It was a dark and windy night when the last exhausted stragglers reached the Houston Airport. The stragglers were exhausted because most of them had been forced to wait in their home airports while a lone gunman with an AK47 managed to get sort into one of the busiest terminals and scare the hell out of a lot of would be passengers, "meeters” and greeters ... not to mention airport personnel.

Fortunately Houston Zoo had organised a comfy town car and entertaining driver to meet the latest arrivals. I had been waiting in my airport for 7 hours and the others almost as long in theirs. As we rode into Houston we were informed that we missed the sumptuous steak dinner in one of the best Houston restaurants. When we reached the hotel the wind was so strong we could hardly make it to the door. Once inside ... straight to the bar for drinks, peanuts and pretzels (no steak).

A wide variety of zoo person had been invited to discuss the update at the Houston Zoo on 03-04 May 2013 ... some who had worked on WZACS before and others keen to help. It had been about 8 years since the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation strategy had come out and our fast-paced zoo world and real world had changed sufficiently to require an update.

WAZCS was not the first strategy ... about ten years before WZACS the first strategy was published as the World Zoo Conservation Strategy: the Role of Zoos and Aquaria of the World in Global Conservation (below). That strategy itself was groundbreaking and it was welcomed by zoos around the globe.

Our host Rick Barongi, Director, Houston Zoo. Gerald Dick, Executive Officer and Jorg Junhold, President, WAZA

A working group hard at work during the WZACS workshop.

Jill Allread, an experienced facilitator, led us through the process of outlining what we need to know to proceed.
The following information is taken from the Personal Notes Houston 03-04 May 2013 compiled by Dr. Heribert Hoffer, a unique, brilliant, often annoying, yet very popular WAZA personality. He is a university scholar, researcher and professor and a great help and to us in WAZA. In addition to his brilliance, he is very entertaining so,

What changed since 2003 that motivated us to update WZACS

Heribert’s notes are, I think, a combination of suggestions from the group and additional ones from Heribert’s fertile mind. I poached these notes, honestizing, having begged Heribert’s notes are, I think, a (motivated us to update WZACS)

What ZOO and SAZARC did with the Strategies

I'd like to relate some of the things Zoo Outreach Organisation did with the Strategies in South Asia that bolstered many of the zoos quite a bit professionally as well as in their education programmes. We made stickers and pamphlets using the attractive cover of the first strategy and these were very popular. We explained very simply the basics of the Strategy which could be understood by all ages and levels of English usage on the pamphlet accompanying the sticker. These were distributed widely to zoos and NGOs conducting education.

For the 2nd version we got more elaborate. First we made a poster of the cover with lots of information about WZACS on the back of the poster. Having understood from the last version that many Indian zoo personnel appreciated the Strategy but were not able to relate to some of the text, we created a South Asian version which highlighted the major features of the 74 page WZACS and put it in a context that was more easily understood by people whose first languages was not English such as zookeepers and some other staff, visitors to zoos, teachers and young people. Because it was 24 pages instead of 74, carried photos of Indian zoos and visitors, and explained the chapters, it was an easy read and less expensive to produce and post. Because it was focused on South Asia it was more palatable to many people and inspired them to request and read the original version.

All the WZACS chapters were covered with a précis of each chapter, an explanation of how it could be used in South Asia and information about South Asian zoos and WAZA.
Left -- The Education Working Group completing their lists and discussion.

Below Riveted participants (Onnie, Markus, Paul PK, Julie, and Fiona) observe the final touches to the way to proceed. Or maybe just tired. Fiona looks particularly dubious as she has been named the Ditor. Good luck to you Fiona!

Below: Heribert, Gerald, Bengt and Paul continue discussing even during a break.

Left : Rick winds up the last day by praising our brave facilitator, his excellent staff and all the participants.
Left: President and President Elect
Right: Evidence of zoo visit.
Below left: Zoo Aquarium dinner
Below right: Evidence of Alcohol (not me) Host and Heribert
Bottom Left: Mexican bar makes everyone happy.
Bottom right: New relationships developed
Bottom: Host and President observing the Piranhas
The last night after the last day’s discussions and the last supper at the Mexican Restaurant and the last cat was hung! Now the real work begins on the WZACS upgrade. Watch these pages.