

# PROVOCATION OF ANIMALS BY VISITORS AT ARIGNAR ANNA ZOOLOGICAL PARK

M. Shyam Shankar, P. Venkatesan, D. Santhi, Suchitra, Mathew C. John and A. Manimozhi \*

## Introduction

Visitors find it recreating and entertaining to visit the zoological gardens, but that in itself would not be sufficient reason for keeping wild animals in captivity. Although wildlife supplies considerable number of mandays for recreation, it contributes an increasingly smaller proportion of the nations recreational activity. Visitors either intentionally or through ignorance can cause a tremendous amount of stress, discomfort and torture or even death to animals. Quite often visitors have been noticed to hurt caged animals by teasing, provoking and feeding. How great the ignorance of the visitors can be seen from the fact that a polar bear contacted severe enteritis with haemorrhage after it had been fed by a visitor on putrid sea fish. Other cases were seals eye poked out with a walking stick and birds beak smashed with a stone (Hediger 1950). Kamal Naidu (1989) has stated a case of zebra which died due to visitors feeding the animal with popcorn plastic bags.

Since the understanding of visitor behaviour towards captive animals plays an important role in efficient management of zoos, a study was conducted to evaluate the visitors misbehaviour towards zoo animals.

## Materials and Methods

The study was carried out at Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur, located in Chengai-M.G.R. district, 32 kms from south of Madras and 22 kms from North of Chengelpet, in November 1994. For the purpose of this study a 'Provocator' is a visitor who indulges in any one or more of the activities such as shouting, throwing stones, papers, plastic materials, feeding, spitting etc. irrespective of age and sex. The researchers acted like visitors and observations were made with out the knowledge of the visitor. A basic questionnaire to assess the sex, age, educational status, motive behind teasing, feeding and general awareness was prepared. The animals chosen for this study were hippopotamus, lion, crocodiles and others. As the provocator moved away from the exhibit, they were interviewed individually and their responses were noted in prepared data sheets. This study covered a total of 200 co-operative provocators.

## Results

The results presented below are based on the responses of two hundred provocators. Our study showed that majority of the provocators were in the age group of 15-35 years. Males (83%) were found to be more provocative than females (17%) and majority were educated (72%) at least to the primary school level. Although 8.5% of the provocators were found to feed the animals, only 50% of them were aware that their unconventional feeding may reflect on the health of the animals. Most of the provocators were unaware of the balanced diet being fed to the animals by the zoo authorities. Moreover, many of the provocators realised that their behaviour could result in a behavioural change of the animals and their feeding activity could attract pests into the animal enclosure.

Our study also showed that 45% of throwing stones were at crocodile and hippos, 57% of the provocative shouting were at the lion enclosure and 33.3% of feeding was observed in the otter enclosure.

**Table 1**

Age group of provocators	
Less than 15 years	19%
15-35 years	79%
Over 35 Years	2%

**Table 2**

Types of Provocation	
Shouting	32.75%
Throwing Stones	27.50%
Pricking with sticks	22.75%
Feeding	8.50%
Throwing paper/plastics	6.00%
Spitting	2.50%

**Table 3**

Motive behind teasing	
To see reactions of the animal	34.30%
To see movements of the animal	33.75%
To attract attention	31.75%
Due to hatred/dislike	0.20%

**Table 4**

Reasons for feeding animal	
To see eating habit of the animal	37.0%
To attract attention	32.5%
Due to Pity	30.5%

## Discussion

Teasing and feeding are major problems in Indian zoos (Kumaragurubaran 1992). Zoos attract many visitors and that most of them come with an idea of recreation creates problems (Malhotra 1990, Shubash Vats 1990). Provocations are

Dept. of Wildlife Science, Madras Veterinary College,  
Madras 600 007.

\* Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur, Madras.

often seen in combination of shouting, hitting with stones, throwing plastic materials and feeding. Our studies show that the major activities were shouting and throwing stones. Kumaragurubaran (1992) has also reported shouting to be the predominant activity in teasing zoo animals.

Shouting was seen more near lion enclosure and as Hediger (1969) observed, the reason could be that the visitors want to see them in action. It was also observed that the behaviour was maximum when people visited in groups. Male visitors were found to be the most provocative and it is consistent with the reports of Kumaragurubaran (1992). Kamal Naidu (1989) has reported that educated visitors are more provocative and present study shows that this trend still seems to continue.

Feeding of animals is done with biscuits, popcorns, peanuts, chips, banana etc. though these items are not sold inside the zoo premises. This activity was mostly accompanied by throwing empty biscuit packets and plastic covers into the animal enclosures.

As the hippos and crocodiles did not respond to either shouting or throwing plastics/paper the visitors took the alternative way of throwing stones at the animals either to make them move or to attract their attention towards them. Otters were mostly subjected to feeding and this often occurred in a repeated manner followed by the other visitors continuing the activity. Similar observations have also been reported in monkeys (Bitgood 1988)

The significant finding in our study is the children (minor group) often initiated the provocation and it was followed by the adults.

### Acknowledgement

Our sincere thanks to Mr. R. Sundara Raju, Director, Arignar Anna Zoological Park, for granting permission to conduct this work in the zoo. We acknowledge Mr. M. Jagannatha Rao, Deputy Director, AAZP for all the help rendered. We thank the Dean of Madras Veterinary college for all encouragement. We are thankful to the zoo veterinarians, AAZP for their kind assistance.

### References

- BITGOOD, S. (1988) *Journal of International Association of Zoo Educators*, National Zoological Park, Smithsonian institution, Washington DC 13-15. (As cited by Kumaragurubaran (1992) *Zoos Print*, 7(9): 1-12.
- Hediger, H. (1950) *Wild animals in captivity*, Butterworths scientific publications, London.
- Hediger, H. (1969) *Man and animal in the zoo*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Kamal Naidu, M. (1989) From the proceedings of the IV All India Directors conference, *Zoos' Print*, Vol 4, No.1, pp.9, (As cited by Kumaragurubaran (1992), *Zoos' Print* 7(9): 1-12)
- Kumaragurubaran (1992) A Comparative study of teasing and teases; *Zoos' Print*, Vol 7, No.9, pp 1-12.
- Malhotra, A.K. (1990) Conservation education at National Zoological Park, *Zoos' Print* Vol.5, No.3, pp29.
- Shubash Vats, (1990) *Reaching out: The start of a conservation education programme. Journal of International Association of Zoo educators*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 3-4.

---

## CLIPPING OF CLAW IN BENGAL TIGRESS IN MYSORE ZOO - A CASE REPORT S.C. Valandikar<sup>1</sup> and R. Raju<sup>2</sup>

---

Reena the Bengal tigress, aged 10 years had developed excess growth (overgrowth) of right claw and was puncturing its paw since 8-9 months, leading to injury, pain and lameness, which was noticed during its walking. When examined, the claw was found flattened and curved sharp at the free end causing damage to the paw.

It was decided to cut the overgrown claw under combination of Xylase + Ketamin anaesthesia. A dose of 200 mg of Xylase and 100 mg of Ketamin was used together and fired. Within 15 to 20 minutes the tigress slept and there were no reflexes of eye or tail. She was secured for extra security with rope tied to the fore- and hindlimbs and the mouth was taped. The hair around the claw was clipped with scissors. With the support of a wooden plank under the right leg, the excess growth (about 3 inches) was clipped with chisel and hammer. The wound was cleaned with spirit, iodine and Neosporin powder was applied and bandaged, since there was little bleeding. As a precautionary measure to tetanus, Tetvac 1ml was injected subcutaneously, Dicrysticin, large dose 1 vial injected i/m and terramycin 10 ml i/m. Daily dressing was continued for a week with application of Neosporin powder.

Remarks: The tigress was anaesthetized on 25.7.94 at 12.40 pm and after 20 minutes operation was conducted which took 30 minutes to complete. The tigress recovered at 5.30 pm with a sudden roar. She had recovered in the morning but drowsiness persisted for the full day of 26th. The wound healed completely in a week's time afterwards.

---

<sup>1</sup> Zoo-Vet & Presently working as Asst. Director, Composite Livestock farm, Bargi Gundlupet tq., Mysore Dist.

<sup>2</sup> Executive Director Zoological Gardens, Mysore 510 001.