

## South Asian Zoo and Wildlife News

### Large population of endangered dolphins found off Bangladesh

The world's largest population of vulnerable Irrawaddy dolphins — famed as aquarium attractions — has been found in Bangladesh's waters, according to a five-year wildlife study. Until now, it was believed the small light-grey mammal was threatened and IUCN had put five of its Southeast Asian populations on its list of critically endangered animals. But the study, launched in 2003 by the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society and the Bangladesh Cetacean Diversity Project, has counted 5,832 Irrawaddy dolphins along Bangladesh's coast and estuaries. "It's by far the biggest population of Irrawaddy dolphins in the world," said project director Brian Smith of the Wildlife Conservation Society. "It's very good news for all of us," he said. Researchers surveyed the waters along Bangladesh's 1,400 kilometres of coastline. In other areas where the dolphins are known to converge, such as the Mekong delta, populations have been estimated at less than 100. They are found in small, geographically isolated populations from Australia to India to the Philippines. One of the main threats to their survival is drowning in fishing nets, says the WWF. They are also fished for their oil and meat. The dolphins' ability to live in both salt water and fresh water makes them popular with dolphin shows, where fresh water tanks are cheaper to maintain. Despite the welcome discovery of the larger than expected number of Irrawaddy dolphins off Bangladesh, Smith of the Wildlife Conservation Society said their long-term future was far from secure. "During the study, we have seen that because of fishing with long nets, accidental deaths of dolphins along Bangladesh coast and estuary rivers is common. They get entangled in the fishing nets and die," Smith said. The researchers urged the government to take immediate steps to create small networks of protected zones in order to prevent the Irrawaddy dolphin following the Yangtze river dolphin down the path of extinction.

### Assam zoo declared no-smoking zone

Guwahati, Sept. 25: Irritating puffs of smoke and carelessly thrown cigarette ends will no longer bother either the visitors or the animals at Guwahati zoo.

Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi today declared the zoo a "no-smoking zone" during a short function, making the zoo the first in the region to adopt such a policy. The divisional forest officer of the zoo, Narayan Mahanta, said visitors would not have the luxury of enjoying a puff while going round the zoo, which will be preserved as a green lung of the city. "We would not like to be harsh but this is a fervent appeal to all visitors not to smoke within the zoo," Mahanta said. Signboards have been put up at prominent places in the zoo asking the people not to smoke. "I had requested forest minister Rockybul Hussain to declare the zoo a no-smoking zone and he readily agreed to it," Mahanta said. The zoo has already been declared a no-polythene zone. The zoo staff has been asked to keep a watch on the

visitors and ask them not to smoke. The Union minister for health and family welfare, Anbumani Ramadoss, has already said the Centre would strictly enforce the ban on smoking in public places from October 2. The Centre has notified the revised Rules on the Prohibition of Smoking in Public Places on May 30 this year. According to the revised rules, smoking is banned in shopping malls, cinema halls, public/private workplaces, hotels, banquet halls, discotheques, canteen, coffeehouse, pubs, bars, airport lounges and railway stations.

### Shillong zoo offers to outsource animals

Shillong (PTI): Lack of manpower, space and funds have made the Meghalaya forest department to offer animals at the zoo here to other organisations till a full-fledged menagerie comes up in the state. The move came after the Supreme Court slapped a notice on the state government following a complaint by wildlife activists including PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) on ill treatment of the animals at the Lady Hydari Park, the only zoo of the state. Principle Chief Conservator of Forests V.K. Nautiyal admitted that shortage of funds and manpower were the reasons for the department failing to provide the "best facilities and care" to the inmates. The State Forest Department had recently shifted a few endangered animals, including a pair of Hoolock gibbons to Assam zoo, following complaints from PETA. <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/004200809211131.htm>

### "One World, One Zoo" Second Call for Papers

Second Call for Papers for the 3rd International Congress on Zookeeping and the 36th American

Association of Zoo Keepers National Conference. It will be hosted by The Puget Sound Chapter of AAZK and Woodland Park Zoo. A joint conference: The 3rd International Congress on Zookeeping and the 36th National Conference of the American Association of Zoo Keepers will be held in Seattle, WA, USA, in 2009. This will be hosted by The Puget Sound Chapter of AAZK and Woodland Park Zoo. You are invited to submit abstracts of papers, posters & workshops on any aspect of zoo work. More information and guidelines can be found at the ICZ website [www.iczoo.org](http://www.iczoo.org) Abstracts for oral and poster presentations should be written in English, no more than 600 words long, and in RTF or MS Word® format. The abstract should contain title, authors and affiliations with the presenting author in bold letters. Body text to be Arial, font size 12 & titles size 14. If you want to run a workshop focused on developing zoo keeper skills, please send a short description. Please mark 'ICZ Abstract' and send to: Paul Howse, ICZ Steering Committee at [p.howse@chesterzoo.org](mailto:p.howse@chesterzoo.org). Estimated attendance is 350 - 400 zoo workers from over 30 countries. **Deadline for abstracts is 1st April 2009.** Conference dates are September 24th - 29th, 2009.

