

Alex Rubel, Director, Zoo Zurich and former President of WAZA honoured with WAZA's Heini Hediger Award Sally Walker

Alex Rubel is a quintessential selection for the Heini Hediger Award. Not only did Alex know Hediger personally as his mentee and zoo staff, he wrote and published a biography of the greatest zoo man.

Alex is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, having studied at the University of Zurich, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. In 1980 he joined the Zurich Zoo as an Assistant Zoo Veterinarian and having worked effectively there. Alex's mentor, Prof. Heini Hediger, passed away in 1992 and in the same year Alex convinced Zoo Zurich to link its goals to the first World Zoo Conservation Strategy, a milestone in the history of the world's zoos and in the career of the young Director.

Alex is a member of prestigious organizations, e.g., Association of Avian Veterinarians and member and later Chairman of the EAZA Veterinary Committee and others. He served WAZA as Council member from 1997-2003 and President of WAZA from 2001-03. He served as Scientific Advisory Council, Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, Berlin, Co-Editor of ZSL's International Zoo Yearbook, London, a Member of the Steering Committee of CBSG SSC IUCN and, since 2006, a member of the Editorial Committee of the publication *Gajah*, brought out by the IUCN SSC Asian Elephant SG.

As Director, Alex led the work of a wide variety of modern and innovative zoo enclosures (1992 European Otter, 1995 South American Mountain Cloud Forest for spectacled bears and coatis, and 1997 Waterfowl). In 1999 he instituted a new and more efficient form of organization in the Zoo and later sparked improvement of the zoo entrance and restaurant. In 2002 he moved the construction of a petting zoo of native domestic animals and in 2005, an Education Centre.

Since 2001 Alex and team also focused upon animal exhibits such as the Himalaya High Mountain for snow leopards, Amur tigers, Mongolian wolves and Red Pandas. In 2003 the Masoala Rainforest, a seminal exhibit devoted to the unique species of Madagascar and *in situ* projects,



Who is more pleased with Alex Rubel's Heini Hediger Award? Alex himself or his great friend Jorg Junghold. Alex Rubel is such a busy and a humble person that many colleagues were amazed to hear of so many works. Alex Rubel is an innovator and creator par excellence. Photo by Gerald Dick.



Dr. Alex Rubel giving his acceptance speech after receiving the Heini Hediger Award. He spoke much more of other people than himself, but particularly his Mentor, Dr. Heini Hediger, perhaps the greatest zoo man in history. Photo by Sally Walker.

added. In 2006 the Eurasian Dry Forest for Indian Lions, based on Gir Forest, India was opened. With this Zurich Zoo celebrated breeding of pure Asiatic lions obtained from Sakkarbaugh Zoo in Gujarat. Alex brought over the Chief Wildlife Warden of Gujarat and the writer for the opening ceremony of the exhibit and a Museum devoted to the history of lions.

The years 2008 saw the African High Mountain for geladas and ibex in Zurich Zoo. Dramatic South-American Swamplands Pantanal for anteaters, tapirs, Squirrel monkeys, yellow-breasted capuchin and flamingos is the future big project for 2012. In 2015 a dramatic Elephant Park that began construction in 2011 will be opened. Planned projects go up to 2020 including the Kaeng Krachan Elephant Park, African savanna for giraffes, antelopes and other animals and an outdoor rainforest exhibit for gorillas. Truly visitors can get an idea of the world's most fascinating animals and their habitats in one zoo in Switzerland!

Alex has served as a number of conservation organizations related to zoos and wildlife. He has been a powerful and generous friend and supporter of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group for two decades and served on the CBSG Steering Committee since 2002.

Alex contributed his time and energy generously to WAZA. He was among the WZO Council members in 1998-99 that crafted a new path for IUDZG to put before its members, including a dramatic revision of the Bylaws, name and logo. He was part of the team with responsibility of vetting candidates for the new and all important post of Executive Director of WZO as well as the location of the new office. Later, during a period of catalytic change from IUDZG to WZO to WAZA and the taking on of *in situ* projects by the zoo community and a new corporate identity, Alex made the following argument in favor of the new ideas: "We, as zoos and zoo associations, will never be respected as global players in conservation if we are not able to speak with one voice and appear under a common brand." Alex and Zurich Zoo jumped right into the WAZA branding and taking up of *in situ* projects.

Zoo eröffnet die neue Aussenanlage für die Löwen

Der alte Indische Löwe Bhagirath und seine junge Lebenspartnerin Joy haben die neue Aussenanlage des Löwengeheges bezogen. Auch die Menschen feiern.

Andreas J. Meier

Nun hoffen die Zooverantwortlichen auf ein Jungtier. «Denn unser Ziel ist es, eine ganze Löwenfamilie zu haben», verkündete Zoodirektor Alex Ribel aus der Eröffnungsfest vor Medienvertretern aus ganz Europa.

Den Indischen Löwen stehen in der für 7,5 Millionen Franken erstellten Anlage nun wesentlich mehr Platz zur Verfügung. Der Lebensraum wurde dem Vorbild des indischen Naturreservats Gir Forest nachempfunden und möglichst naturnah gestaltet. Laub, Sand, Kies und Fels sowie diverse Sträucher dazu verschiedene Liegeplätze sollen den Löwen einen angenehmen Aufenthalt im Zoo Zürich beschaffen. Auch bei der Planung geht der Zoo seine Wege. Ein komplexes System soll zusätzliche Reize für die Löwen entfalten. Doch Joy, der neuen Löwin des Zos, schenkte am Freitag in einer Ecke ihr war alles noch etwas zu neu.

Der Zoo und die VRZ bieten exklusive Führungen und Transfers mit indischen Menen. Mit und bis jeweils 17.30 Uhr und 18.30 und 19.30 Uhr. Mehr Infos unter: www.zoo-zuerich.ch



Bhagirath, das betagte Indische Löwenmännchen, geniesst die neue 1700 Quadratmeter grosse Aussenanlage in seinen Zügen. Seine Lebenspartnerin Joy liess sich nicht blicken. «Sie ist verunsichert und braucht noch Zeit, um sich einzugewöhnen», meinte Kurator Robert Zingg. *www.zoo-zuerich.ch*



«Jetzt können wir Löwenfamilien haben», Zoodirektor Alex Ribel.



Zoo-Verwaltungspräsident Martin Raville in Festtaune: «Es ist ein schöner Tag für den Zoo Zürich an diesem sonnigen Tag.»



Die engagierte Löwenschützerin Sally Walker vor dem Bild des verstorbenen, legendären Indischen Tierschützers Raval.



Da lässt sich gut dösen: Bhagirath beim Mittagsschlafchen in der Aussenanlage, die dem Naturreservat Gir Forest in Indien nachempfunden und vom Zürcher Landschaftsarchitekten Walter Vetsch konzipiert wurde.



Medienschaffende und Zoofachleute aus ganz Europa fanden sich letzten Donnerstag in Zürich zur Eröffnungsfest ein.



Zoodirektor Alex Ribel übergibt Pradeep Khanna, Chef der Naturreservate in Gujarat, eine Ehrenurkunde für Verdienste im Löwenschutz.

Amazing press coverage for the opening of the lion centre.



Alex Rubel and Conservation

Under Alex Ruebel's directorship, Zurich Zoo created many *in situ* projects, a number of them reflected the zoo's outstanding exhibits. For the finest example of this genre of projects, the zoo's Masoala Rainforest, one of the largest and most accurately rendered zoo habitats in the world, is not only a sort of world wonder in itself but also a perfect example of broad based, effective zoo conservation. Zurich Zoo's involvement with the country of Madagascar and the Masoala National Park have made it possible for the Zoo to give immense help to the locals of the surrounding area in using their land sustainably.

In addition the zoo contributes much of the expense incurred by the National Park partly by sales in their Masoala shop and restaurant and visitor donations. The zoo has contributed over 1 million dollars up to now.

Amphibians are another keystone project of Zurich Zoo under the aegis of the IUCN ASG impetus to focus on the rash of extinctions as a result of climate change and a seemingly unstoppable disease which killed off many species. The focus on conservation of small neglected taxa such as bats, amphibians, etc. by the Zurich Zoo is admirable.

The current Objectives of Zurich Zoo are a fitting way to wind up Alex Rubel's nomination as he has been both inspiration and driver of innovation and progress for the last two decades. Objectives of Zoo Zurich are

- i) promote greater protection of species in their endemic habitats,
- ii). conserve areas with natural habitats or help work towards their expansion,
- iii). foster greater awareness of biological analysis of species, and the ecology and science of conservation,
- iv). promote more political initiatives for environmental issues, and
- v). achieve a higher quality of life for people living in close proximity to nature via education, training and raising public awareness.

Many heartfelt congratulations to Alex and his team for their outstanding work and for the receipt of the Heini Hediger Award



Model of the Education Section of the Asiatic Lion area. Many historical artifacts from Gujarat and even Egypt praising the lions decorate this attractive exhibit.





How the Zurich Zoo got its 22 lions ...



How the Zurich Zoo got even more lions ...



Vision

Zoo as a motivator of a strong **human-animal relationship**
 Zoo as **ambassador** and **PR-Agency**
 Zoo as a **competence center** for the animal world and nature

attractive
 sensibilizing
 fascinating
 motivating
 stimulating

→ Zoo as conservation center



Another wonder at Zurich Zoo ... Masola Rainforest right in the middle of Switzerland



Masola Rainforest, Zurich possible only because of this amazing temperature controlled shelter.



Features of Masola Rainforest

