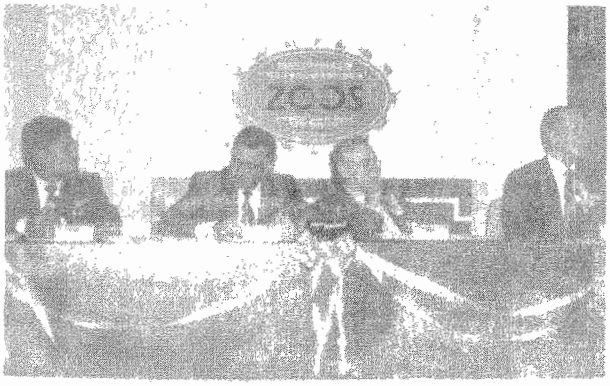
THE FIFTH CONFERENCE OF SOUTH-EAST ASIAN ZOOS

Brij K. Gupta

The Fifth Conference of South-East Asian Zoological Park's Association (SEAZA) which took place during 16 to 20 October 1995 at Taipei brought together people from a mix of nations and a variety of institutions, representing government, wildlife and forest departments, scientific institutions and information networks, universities and conservation NGO's. The Conference was hosted by Taipei Zoo, the City of Taipei and the Zoological Society of Taipei, Taiwan. The Conference was officially opened by the SEAZA's President General D. Ashari, in the presence of officiating guests, Dr. Ying-Chang Wu, Director of the Taipei Education Bureau; Ms. Judy Lee, Secretary General of Taipei Zoological Society; Mr. See-Wo Chu, Director of Taipei Zoo, and the delegates and guests. The conference was attended by 130 participants representing fifteen countries and territories. The President of SEAZA welcomed all the participants, especially those representing the International Union of Zoo Directors (IUDZG), the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), the Wildlife Information Network (WIN) and the Australian Zoological Parks Association (ARAZPA). He regretted the absence of delegates from Japanese Zoological Parks Association who could not be present.



Opening ceremony: Mr. Mohd. Nawayai Bin Yasak, Director of Melaka Zoo; Mr. Willie Labuschagne, Director of National Zoological Gardens of South Africa; Dr. U.S. Seal, Chairman, C.B.S.G.; Mr. Wen - Tong Hung, Honorary Chairman of Zoological Society of Taipei.

The theme of the conference was "SEAZA Missions for the 21st Century". The Conference was divided into four parts (1) General assembly sessions (2) Scientific papers presentations (3) Workshops and (4) Visits to Taipei Zoo and Yangmingshan National Park and National Palace Museum of Taiwan. During the scientific sessions, 34 scientific papers were presented by different countries including India, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Taiwan, Australia, USA and UK covering the topics of (1) conservation and reproductive biology, (2) new concepts for management, education and research related to *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and (3) cooperation among zoos in the South East Asian region.

The majority of papers presented were on new concepts for management, education and research, captive breeding, reproductive biology, wildlife conservation and the rest of them were on cooperation among zoos in South East Asia, animal health care and diseases, planning and designing of exhibits, animal welfare, animal physiology, hand rearing and opportunities for staff training.

Two persons from the Indian zoo community attended the SEAZA Conference this year. Mr. R. Sundararaju, Director of Vandalur Zoo, Madras and Mr Brij Kishor Gupta of the Coimbatore Zoological Park and Conservation Centre. There were two presentations from Mr. Sundararaju and Mr. Gupta, this reporter. The Coimbatore Zoological Park displayed and distributed their brochures and newsletters to all participants.

Mr. R. Sundararaju, Director of Vandalur Zoo gave an excellent presentation high on the "Wildlife Conservation through Education and Research". Mr. Brij Kishor Gupta of the Coimbatore Zoological Park also gave a presentation on the "Development Concepts of upcoming Zoo in Coimbatore".

During the Conference Mr. Bernard Harrison, Executive Director of Singapore Zoological Gardens announced that Singapore Zoo will host a workshop to teach the Regional Animal Species Plan ("REGASP") to SEAZA members during April, 1996. He also announced that a 3-day workshop on animal identification and on ARKS and REGASP animal rec-

Ms. Gaye Hamilton, Director, Werribee Zoo, Australia; Mr. R. Sunderaraju, Director, Vandalur Zoo, Madras; Dr. G. Agoramoorthi, Dy. Director of Pingtung Rescue Centre for Endangered Wild Animals, Taiwan.

ord keeping systems will be held at Melaka Zoo on 17 to 19 October 1996, just prior to the next SEAZA Conference. The venue for next SEAZA Conference was confirmed and it will be held at Melaka Zoo, Peninsular Malaysia. The date for the conference is tentatively set for 21 to 26 October, 1996.

During the Conference the SEAZA and World Pheasant Association (WPA) agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understaning (MOU) to cooperate in both *in situ* and *ex situ* measures to preserve the biodiversity of galliform birds. The cooperation will include forming a Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) cochaired by both associations, producing studbooks, conducting workshops and training sessions, and other relevant action to improve conservation of the Galliformes.

Many thanks and credits are due: Mr. Sundararaju, Director of Vandalur Zoo, Madras and Mr. Brij Kishor Gupta of the Coimbatore Zoological Park and Conservation Centre were sponsored by the Taipei Zoo and Taipei Zoological Society. Many thanks for these oganisation for making it possible for India to be so well represented by the government zoo and by a yet to be opened zoological park. The Taipei Zoo and Taipei Zoological Society, did excellent arrangements and these were instrumental to success of the conference.

My personal appraisal is that the SEAZA Conference was a significant meeting of the international community. Its holistic approach to global cooperation in the zoo community and concern with the animal conservation, breeding, species management and welfare programmes in the maxim.

Before the Conference got under way, participants perceived that this meeting point between conservation and reality. Where does one zoological and botanical garden go right and another wrong. Where does the role of government wildlife departments and conservation NGO's begin? And where indeed does policy making and practical action begin? These were some of the questions that were discussed in the conference.

I am thankful to the members of the Coimbatore Zoological park Society, particularly Secretary for extending support.

BREEDING OF GREY FRANCOLINS BY VILLAGERS IN AGRA DISTRICT

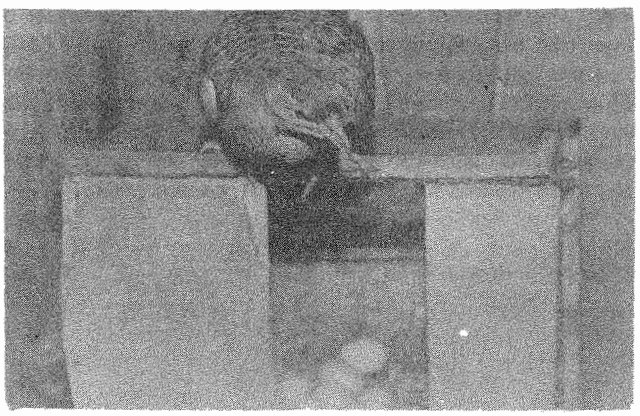
Brij K. Gupta

While conducting the Asian Waterfowl Census in Agra District of Uttar Pradesh, during 1993, 48 households of 3 villages namely Bazidpur, Pokharia and Saharanpur were observed, engaged in the captive breeding of Grey partridges, *Francolinus pondicerianus* (new name for Grey francolins described by Carol and Inskipp, 1955). The birds are bred, not for food but for engaging them in traditional cockfight for purpose of gambling. On an average 2 to 3 pairs (Minimum: 1 pair, maximum: 5 pair) were maintainedper household. In three cases francolins and leverets of hares (*Lepus nigricillis reficandatus)* were kept together.

The francolins were provided artificial nest boxes (ranging from 2x2 to 5x5 feet dimension). All nest boxes had dry grass as a nesting material. The average clutch size was found to be 6 eggs (N=7) of cream colour. The diet fed to the francolins includes dry fruits, seeds, cereal grains and insects. Dry grapes and cashew nuts are fed as "additives" to prepare them for the special events. The hatchling success was reported to be 95%. Villagers consider overfeeding and parasitism as the major reasons for occasional deaths of adult birds.

After a long discussion, the villagers revealed that they had been breeding francolins perhaps for the last 10 years. The females are used for breeding the male francolins are used for gambling events which are organised every month in each village. On an average, each owner invests Rs. 100 to 500 every month for the maintenance and care of their francolins. As the birds are raised on a healthy menu, a fully grown bird is sold for a price ranging from Rs. 1,000 to Rs. 5,000. The founder stock for captive breeding is obtained from nearby dry, open grass and thorn-scrub forest and cultivation areas.

Many villages in India keep animals for various purposes. In Kerala, for instance, small Indian civets are reared in captivity for its prized perineal gland secretion "civet-musk" (Xavier, 1993). While these civets are not bred, the francolins have to



Grey francolin hen on her eggs in a typical village nestbox.

be bred, nursed, reared to adulthood and specially trained if they are to stand a chance in the gambling fights. Considering the commonness of Grey francolins and their adaptability to live near human habitations, it appears that the wildlife protection authorities are not very much concerned about this, even though it is illegal to maintain them in households. Moreover, these birds are listed only in Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protection (Act) 1972.

I thank Puneet Wanchu for assisting during field work, Dr. A. K. Sinha and Dr. Sant Prakash of Dayalbagh Educational Institute for encouragement and Ms. Sally Walker and Dr. N.V.K. Ashraf for comments.

Literature cited:

Caroll and Tim Inskipp. 1995. Bird Classifications, old and new. *Sanctuary Asia*, Vol. XV, No. 5, 84-105.

Xavier, F. 1993. Status and Management Survey of Small Indian Civet (*Viverricula indica*) in captivity. *ZOOS' PRINT*, Vol. VIII, No. 9, 1-6.

Coimbatore Zoological Park and Conservation Centre, Pioneer House, Peelamedu, Coimbatore 641 004