

# The Kabul Zoo, Afghanistan - some recent history

The following article appeared in the magazine, *International Zoo News*, in 1973, Vol. 20-4, No. 114. It was written by Dr. Gunther Nogge who is currently Director of Koln Zoo, Germany. Dr. Nogge worked with the Kabul Zoo in the years 1969 - 1973 while he was a lecturer in zoology at the university and advisor of the zoo.

## Report of the Kabul Zoo for 1972

At the end of 1972 three hybrid Bear cubs were born; the father is a Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*), the mother a Himalayan Black Bear (*Selenarctos tibetanus*), which were kept together in a moated enclosure.

Acquired during summer 1972 were 2.2 Flying fox, 1.1 Great hornbill, 1.1 Red-billed blue magpie, 1.1 Blue-winged pitta, 1.1 Nicobar pigeon, 1.1 Emerald dove, 1.1 Coppersmith barbet, 2.2 Gold-fronted leafbird, 1.1 Fairy bluebird, and several species of mynah. On the occasion of a state visit by the Indian President, Mr. Giri, Kabul Zoo was promised a small elephant which is expected to arrive soon.

At the end of 1972, Kabul Zoo had 32 species of mammals with 101 specimens, 95 species of bird with 408 specimens, and 5 species of reptiles with 15 specimens.

The main construction project in 1972 was an animal house for the exhibition of Indian birds and small mammals. Five indoor and outdoor cages show Leopard cats, Civet, Flying squirrel and Lion-tailed Monkey. Four cages for birds display hornbills, parrots, Blue magpies and finches. The main part of the building consists of a flight room measuring 80 square metres and decorated with plants, a small pond for water birds and several trees. Toward the rear of the flight room is a wall constructed of unbaked bricks in the style of an old Afghan house containing a number of nesting holes to house the birds. Between the wall and rear section of the building are heating facilities. The flight room as well as the cages are illuminated by means of glass ceilings and the cages themselves are constructed with glass fronts to permit easy viewing for the public.

Attached to the Indian House are eight pheasant cages which exhibit the zoo's

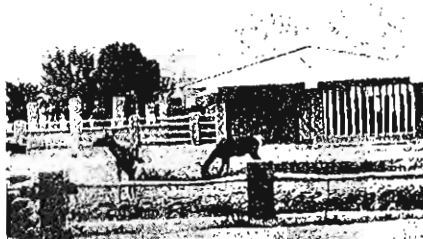
exotic pheasants and include Golden, Lady Amherst, Silver Reeve's and Blue-eared pheasants.

To display the zoo's Rhesus monkeys in a more pleasing fashion a moated island with an artificial mound was constructed last summer. A small sleeping house for monkeys was also built which the animals reach by means of a small bridge over the moat.

When the Asian elephants was promised, plans were drawn up immediately for the construction of adequate housing, which is currently in progress.

The number of visitors in 1972 rose by approximately 20% over 1971 and was more than 150,000.

(Dr. Gunther Nogge)



Bactrian Wapiti at Kabul Zoo in the 70's. Photo by Gunther Nogge.



Pelicans sun themselves by a pool in pre-war Kabul Zoo in the 70's. Photo by Gunther Nogge.



Ibex and bezoar at Kabul zoo in early days. Photo by Gunther Nogge.

## Kabul Zoo -- 2002

In March, Prof. Dr. Clas Nauman, a zoologist who worked with Gunther Nogge on the faculty of science in Kabul some years ago, visited the Kabul Zoo after encountering great difficulties in finding a flight to Kabul. He had built up a zoological museum on the grounds of the zoo which is no more in existence. Dr. Nauman is head of the Bonn University's Kabul committee. Dr. Nauman brought hundreds of slides and reported to Dr. Nogge who made the following comments in various emails to the Kabul Interest Group. The photos on the next page are from the visit of Dr. Nauman.

Extracts from emails from Gunther Nogge :

"I have now a quite clear picture of what once was the Kabul Zoo by hundreds of slides, which my colleague Clas Naumann brought home. Ninety-nine percent of the Zoo is destroyed. There is no water in the ponds and of course no waterfowl. Leopards, snow leopards, tigers, brown bears, striped hyenas, jackals, corsacs, porcupines, wild boars, Bactrian wapitis, wild sheep, ibex, bezoar goats, onager, are all gone.

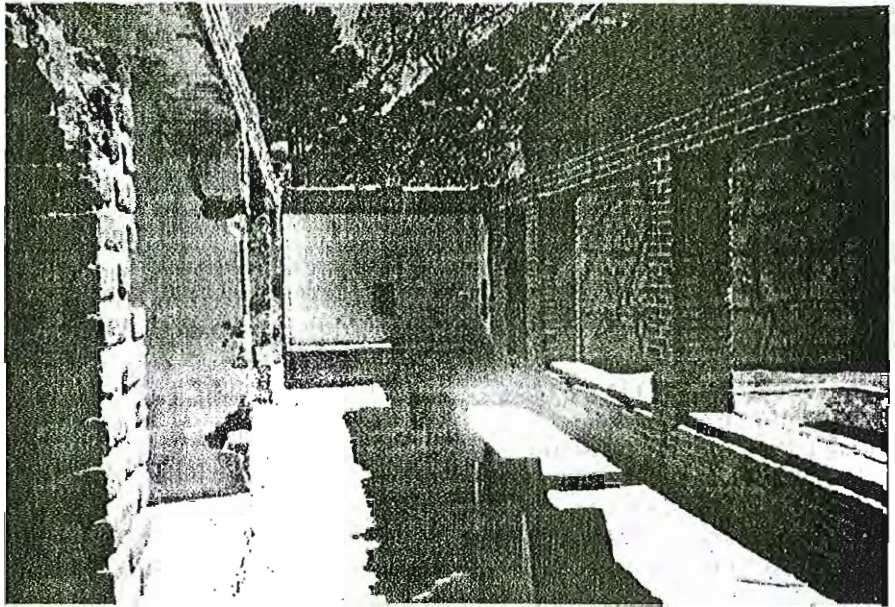
The only surviving hoofed stock is a single goitered gazelle. Aside from the Himalayan black bear, there are few rhesus monkeys, some wolves, and a number of birds. All animals according to Clas look well fed and healthy, including the bear except its nose. So, there seems to be no welfare problem at this time, and we can start thinking of the future.

In my eyes, zoos in developing countries are even more important than in the developed world. They can play a tremendous role in conservation education. Animals at the zoo must reflect the local fauna and serve as ambassadors of their environment - and Afghanistan indeed has a very rich and spectacular fauna. There can be no doubt, that the Afghan government has other priorities and there will certainly come no development aid from outside. Having

collected so much money for (the animals of) the Zoo, the Zoo community has a unique chance to do the job."

Dr. Ehzan Argandewal, zoologist, and dean of the faculty of science at Kabul University until 1996, and Mr. Taufik, both Afghani expat working in Cologne at the zoo visited Kabul shortly afterward as well. We have yet to get a report from them.

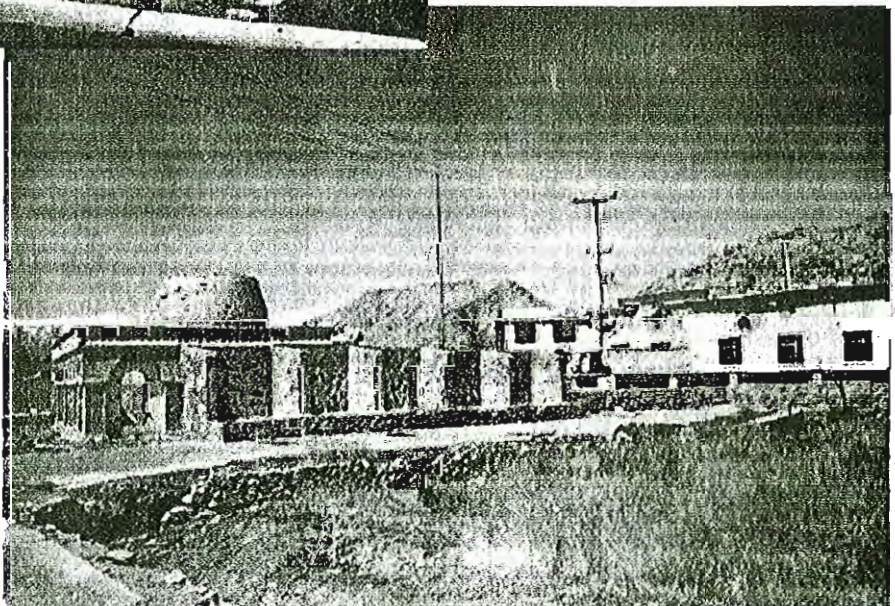
Subsequent issues of ZOOS' PRINT will carry updates of the work at Kabul Zoo, which has become a project not just of a few people in a couple of rich countries but an international zoo effort, of which we in the zoo field can all be proud.



Bird House at the Kabul Zoo. Photo compliments of Clas Nauman.



Monkey Island. Photo compliments of Clas Nauman.



Elephant house at Kabul Zoo. Photo compliments of Clas Nauman