

# Dhaka Zoo Activities

## A brief History

Dhaka Zoological garden is a unique institution for conservation, recreation, education and research for zoo animals in captivity. It is located in a pleasant natural landscape 16km away from the city center. A great necessity of establishing a state owned zoological garden was felt in 1947. Primarily, A Zoo Park was started at High court premises of Dhaka with a limited number of spotted deer, monkeys and few other species of animals. A master plan was approved with a view to establish a zoological garden at Mirpur in 1960. An advisory board was constituted for establishment and proper management of zoo the next year. The zoo was opened on June 23, 1974 after necessary construction and procurement of animals from home and abroad. Till then it has been grown into a beautiful and attractive zoological garden exhibiting animals in natural settings.

## Important Sections of the Dhaka Zoo with Brief Activities.

### **Administrative Section -- responsible for**

rendering of administrative services for zoo personnel. This section provides the supportive service corresponding the Directorate of Livestock Services, Ministry and outside the country.

### **Animal Nutrition Section -- responsible for**

formulating ration of different species of animals, birds & reptiles

Procuring feeds from the contractors

Providing the feeds as per required for animals

Prescribing nutritional status based on the health status of animals

Animal Nutrition officer is responsible for running the section properly.

### **Animal Health Section -- responsible for**

looking after the health condition and treatment of sick animals, in association with internal medical board. In case of emergency, the medical team will be comprised of the several senior vets., member from zoos and out of zoo i.e., from Central Veterinary Hospital. Chemical restraint agents are used for capture of wild animal. Sick animals are also separated in an isolation house for intensive care under this section. Newly arrived animals & birds are kept under close supervision in quarantine section.

### **Animal Research Section -- responsible for**

diagnosing the diseases for zoo animals. The section is headed by a Scientific Officer who exerting whose diagnosis process on regular or occasional basis. In critical situation samples are sent to CDIL for C/S test & also confirming diagnosis. Additionally section deals with zoo education and research program.

### **Zoo Education -- responsible for**

for encouraging and increasing the awareness of the schoolchildren, they are allowed to enter the zoo free of charge. Generally, they come in a large group from the different educational institution. The authority cooperates to visit them describing the animals food habit behavioural and status and answering their inquisitive questions. Internship courses on management and veterinary practices are also being implemented in the zoo for the Vet. College and University students.

Dhaka Zoo is a fully co-operative in practical and research work for the postgraduate and Ph.D. Students.

## **Management Sections**

For the managerial advantages, all animals of the zoo is divided into 4 sections. 1. Carnivores, 2. Small mammals and Reptiles, 3. Large animal and Herbivores and 4. Birds.

Individual Zoo Officers take the responsibilities of each section. They look after the animals; send the report of diseased animal to the curator to take immediate actions if necessary. Every morning the houses are cleaned properly by the animal attendant. At 10 to 11 am Zoo officer receives the feed as required for his section and then distributes feeds immediately to the animals as per recommendation. They also look after breeding and take special care for endangered species.

**i) Zoo Museum Section --** has two divisions- i) Stuffing & Preservation – where stuffing of different extinct or endangered dead animals are made and exhibited for the people. And Snakes, fishes, eggs of birds, i.e Ostrich or Cassowari or small dead animals are preserved in the jar to show the visitors. Museum seeks more development program to full fill visitors demand.

**ii) Fish Aquarium -** various kinds of exotic colorful fishes are being kept in the Aquarium to attract the visitors. However, the technical side of the aquarium is now being developed to reduce mortality rate of the fishes. Some indigenous fishes are also in the aquarium to look at their breeding capability in captivity, mainly to show foreign visitors.

**iii) Fisheries Section --** there are two big lakes- one at the north and another at the south that makes the zoo more natural and bring real amusement to the visitors. There are adequate amounts of fishes in both lakes. People are allowed to catch the fish by angling, collecting the ticket from the authority. Fishery officer is responsible to look after this section. Huge numbers of migratory birds are available from Nov-March in every year.

**iv) Publicity Section --** The section keep the up-to-date records of documents of the animals and publicity officer regulating the visitors as guide with up-to-date information on zoo animals prevailing in Dhaka Zoo. Publicity Officer also plays an important role in focusing the exciting events occurring in the zoo.

**Garden Section --** This section deals with the preservation of various flora in Dhaka Zoo. There are different types of species of herbs and Shrubs in zoo premises, which contributes beautiful sceneries and shadow for the visitors. The fruits bearing trees are also helpful for birds and small mammals in providing some feed. One Arbor culturist looks after the whole area of garden.

**Security Section --** This section is responsible for maintaining of security, law and order situation for the visitors and zoo premises. About 20 ansars and 35 civil guards are engaged for this purpose.

### Animals Required/ Surplus of Dhaka Zoo

Species	Required for the Zoo			Surplus Animals		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Indian Lion	4	4	8	9	2	11
Royal Bengal Tiger	4	5	9	4	3	7
Black Bear	2	2	4	-	4	4
Python	4	4	8	10	14	24
Hippopotamus	2	3	5	4	1	5
Spotted Deer	31	48	79	33	15	48
Pond Heron	20	20	40	22	26	48
Night Heron	20	20	40	26	24	50

### Threatened Vertebrates in Dhaka Zoo

Group	Extinct	Critically Endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable	Total Sp.
Mammals	2	11	7	2	22
Birds	1	3	5	4	13
Reptiles		3	3	4	10
Total					45

### Present status of animals and birds in Dhaka Zoo

Class	Species	Total
Mammals	58	465
Reptiles	15	65
Birds	80	1310
Aquarium Fishes	28	355
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>2195</b>

### Breeding status of Threatened animals in Dhaka

Species	Status	Total 1988-2003	Present stock
Bengal Tiger	CE	22	16
Leopard	CE	9	4
Fishing cat	EN	7	4
Barking Deer	EN	37	14
Sambar Deer	CE	45	6
Binturang	CE	7	2
Rhesus Monkey	VU	65	36
Nilgai	EX	21	4
Porcupine	EN	10	8
Rock python	EN	32	31
Peaowl	EX	23	15
Hoolock gibbon	CE	1	3

CE – Critically Endangered; EN-Endangered; EX-Extinct; VU- Vulnerable

## A Day at Dhaka Zoo with Zoo Staff Officers Sally Walker

In September I had an opportunity to spend a couple of days at the Dhaka Zoo with the group of zoo officers whom I have come to know well in the last few years. I visited Dhaka Zoo first in 2000 to personally invite the Curator and Assistant Curator to the first South Asian zoo directors meeting which was to be held in Nepal. I met their Department superiors and thus made sure they would be permitted to attend. Since then I have visited at least once a year for something or other, in 2002 that something being the South Asian Zoo Association meeting which was hosted by Dhaka Zoo.

This year, Dhaka organised its own seminar "for the first time" on the occasion of handing over some surplus animals "for the first time" to some zoos of the country which needed animals.

Every time I visit the Dhaka Zoo, we have a little seminar in which I am asked to tell them "everything about modern zoo management". This is impossible but we always have useful discussions. The last two times we have utilised the

Hoolock Gibbon as a theme of what to do and what NOT to do in a zoo. This year it was even more appropriate because ZOO, WILD, the Primate Specialist Group, South Asia and the Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh strengthened by the Forest Department of Bangladesh plans to conduct a Population and Habitat Viability Assessment Workshop (PHVA) for Hoolock Gibbon, in February 2005, in Dhaka at the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM).

We began our seminar with a request for zoo officers to note down some of the things they had learned in SAZARC meetings. Two samples are included here, from Md. Shahzaman Khan, Animal Nutrition Officer and Begum Kusidtha, Scientific Officer.

### What we learned at SAZARC

I attended SAZARC 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting themed as "Zoo Management for Conservation and Welfare of Wildlife."

I learned a lot at the meeting from Miranda Stevenson, Sally Walker, N.V.K. Ashraf, Adit Pal, Uzma Khan and other Zoo resource persons about zoo management subjects and zoo education as well. I have been practising the knowledge I got from them within the Dhaka Zoo although we do have some constraint. I have been working in the zoo as a Zoo educationist. For this connection and any conservation zoo needs three C's – Co-operation, Co-ordination and Communication. We are trying to maintain these within the zoo. Zoo education is the key to conservation of wildlife but public education is a relatively new activity for our zoo.

Present education activities at Dhaka Zoo are :  
Speeches and brief talks to the Primary, Secondary, University Students, Internship and M.S. Students, and Interested groups, Guided Visits, Art competition, Bird Watching-especially migratory/Guest birds, nocturnal animals.

The objectives of zoo education in our zoo are : i) to develop awareness; ii) to develop positive attitude towards conservation of wildlife; iii) to change the attitude about misbehaviour to the zoo animals.

In fact, we are trying to practice the concept of "Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare" in our zoo -- freedom from thirst, hunger, malnutrition, freedom from discomfort -- that we learned from Miranda Stevenson. We have made some changes by insuring a comfortable space for live and during shifting from cage to quarantine and reverse.

To insure freedom from pain, injury and diseases we remove sharp edges, of holes or loose wire or rails before releasing animal into enclosure or quarantine. We carefully administer both preventive and curatives medicines to the captive animals. Freedom to express most normal behaviour, freedom from fear and distress - - we are trying to develop enrichment activities within the zoo by introduce tires, ropes and other toys to the primate cages, giving fruits by hanging them.

Despite this I feel I have much to learn. If I get adequate knowledge then I can perform my duties and work properly.  
*Submitted by Kudistha Begum, Scientific Officer, Bangladesh.*

I attended the 2002 SAZARC meeting held in Sri Lanka. I learned a lot from that session although I knew some basic things about wildlife nutrition being a nutrition officer. After returning from that meeting, I formulated ration on the basis of BMR and also vitamin mineral premixes added in ration. I am getting a good result with the animals in this way. This training has given an immense support to me do effect change in our Dhaka Zoo. Thanks to all sponsors.  
*Md. Shahzaman Khan, Animal Nutrition Officer, Dhaka Zoo, Mirpur Dhaka, Bangladesh, September 2004*

I assisted the zoo officers in creating a small action plan which had to be completed before I left Dhaka because every visit they comment on their desire for training but there is little action, despite my very strong suggestions ! This time we planned every action that needed to be taken to obtain some training for maximum number of the officers, including tasking individuals to do the various actions required.

## **Zoo Officers Training Action Plan**

### **Action 1 -- Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust**

Closing Date for Applications for 2005 Course: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004 and Dhaka Zoo officers had applied to for the training programme "Diploma in Endangered Species Management". Dr. Md Salim Iqbal, Veterinary Surgeon, Dhaka Zoo and Md. Azharul Islam, Officer in-charge Museum were tasked with download the form and distributing among the officers. During processing their application everybody has to send one copy to Ms.Sally Walker, Director, SAZARC who will recommend those who complete the form adequately.

### **Action 2 -- Central Zoo Authority training**

Director General, Department of Livestock Services will communicate with the Member Secretary, CZA and will seek for short training courses for Zoo Personnels on Zoo Management, Animal Health Care, Zoo education etc. Sally should talk to Central Zoo Authority with reference to this and also write to Director General, Mr. Khan for further assistance. Curator Mr. Mofizur Rahman Will conduct everything with DG.

### **Action 3. Contact with Miranda Stevenson**

Sally Walker reminded the zoo officers that they had made a special personal contact with Miranda Stevenson, Director of the Zoo Federation of Gt. Britain and Ireland and that she would be teaching again in Pakistan this year when SAZARC meets there. She suggested that zoo officers interested in training should communicate with Dr. Stevenson so that she will come to know them better and think of them when opportunities for training or for a project with a zoo in her region comes up.

### **Action 4. Special training on Hoolock Gibbon**

Contact Gibbon experts around the world. The persons related with managing this animals especially the Zoo Officer (Small Mammals & Reptiles), Nutrition Officer & Veterinary Surgeon will search for training or at least published literature on gibbon species so that their management of Hoolock Gibbon in the zoos will improve.

### **Action 5. Special Training on Zoo Education**

The Officer in-charge museum & Publicity officer can learn a lot from materials sent from Zoo Outreach Organisation. Sally should send materials to him.

### **Action 6. Vienna Zoo Trainers**

Sally Walker is in touch with expert trainers at Vienna Zoo and will try to get them to come and conduct a training at Bangladesh with the zoo personnel of all the zoos.

In the end, about six zoo officers completed their forms and applied to DWPT for training. Other Actions will be attended.