currently they really only interfere in matters of finance and animal movement. There are some 18 townships within Karachi and five of these already have mini-zoos, therefore legislation would help control this, although there is no desire from the executives of the townships to have such zoo controls. These zoos are not of a good standard and actually provide ammunition to explain why legislation is required. Federal Controlled Territories may be the most difficult, but the same principle applies. Unfortunately as Raja Javed and other from Islamabad were unable to attend, it was not possible to discuss further.

Bangladesh Working Group

Group members: Jillur Rahim Shahriar, Sr. Asst. Secty, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock MFL; Md. Shafiqur Rahman Shoshi, Dhaka Zoo; Md. Golam Rabbani, Rangpur Zoo, Rangpur; Dr. Zahed Mohammad Malekur Rahman, Dulhazara Safari Park; Abudur Razzaque Mia, National Advisor, MFL; Chowdhury, Md. Mongur Morshed, Chittagong Zoo.

Though, Bangladesh has no Zoo Act as yet, it is needed for improved management and conservation of captive animals, which Government of Bangladesh has supported in principle.

In the SAZARC meeting in 2003 a Working Group created a Draft of a Zoo Act using the Indian Zoo Act as a model. This launched the idea of zoo legislation for Bangladesh but there were difficulties in deciding which Ministry would float the act. Later seven Inter-Ministerial Meetings were conducted and submitted a draft copy of the Zoo Act to the Ministry of Law for vetting. Now it is waiting by the National parliament. The Act is to make provisions for establishment of Zoos and for conservation of wildlife in Bangladesh under the authority of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock with the Director General of to perform the main functions.

In the working group salient points were reviewed discussed, such as Why Bangladesh needs a Zoo Act and activities which have been completed. The Draft Act is waiting for debating in the National Parliament. The entire Draft was read out by JR Shahriar in order to familiarise Resource Person Kris Vehrs with it and a hard copy given to her for more clarification so that a meaningful discussion could take place later. Kris met with the Bangladesh participants several times during the meeting and worked on their Draft.

Bhutan

Group Members: Kuenzang Gyeltshen, Bhutan; Sarita Jnawali, Central Zoo, Kathmandu; Shiv Raj Bhatta, Dept of National Park and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, Sally Walker (Facilitator).

Mr. Gyeltshen, Livestock Officer, Wildlife Rescue & Rehab Centre, Nature Conservation Division Department of Forest, Bhutan. He was the only person from Bhutan at the conference. In the legislation working groups Mr. Gyeltshen shared the table with the Nepal contingent. Mr. Gyeltshen related that Bhutan should start thinking about such legislation because a large number of rescued and confiscated animals were coming into captivity and they needed to be more organised about it. He will discuss with his department when he returns to Bhutan.

Nepal

Group Members: Sarita Jnawali, Central Zoo, Kathmandu; Shiv Raj Bhatta, Dept of Natl Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, Sally Walker (Facilitator).

Nepal group discussed the question of the working session, that is why we need zoo Legislation and suggested the following:

1. To provide the legal status to Zoos,
2. To define what is meant by "zoo",
3. To regulate number and quality of Nepal's zoos,
4. To establish population management in the zoos,
5. Animal rescue centre should be regulated under zoo legislation (zoo is assisting to rescue animal),
6. Animal (captive) welfare to be addressed,
7. To form minimum standards and criteria for zoos,
8. To set a minimum education standard,
9. To set a legal mechanism for zoo inspection,
10. Provision/mechanism for closing zoos,
11. To arrange a clear enforcement agent (DNPWC and Ministry)

India

Group Members: Dr. R.K. Sahu (Facilitator), Kamla Nehru Zoo; Vijay Ranjan Singh, Mysore Zoo; and Sri Rajpoot, Van Vihar Zoo.

The members of the Indian group earlier had identified some weaknesses in Indian zoo legislation, warning participants to beware of these lacunae. They were tasked with drafting Indian Zoo legislation that they felt were counter productive. In the end they concluded that the problems were not with the printed legislation as such but with the various ways it was interpreted by individuals.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has a Zoo Act which established the Department of National Zoological Gardens which is responsible for all government owned zoos. Currently there is the zoo at Dehiwala and the elephant orphanage at Pinnawala. Two new zoos are under process as well, a Safari Park and another traditional zoo also at Pinnawala. It has been recognised that adding standards of care to the existing act as an amendment would be a good move. Much attention was given the zoos in Sri Lanka NOT under the Department which get around existing rules by holding only exotic (non-native) animals which are not covered under the existing act. Discussion was conducted on this and other matters.