

Dr. Miranda Stevenson, O.B.E. - an innovator and a dynamic influence in zoo conservation and welfare - honoured by the Queen of England.

This belated announcement of a very prestigious award to an outstanding individual is long overdue. It is so because the recipient is this writer's best friend and, as happens to all of us at times when discussing (or trying to discuss) someone or something we know and love very well, I could not gear myself up to do justice to either the award or the recipient. This being the last issue of ZPt for 2012, I realised I had run out of time. Being this late is bad 2013 would be unforgivable.

My friend is Miranda Stevenson -- zookeeper, zoo curator, zoo director, regional zoo association chair -- and the award is the OBE Order of the British Empire for selfless service to wildlife, animal welfare and conservation. Miranda was awarded the OBE in 2012's New Year's honours in United Kingdom.

Created by King George V in 1917, the OBE recognises distinguished service to arts and sciences, public service and work with charitable and welfare organisations of all kinds. King George recognised the need for a new symbol of honour that could be more widely awarded, in recognition of the (then) people helping the British war effort both as combatants and as civilians on the home front. Women were included in the Order and also foreigners who had helped the British war effort. George also intended the Order should be used to reward services to the State in a much wider sense following the war. Thus, now, the OBE is the order of chivalry of British democracy. Valuable service is the only criterion for the award, and the Order is now used to reward service in a wide range of useful activities. Even citizens from other countries can receive an honorary award for services rendered to the United Kingdom and its people, and at present there are over 100,000 living members than 100,000 living members of the Order throughout the world.

Miranda Stevenson has been an innovator and a dynamic influence in the areas of animal welfare, standards of care and quality of life, best practice, and conservation, first in her home zoo of Edinburgh, and later at Marwell Zoo and finally as Director of the British and Irish Zoo Association. She became involved with international cooperative breeding programmes for endangered species. Although her Ph.D. featured primates, Miranda was equally interested and concerned about other wild animals and their needs in nutrition, welfare, living



Miranda Stevenson, O.B.E., proudly displays the medallion for the much coveted OBE Award, richly deserved.

conditions, etc. She has been deeply involved in zoo forums and in other official zoo agencies or organisations such as CBSG, WAZA, Global Zoo Forum, etc.

Miranda has mentored many people throughout her career including this writer. She is personable, kind, and generous with her time and her knowledge. Her combination of humility and generosity are admirable and make her completely approachable, for which I am grateful, as she became my mentor and friend.

Quoting from Lifelines, the BIAZA quarterly publication, many senior zoo managers in the zoos of England are indebted to her guidance early in their careers and agree that she has been "an architect of modern zoo philosophy and practice. She has inspired many people and achieved remarkable advances in zoo biology and zoo conservation." Also the BIAZA President, Sir Drummond Bone commented that the OBE was well deserved and reflected not only "all the work which Miranda put

into our community over the years, but the progress she has made in raising the profile of zoos and aquaria generally." EAZA Chairman and former BIAZA official, Dr. Simon Tonge said: "Miranda has been a great colleague and inspiration to the UK zoo community over many years and her OBE award is richly deserved."

Speaking for myself and many of my colleagues from South Asia, Miranda has been a tremendous help and a role model for all zoo personnel. Miranda was primary resource person for several conferences of the South Asian Zoo Association featuring animal welfare, conservation, zoo legislation, etc. She has been one of our most popular and helpful resource persons and has promised that she won't stop helping SAZARC even after her shortly upcoming retirement, which is a great relief! She has taught in SAZARC conferences at Dhaka Zoo, Bangladesh; Lahore Zoo, Pakistan and National Zoo, Sri Lanka. She will also be a guiding force at an upcoming event to help SAZARC members to initiate national associations in their countries in order to draw more zoos into better communication, cooperation and coordination within their nation. This will also enable zoo personnel in all South Asian countries to attend meetings and conferences in their own country.

In addition to this, Miranda has been and is a valuable advisor to me in other projects associated with the Captive Breeding Specialist Group and World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. I rarely do anything without consulting her for advice and guidance.

So better late than never, Miranda! ... congratulations on your MANY achievements, your wonderful career, your sense of humor, your OBE honours and your future plans for continuing activities in zoos and conservation.

Sally Walker



Miranda as Resource Person (top) in Dhaka Zoo, Bangladesh; (middle) in Lahore Zoo, Pakistan and bottom in National Zoo, Sri Lanka.