

Philippines' Zoos, Breeding Centres and Rescue Centres visited by SEAZA conference delegates



*Kinder
Zoo
(Children's
Zoo)
-- a newly
developed
and
charming
section
of the
Manila Zoo*

Manila Zoo

Before the current Manila Zoo was founded there was a Public Garden in Manila where some mammals, birds and reptiles were exhibited. Previous to that, under the Government of Spain, a few animals were kept in the Botanic Gardens but these Gardens were completely destroyed in a battle. The same Report, by S. S. Flower, Superintendent of Giza Zoo (1909), stated that it was proposed to have a regular Zoological Garden in Manila.

The Manila Zoological and Botanical Garden was founded a half century later, however, on 25 July 1959 by city authorities. At that time the area was 14 acres. Kirchshofer (1966) has listed it as having a zoo museum. In 1972 the Manila Zoo and Botanical Gardens was run by the Public Recreation Bureau and covered an area of 5.5 ha with 13.5 ha. available for development. At that time the zoo employed 258 staff (International Zoo Yearbook, 1972).

In 1995, 35 years after its construction, according to promotional literature sent around, the Manila Zoo undertook a redevelopment project to make it a "world class venue for recreation, environmental conservation and education." The project was spearheaded by the Mayor of Manila and powered by well-intentioned groups and individuals, such as the Public Recreation Bureau, Friends of the Manila Zoo Foundation, Zoo Village Development Corporation, Coe Lee Robinson, Inc; PDAA Group International and Archbishop Tom Adarme. The stated mission of the redeveloped zoo was to popularize environmental conservation, wildlife education and to provide an interactive and enjoyable experience. This commitment was to be fulfilled by participating in the Philippines national agenda for increased environmental awareness, providing a unique educational programme of activities and working with both local and foreign zoos actively supporting global wildlife conservation (Friends of the Manila Zoo Foundation, 1996).

In 1996 Manila Zoo had an annual visitation of 1.4 million and a collection of 620 species, about the same number as today. In their

literature the Zoo took its own inventory, stating that there had been no major renovations since its construction, utilised only 50% of its land area for the animal exhibits and did not provide proper visitor services and amenities. The zoo aimed to correct those deficiencies and others by bringing together a high-powered team of local and foreign organisations. A Master Plan was drawn up with thematic areas such as an Asian Dome, African Grassland and walk-in aviary. This work was to be completed by 1997, which, considering all what was envisioned, may not have been a realistic time frame (Manila Zoo, 1995).



*Manila
Zoo
Redevelopment
Project
raised
funds for
and
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a
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Kinder
Zoo*

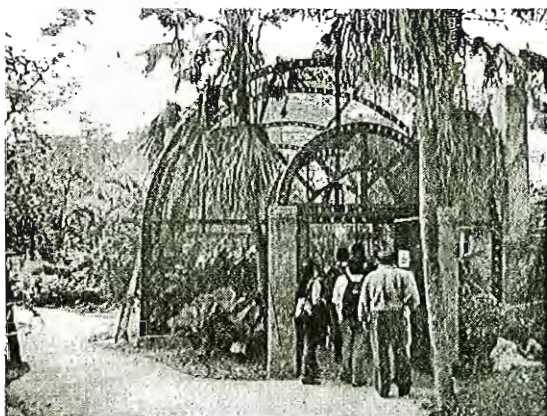
At this writing the Manila Zoo Master Plan has not been realized to any great extent. Building has started but in an *ad hoc* fashion. The Foundation has raised money for a children's zoo which occupies a whole section of the zoo and is extremely attractive. The International

Foundation for Animal Welfare had given funds to construct tiger enclosures which are large, naturalistic and make very good viewing. However, the Master Plan itself, which was prepared by an American zoo consulting company in meetings with the local committee, has



A very attractive Flamingo Pond graces the entrance area of the new Kinder Zoo, Manila

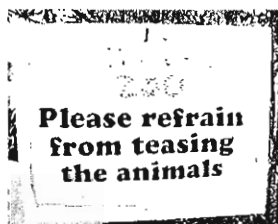
met with strong opposition by almost everybody within the western zoo community with an interest in conservation in the Philippines. The last Master Plan does not show-case Philippine wildlife or contribute much to making the public aware about the biological richness of their country. Instead it features 'standard' zoo animals such as giraffes, elephants etc. which could be seen in any of the world's zoos.



Visitors from SEAZA enter the new and very pretty and serviceable walk-through aviary and butterfly house at Kinder Zoo, Manila.

Discussion has been going on with the Manila Zoo Master Planning committee but it is not known to what extent the master plan has been modified (Wirth, Pers. Comm., 1998) and, in the meantime, the available land area has dissipated. Also, the inclusion of features such as a feeding lake for threatened, neo-tropical, arapaima fishes are simply outdated in the contemporary zoo context which supports the concept of promoting conservation and education of indigenous animals to the extent possible. In a brand new zoo plan, any "extent" is "possible" and planning such elaborate and expensive exhibits for non-native species in a country as speciose in threatened endemics as Philippines simply doesn't make sense.

The political situation of Philippines affects the zoo which is dependent for its director and staff on the Mayor, who is himself dependent on whatever political party is in power. It sounds like a familiar situation, particularly in many tropical countries where progress gets stuck in a sort of extinction vortex in which the process of going forward and then back to square one over and over again due to governmental collapse, elections and frequent transfers and policy changes



creates a sense of hopelessness.



Teaching visitors about butterflies at the walk-through aviary at the "Kinder Zoo"

Another type of volunteer group has come up around the Manila Zoo relatively recently, called "MyZoo". The MyZoo Volunteer Group Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit, charitable organization working towards the conservation of local biodiversity by utilizing the zoo as a center for public education. It was founded by Kathy Chva and Kitty Arcein just one year ago along with a group of about 50 volunteers and the various zoos, organizations and institutions. "MyZoo" offers programs such as the "zoo to you" (an outreach education program), community service programs for schools and universities that have 16-20 hour required service for their students, zoo tours and close encounter programmes at the zoo itself. Myzoo's email is <<myzoo@rescueteam.com>>



Kathy Chva, one of the founders of MyZoo shows a snake to a zoo crowd.

The Manila Zoo badly needs its renovation as it is congested and shabby. Some of the enclosures are simply dreary but others, such as the primates cages, have very serious problems and the animals are living in agony. The success of the Kinder Zoo clearly demonstrates the ability of the associated organisations to construct and maintain an attractive and innovative facility. The Philippines zoo community has requested the South East Asian Zoo Association for assistance in bringing all their zoos up to standard. In 2002 the SEAZA welfare committee will inspect the zoos, starting with Manila Zoo and give recommendations for improvement. If the government could prioritise this project for a short time to get it off the ground, the zoo could do a great deal to promote and protect some of Philippines many endemic and threatened species.