

threatened species in zoos and aquariums be managed as global or regional cooperative programmes with participating zoos and aquariums sharing a set of specific programme objectives. Regional programmes should link together to address global conservation strategies. Global or regional studbooks or equivalent databases need to be maintained for these species. Where resources allow, breeding programmes for non-threatened species should also be monitored and managed.

The WZACS recommends that all breeding programmes in which zoos or aquariums are involved should be quantitatively and objectively evaluated in terms of their objectives, status and viability.

The WZACS strongly recommends that all breeding programmes should be based on sound science and management using the latest available knowledge on population management, reproductive biology, genetics, animal behaviour, nutrition, veterinary care and husbandry standards.

The WZACS reminds all zoos and aquariums and local, regional and national authorities that they would find it useful to consult the 'WAZA Guidelines on the acceptance of seized or confiscated animals' before accepting confiscated animals.

The WZACS urges all zoos and aquariums to continue to support the scientific development of population management, particularly for taxa held in group situations (e.g. fish, invertebrates and micro-organisms), or species facing specific challenges, such as disease.

The WZACS reminds all zoos and aquariums that they are expected to maintain critical animal records on their collections and contribute these data to the ISIS database and studbooks in a timely and comprehensive manner. The WAZA and regional associations must continue to explore economically viable methods for institutions in developing countries to participate fully in this process.

The WZACS calls on all zoos and aquariums to link their collection planning with regionally or globally identified conservation priorities working in collaboration with the IUCN Species Survival Commission's taxonomic and species advisory groups.

The WZACS calls upon legislators and enforcers to make sure that the processes of implementation involved in the transfer of animals and genetic materials between zoos and between aquariums are completed as speedily as possible.

---

## WZACS is, or should be, for ALL Zoos (or) Let's take the "Con" out of zoo conservation

Zoo Outreach Organisation and the South Asian Zoo Association, both members of WAZA, have taken a very active role in trying to promote WZACS and its implementation to South Asian zoos and aquaria. We now have a special mission to promote the notion that ALL zoos, not just zoos with a surfeit of resources, and, at least, all those zoos that WANT to be ethical and caring and "righteous", need to be *active partners* in all aspects of this movement.

Therefore, the interpretation of what WZACS says is very important. WZACS has adopted an IUCN definition of conservation which is "*Conservation is the securing of longterm populations of species in natural ecosystems and habitats wherever possible.*"

This definition is more or less what we often refer to as "field conservation" or *in situ* conservation. How do zoos from our part of the world achieve that? When zoo personnel continue to think that just by holding an animal they are "conserving" it, no matter where it came from (a trapper, dealer or a bad zoo), and no matter its living conditions, some zoos will see no discrepancy. There is, however, a big difference in merely having wild animals and contributing to conservation. The purpose of this article is to set right misguided thinking on this issue.

The environmental and wildlife crises which are taking place now all over the world should suggest to all zoo, wildlife and environmental institutions that they should

make the most of their unique ability to promote awareness and lend whatever their expertise to the goal of protecting, renewing and/or sustaining habitat and the wildlife within.

As mentioned before WZACS more or less defines conservation as "field conservation". According to Miranda Stevenson, Director of the British Association of Zoos and Aquaria and also the Coordinator of WZACS, "the reason for the emphasis on *in situ* conservation in WZACS is two-fold (i) true conservation can only take place in the natural environment and therefore the 'securing of long-term populations, etc. must be the long term goal of any programme, and (ii) keeping animals in captive environments without this goal can hardly be considered conservation – more accurately this would be preservation only! Some preservation efforts (Pierre David's deer, Przewalski's horse, etc.) started off as preservation and ended up as conservation, however, zoos have been criticized by the anti-zoo lobby and even some conservationists for putting the "con" into conservation, and where a zoo claims to be doing conservation simply by holding a species – there is some justification for this criticism! Also as Sally describes subsequently, buying animals from dealers and irresponsible breeding can be actually detrimental to conservation, as can keeping them in inadequate captive environments."

WAZA is right to promote this definition. Keeping wild animals in institutions, when their habitat has been allowed to degrade and disappear, makes very little or no sense at

all if they have no future as species. If all we wanted was a “biodiversity blood bank”, we could just take samples for a few “frozen zoos.” No, we want to save wild animals in their habitats and we want to save habitats as well. The presence of threatened wild animals in a locality can be used as a means of encouraging government to declare them as protected areas and of strengthening protected area networks all over the world.

Is it not the case that we want to utilize zoos/wild animal facilities in all their forms for conservation — national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, museums and botanical gardens and even rescue centers and animal orphanages ? Education in any of these, bolstered by effective interpretation, can create emotion along with awareness related to the environmental crisis so that people will be encouraged to change their behaviour. The current crisis has a chance of being stabilized only if most of the people in each locality of the world, understand it, feel its importance and change their behaviour. If the crisis can be stabilized, then there may be a way to turn it around.

The WZACS, in defining conservation as “field” or “*in situ*” conservation does not mean that zoos which are not wealthy enough or without sufficient infrastructure can’t participate. There are many ways to give support to field conservation besides breeding threatened species for release into the wild. Breeding — of the quality required for reintroduction — is a very difficult and delicate operation that may be beyond the ability of many of the worlds’ zoos and other animal facilities. Support to field conservation can be a variety of associated activities, such as

- re-orienting education programmes from biological emphasis to conservation values, and improving the efficacy of education programmes to influence the public
- organizing fundraising events or currency collection sites for specific field projects,
- sharing their many skills in daily animal handling and wildlife veterinary medicine
- conducting benign research on captive animals which will aid in understanding them in the wild
- advising field biologists and other field personnel who may be involved in reintroductions, etc.
- and many more ...

Or, again according to Miranda Stevenson “the caveat is to ‘benefit’ species in the wild – and much captive management does this in a variety of different ways.”

#### “Not-actions”

In addition to positive actions, however, supporting or ‘benefitting’ field conservation can also be achieved by curbing certain actions that are inimical to protecting and sustaining wild populations, such as :

- buying animals from dealers or other zoos who obtain them from the wild
- obtaining animals from any source without knowledge of how to breed them, without belonging to any coordinated breeding programmes, without knowing with certainty their taxonomic identity, without knowing their provenance
- Hybridizing, cross-breeding, over-breeding, and inbreeding captive wild animals is also inimical to conservation.

- releasing animals into the wild without sufficient knowledge of their ability to survive, without knowing their health status (or ignoring it), without knowing fully other fauna and flora in the release locality and the threats the release may create, both to released animals and to resident wildlife ...including plants.

Much of this is going on today with the full support of some governments and even under the direction of their Courts. Such activities can create disastrous problems which insure population decline of other taxa. ***For zoos (and governments) which permit, encourage or do these things, making a commitment to STOP these actions is in itself a commitment to conservation of wildlife in the wild.***

Zoos which commit these actions are not wholly culpable when their state or municipal administration insists on transferring zoo officials frequently, obviating the possibility of the officials understanding the consequences of such actions for conservation. They are also not wholly to blame when their politicians and policy makers encourage them to obtain new animals at any cost, just because the voting public wants to see exotic spectacles. Refusing politicians and policy makers what they want for their voting public can impact one’s career and all that entails for their family, etc., so nobody is judging zoo officials in this paper.

All of these things impact wildlife in the wild. Nevertheless, it is the responsibility of everyone involved to educate those who are uninformed and to work towards an improved way of conducting their affairs.

Other than support for wildlife in the wild the second major principle of the WZACS is its emphasis on partnerships. No zoo is an island and when it comes to field conservation, hardly any organisation or institution makes much of a long-term impact alone. Partnering with forest departments, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, other zoos and animal facilities of different kinds, etc. can help zoos in any part of the world with their involvement in field conservation. Many zoos and conservation organisations in western countries have been giving significant support to field conservation for several years. Sometimes these organisations come into our countries in South Asia to conduct a field project and do not even contact the local zoo. This is the case in other countries also. There is an initiative building now (this also was suggested in WZACS, Chapter 7, Partnerships and Politics) for zoos with projects in localities where there is a zoo to engage the local zoo and its staff and see if there is any way in which they can collaborate on the project. One obvious way is through education — the local zoo could highlight the field project in their education programme. The visiting zoo could probably help out by contributing some equipment, expertise, funds for printing, etc. The local zoo staff will know better how to communicate with people in the nearby field project and could be of help in that way. There are other ways zoo personnel could be helpful to a field project.

We want to encourage the regions and countries whose zoos are not administratively, technically or financially in a position to run a field project themselves to find ways to

contribute to field conservation with a partner or partners. The partner(s) can be from another country or region, or from your own country or locality. One of your partners will have to be the existing forest administration due to local legislation and rules. Maybe there is some DFO (Divisional Forest Officer or equivalent) nearby you that has a small project that he can't implement alone. Some of what WZACS says about partnerships for *in situ* conservation can be read on the next page.

The Bhilai Steel Plant Zoo made a policy decision that their zoo's primary mission would be conservation education. After his first CBSG and SAZARC meeting Ganesh Dubey, Superintendent of the zoo, took up a very successful education project involving local trade in wild parrots. Now, tell me THAT doesn't affect wildlife in the wild. The Chennai Snake Park Trust has also made such a commitment to

conservation in education about reptiles. So those zoos are already carrying out the WZACS principles while bigger and richer zoos are sitting around waiting for their animals to breed and an appropriate habitat to materialize.

Over the next few weeks and months, we will be working on a list of ways that ALL zoos can contribute to field conservation meaningfully. We would like to invite contributions of ideas and opinions (either for or against), examples or case studies. Please send your ideas and projects, even projects that you can't do but would like to do. Send to [sallyrwalker@aol.com](mailto:sallyrwalker@aol.com) or [zooreach@vsnl.com](mailto:zooreach@vsnl.com).

Working together with guidance from WZACS and our partners, we can make a difference in long-term and genuine conservation of wildlife in the wild.

---

## Response from Head of International Zoo Programmes, ZSL

Director, SAZARC

Even in such a brief paper you have raised so many issues and I would like to pick up on some and make a few brief general observations.

Firstly I think this is a good approach and using your region of South Asia for test the water will be very useful. There are a good number of zoos there which range in size and support systems and are at different stages of development, if you use the WZACS as defining the targets. They are also in an extremely important area for wildlife and habitats.

I do not get the impression from WZACS that only zoos with a surfeit of resources can undertake *in situ* conservation but it may be harder for zoos that struggle financially and are not exposed to the concept to extract from the document just what they can do to support field conservation.

Bad zoos do reflect on the good zoos wherever they are. One bad zoo can be a tremendous asset to the anti-zoo lobby in any country or region as they then use that as the example of zoos to their readers and potential supporters. This does not have to be in developing countries only. I also think that bad zoos impact on our ability to raise funds, with granting agencies, sponsors, foundations, etc., being distracted by the welfare issues seen in bad zoos, even if they do not apply in good zoos.

Of course it varies in countries and regions, but many zoos in what we would see as "range countries" are run by wildlife agencies, or by cities, states, governments, etc that have responsibility for wildlife. In theory the synergy between these zoos and the conservation efforts should be very effective but often zoos are seen as a drain on resources rather than a tool to help with their work. You mention the partnering potential toward the end of the piece as an example of this and surely this is where the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans should be making that link and clarifying the role of zoos in that country.

One of the key roles of WAZA and the regional zoo associations is to make sure the decision-makers accept and adopt WZACS. This would hopefully stop some of the practices you mention – use of dealers, inbreeding, inappropriate species, etc. Easier said than done, I know, but if we are to make an impact over the long-term we have to achieve this better understanding by those who manage and fund the zoos. Of course we have to make sure that all zoos follow these directions, it is not only zoos in developing countries that show bad practice and that is not out of ignorance or opportunity to do better.

The use of dealers, wild caught animals, animal exchanges (dumping surplus), unnecessary breeding, confiscated animals, etc are tremendous challenges for all zoos. Unwise "reintroductions" are not necessarily activities of zoos only in developing countries. I am sure we can all quote examples of other organisations doing exactly this in many western countries. It will be interesting to see the responses your paper stimulates.

**Nick Lindsay**  
**International Zoo Programmes**  
**Zoological Society of London**  
<http://www.zsl.org/>



WORLD ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS