

Review of CBSG, AArk, WAZA Mid-year meetings held in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates hosted by Al Ain Zoo



The annual ISIS Board, CBSG Steering Committee, Committee on Population Management CPM and WAZA Council meetings were held at the Rotana Hotel in Al Ain from 15-20 March 2009 including a one-day strategic planning meeting for AArk and a one-day review of a Corporate Strategy Towards 2020 which has been in process for some months.

The meetings were hosted by the beautiful Al Ain Zoo and Resort which is undergoing massive restructuring, expansion and rebuilding. Meeting delegates were hosted on an evening visit to the zoo and a gala dinner under the stars. Willie Labuschagne, a past President of WAZA now working in Al Ain for the Management of Nature Conservation, MNC, President's Affairs, arranged a visit to one of the President's animal holdings and research laboratory followed by a magnificent typical mid-eastern dinner.

This is very brief summary of some of various meetings follows as well as a brief overview of the Al Ain Zoo and a note on the new Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund.

CBSG Steering Committee Meeting, 16 March 2009, Al Ain, UAE

Participants: Jeffrey Bonner, Onnie Byers, Amy Camacho, Frands Carlsen, Mark Craig, Gerald Dick, Lesley Dickie, Nate Flesness, Greg Geise, Jo Gipps, Bengt Holst, Heribert Hofer, Bob Lacy, Lena Linden, Mike Maunder, Gordon McGregor Reid, Dave Morgan, Theo Pagel, Christian Schmidt, Lee Simmons, Mark Stanley Price, Tracy Rehse, Simon Stuart, Hassan Syed, Kris Vehrs, Sally Walker, Bob Wiese, Chris West

In the previous midyear meeting, one of CBSG's Steering Committee members, Frances Westley gave an enlightening presentation on the adaptive management cycle of organizations: growth, conservation, release, reorganization, growth. Frances said that resilient organizations reinvent themselves rather than going through major crashes and reemergence from the ashes. They do so by releasing resources in response to changing situations, reorganization of parts of the system, growth to respond to new opportunities, and efficient allocation of energy to successful ongoing projects. CBSG is a resilient organization and it passes through adaptive mini-cycles of creative growth. Although CBSG is, like many others organizations in the current economic crisis, facing uncertainty and challenges, it is ready to evolve and continue to improve. The mid-year meeting was devoted to discussions on restructuring with the idea of facing the new IUCN quadrennium with an improved structure.

Participants were urged to share their own issues and concerns about CBSG and its Steering Committee and took a survey after the meeting to help the Steering Committee improve its productivity and the meetings.

CBSG gets requests for help with species conservation issues from all over the world. Some are from people and organizations that have worked with CBSG before and some are also from people and organizations who are new to us. Thus we can know that CBSG's work continues to be highly valued.

AArk: Lena Linden, Director of Nordens Ark, Sweden will be CBSG's representative on the AArk Executive Committee. She reviewed AArk's productivity and gaps. She reminded the SC of AArk's strategic planning process scheduled for the following day. Adelaide Meeting review - CBSG convened three working groups at the Steering Committee meeting at the Annual Meeting in Adelaide which dealt with mission statement, governance and restructuring, and *in situ* / *ex situ* linkages. Updates were reviewed on revisions to these topics. The proposed Mission statement was discussed and suggestions recorded. Many felt that the proposed Mission statement was too long.

In the discussion of *in situ* / *ex situ* conservation linkages suggestions that had come up in Adelaide were reported to be in process. Some of the suggestions were:

- *To engage more people from the "non-ex situ community".* For this CBSG is making an effort to include more individuals from the *in situ* conservation community in the membership of CBSG. Also there is a proposal the *in situ* representatives sit both in the Advisory Group and on the Strategic committee.
- *Target the distribution of CBSG workshop reports to help linkage and also improve dissemination (and*

implementation) of recommendations to both in situ and ex situ communities. CBSG is trying more systematically to inform zoos and zoo associations of results of all CBSG workshops through summaries of workshop recommendations and the final report. This will help link zoos and zoo associations with field projects and lead to a more balanced conservation awareness.

- *Systematically and often, produce and disseminate conservation success stories to be sent to CBSG members and also regional zoo associations.*
- *Provide better information and more easily accessible information on CBSG network members and their expertise.* CBSG is working on creating an effective member electronic network. All members will be able to search for others based on name, language(s) spoken, and areas of taxonomic, geographic, and disciplinary expertise.
- *Find a way to make conservation database information more linked/available to other regions and to in situ community.* There is a World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Database which will be hosted by CBSG Europe and managed by a Board (strategic layer) comprised of representatives from WAZA, CBSG, and the regional zoo associations. Improvement and creation of tools associated with making this database sharable and effective are ongoing.

Mass Collaboration Tools: Creating a truly functional CBSG network will be possible by the assembly of mass collaboration tools and pulling all members into this loop. There is a lot of foot dragging in this process due to a variety of reasons. It takes time to start and learn the simple procedure and it is unfamiliar to many CBSG members and some are nervous about internet downsides. This process will continue to evolve and eventually all CBSG members will get up to speed. Then, as a CBSG Member, they will have access to the CBSG Members Site. Users benefit from ability to Search for other CBSG members, email a member or add them to their Outlook Contacts, and access "Members Only" information (announcements, events, directory, links, etc.).

SSC Discussion with Simon Stuart, Chair of the Species Survival Commission: Simon began with some statistics to remind us why we were at a meeting in Al Ain. Some of these were shocking, such as that 60 species on the IUCN Red List are extinct in the wild. Simon related three major crises, the Amphibian Crisis, Corals are also in crisis and also Asian large mammals. Other crises are impending such as West and central African large animals, Fisheries (by-catch) and Coral-dependent species. Simon talked of the role for CBSG in responding to these emerging crises either in terms of captive breeding or small population management. There was also discussion of the Species Conservation Planning Task Force in context with CBSG.

The remainder of the meeting was on the proposed structural evolution with Chair Bob Lacy presenting the potential changes. Some of these will have to do with membership, with an idea of having different categories of members, the more consistently active, those who are active from time to time but want to be in the information loop. Also proposed were some specialized advisory and strategic groups to assist the Chair and CBSG as such. There was discussion on the complexity of the new proposals. The Chair will consider the comments and rework some of the proposal. The changes and others will be announced with member identities and roles in due course. Assignments will be for the duration of the current IUCN quadrennial.

CBSG Futures Meeting: Also upcoming is another CBSG Futures Meeting. CBSG has had three major futures exercises, first in 1993, then in 1996 and in 2000. The upcoming exercise is likely to be in early 2010 and described as a structured, facilitated workshop to redefine, reenergize, refocus, and launch CBSG forward with renewed momentum and commitment. The Steering Committee meeting in St. Louis will be a staging area of planning the futures workshop.

Success stories: CBSG Steering Committee has developed a practice of asking for members to relate success stories they have from their work in the previous few months. The stories described briefly at the Al Ain meeting were:

Lena Linden: Toad story; Jo Gipps: Livingston fruit bat project involving community development and a 25 million dollar grant; Gordon McGregor Reid: Elephant conservation in Assam and expanding into Sumatra; Lesley Dickie: EAZA campaigns – 100 individual projects in the wild have been funded and many institutions that contributed to the campaigns continued funding or set up their own related projects after the campaigns ended; Sally Walker: Human elephant coexistence projects in south Asia branching into Thailand and Sumatra; Chris West: Pygmy blue tongued skink – collaborative research project and a species recovery and captive breeding; Mark Stanley Price: Moths – found that presence of large trees in hedgerows is essential for moth biodiversity and this has led to a change in European policy; Pati Medici: Tapir story; Bob Lacy: Aruba update; and Dave Morgan: Bringing endangered and critically endangered frogs into captivity for establishment of assurance populations.



Amphibian Ark Strategic Planning Meeting, Al Ain, UAE, Summary

Attendees: Jeffrey Bonner, Robert Browne, Onnie Byers, Don Church, Gerald Dick, Lesley Dickie, Nate Flesness, Ron Gagliardo, Richard Gibson, Jo Gipps, Bengt Holst, Jörg Junhold, Bob Lacy, Lena Linden, Dave Morgan, Gordon McGregor Reid, Lee Simmons, Simon Stuart, Kris Vehrs, Sally Walker, Chris West, Kevin Zippel

In order to review the status and future of the AArk, a strategic planning meeting was held in Al Ain, UAE on 17 March 2009.

Overview of main issues for SC consideration

- change in language of mission
- change in list of values
- renewing our awareness efforts in a new campaign
- formalizing ourselves as a membership-based organization

The meeting opened with a welcome from the AArk Executive Committee Chair Gordon Reid. Simon Stuart (Chair of the IUCN SSC) then spoke briefly about activities on the Amphibian Specialist Group front, including plans for a 'mini-summit' this fall to review any progress made on the ACAP agenda and new plans for implementation. AArk was commended for doing very good work.

Kevin Z reviewed the AArk origins, organizational hierarchy, vision, mission, values, staffing, past and current activities. Onnie Byers reviewed AArk budget and financial status and management. Kevin then reviewed what AArk staff considered major successes and shortcomings of efforts to date. Successes included our partners' expansion of existing rescue programs, investing in *in* and *ex situ* programs, and YOTF campaign money raised by participating regional associations. However, if we still wish to save many amphibian species, we must do a better job of helping our partners do theirs, e.g. (1) find ways to reallocate existing resources, (2) raise new, dedicated resources from existing supporters (which was the goal of YOTF), and/or (3) find new resources from outside our existing support network (apparently our greatest hope).

Kevin Z presented the staff's vision for the future of the AArk of which the most significant changes included the suggestion of membership, and transferring certain responsibilities from the AArk staff to our partners as the latter's capacity to take over has increased. This transfer of responsibilities would free up the AArk staff to focus on facilitating the development and management of Taxon Management Groups for priority rescue species, and partnerships to sustain those programs long-term, plus supporting research and reintroductions that will ultimately obviate the need for captive programs.

Gordon Reid then led the group in reviewing the vision, mission, and values in light of the new view of where AArk should be in 5 years. It was felt by the group that the current vision "the world's amphibians safe in nature" was sufficient without revision. The

staff have since changed the mission "facilitating partnerships that ensure the global survival of amphibians, focusing on those that cannot currently be safeguarded in nature". There was some concern that facilitating partnerships is one among many we do — awareness, prioritization, training, and facilitating research — and that all of these activities are really just processes to achieve the vision. Therefore an alternative mission could be "ensuring the global survival of amphibians, focusing on those that cannot currently be safeguarded in nature". Finally, the majority opinion of the staff was that all of these activities are done to support partnerships, and the facilitation of partnerships is therefore so fundamental to what we do that it should remain in the mission statement.

The original list of values from the 2007 meeting were:

- education
- practice good science and good ethics
- links between *in situ* and *ex situ*
- animal welfare
- respect for diversity of membership
- cooperation
- good business practices
- above all do no harm
- biosecurity
- responsible financial management
- range country activity, capacity building
- training
- sharing knowledge
- long term perspective
- empowering

We have condensed and polished these values to:

- preventing amphibian extinctions
- working with species within their native range country, supporting range-country biologists, and building capacity there as needed
- adhering to recommended biosecurity standards for *ex situ* programs to minimize risk of doing additional harm
- linking *ex situ* programs to *in situ* conservation to protect habitat, mitigate other threats, and eliminate the need for captive programs as quickly as possible
- facilitating partnerships to maximize expertise, diversity of ideas, and the likelihood of a program's long-term sustainability
- raising awareness to change behaviors that contribute to amphibian threat
- practicing good science, ethics, and animal welfare
- demonstrating good business practices and responsible financial management

After some additional discussion of challenges faced and ways to proceed, the meeting broke into 3 working groups, Governance and Membership Working Group, Identity working group and Awareness, Communication, & Fundraising working group all of which gave reports of their discussions. After plenary, Gordon asked for suggestions of changes on the basis of the reports and there were none.

WAZA COUNCIL MID-YEAR MEETING - 18th and 19th March 2009

Al Ain, Rotana Hotel, UAE

List of participants

Council members

Gordon McGregor Reid (GMR), President, Mark Penning (MP), President elect, Jeffrey Bonner (JBonner), Jerry Borin (JBorin), Jo Gipps (JG), Jörg Junhold (JJ), Ryszard Topola (RT), Sally Walker (SW) Chris West (CW)

Executive Office

Gerald Dick (GD), Executive Director

Invited guests

Simon Stuart, Chair, Species Survival commission, IUCN/SSC
Dave Morgan, Committee for Population Management
Brij Rai Sharma, Central Zoo Authority, India
Amy Camacho Africam Safari, Mexico
Carina Kloek-Motin, Universeum, Göteborg
Fred Launay, Al Ain Zoo, UAE (Mike Maunder stood in for Fred Launay)
Tim Jones, DJ Environmental, Facilitator

WAZA and IUCN/SSC

Simon Stuart gave a presentation on the situation of IUCN and the Species Survival Commission and the future strategic plans (Presentation: IUCN- SSC Vision 2009-2012, available from the Executive office).

The major issues of SSC are: Red list index still going down; biggest challenges are amphibian crisis, coral crisis (bleaching, diseases, sea surface temperature rise, ocean acidification) and Asian large animals (SE Asia and China-Yangtse dolphin, many species have TCM-medicine value, primates, turtles). West and Central African large animals, fisheries worldwide, eg. sawfish (typical bycatch issue), coral-dependent species. There are a few positive examples as well: improvement for 40 species, 5% of threatened mammals have increasing populations, 16 bird species prevented from extinction.

Simon also spoke about the 5 year strategy for SSC which involves:

1. Completing the assessments of biodiversity conservation needs (marine, freshwater, terrestrial, invertebrates, plants, reptiles, mammals, birds, amphibians, and training)
2. Key questions in science (costs of, vs costs of losing biodiversity, factors for conservation success, factors for sustainability use, defining economic incentives, criteria for biodiversity importance of Protected areas, invasive species management, managing species in face of climate change, creating win-win situations: poverty alleviation and conservation, biodiversity and ecosystem services, mgmt of emerging infectious diseases)

3. Stakeholder participation (regional & national consultations for defining conservation priorities, needs for funding and capacity, new funding mechanisms for field projects, communicate conservation messages to stakeholders)

4. World species congress in 2014 (worldwide participation, scientific and conservation communities, assessments and research, conservation actions, political backing, high level decision makers participation)

5. Get more support from the zoo community for amphibians!! (*ex-situ*, *in-situ* conservation, communication); AArk is part of the implementation of ACAP in respect to *ex-situ*. For September 2009 a mini-summit is planned for amphibian conservation by Simon.

WAZA gives support to SSC Chair for the salary of the Chair.

MoU with CBD and RAMSAR

Executive Director is authorised to sign the MOU with RAMSAR and CBD, the CBD MoU will be formally signed during the St. Louis conference in a ceremony following the presentation of the Executive Secretary, Mr. Ahmed Djoghla.

Marketing Activities planned for the Year of Biodiversity 2010

Book on the role of zoos, "zoos' role in biodiversity conservation".

Haupt publishing house (based in Bern) offered to check the opportunities to publish a book focusing on the "zoos' role in biodiversity conservation". This book may be published in German and English in cooperation with an English publisher as partner. This book would focus on *in situ* projects, but chapters on studbooks, biodiversity and partnerships (CBD and 2010) are envisaged to be included. Council members support the publication financially, a first contribution has been made on the spot by SAZARC (200 \$): Thank you!!! The institutions which will support are: Bristol, Chester, Columbus, St. Louis, Leipzig.

A promotional artwork poster for the "Year of Biodiversity" on behalf of WAZA is offered by the internationally accepted artist and designer at Natural History Museum Berne, Mr. Claude Kuhn. This poster could be ready by St. Louis in October already.

Biodiversity Resource Manual: in cooperation with IZE an internet based manual on biodiversity is being prepared (compare with gorilla manual "All About Gorillas").

Future conference venues

Background: next conferences, already scheduled

2009 St. Louis, USA (4-8 Oct 09)
2010 Cologne, Germany (17-21 Oct 09)
2011 Prague, Czech Republic
2012 Melbourne, Australia
2013 Disney Animal Kingdom, USA

Presentors competing for conference bid: Brij Sharma, for National Zoological Park, New Delhi, India; Gordon McGregor Reid, for Chester, Upton on Chester, UK; Carina Kloeck-Motin, for Universeum, Göteborg; Amy Camacho for AFRICAM Safari, Mexico; and Mike Maunder, for Al Ain zoo. Council decides for only a 5 year period, therefore only one, 2014: New Delhi was selected. In 2015: Africam, Chester or Al Ain and other bidders to be considered and decided in 2010 mid-year meeting.

Committee on Population Management (CPM) Report

International Studbook and Global Species Management Plan is the main function of this committee. At present a review of studbooks is going on. Inactive studbooks will be archived (now 6). No new ones have been established. There are 10 transfers of studbook keepers. CPM initiated a document for Rules and Procedure for which a draft was produced for consideration by Council.

Other topics were discussed which cannot be circulated at this time.

After the meeting the President introduced Tim Jones, DJ Environmental, Facilitator who would lead the WAZA Strategic plan meeting to take place on the following day.



IZE website

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improve your education skills**

Check it out! -- <http://www.izea.net>

To better serve their members and help potential members, IZE has adopted a sliding scale for membership fees based on categories developed by the World Bank. Check it out at <http://www.izea.net/membership/become.htm>.

Keep watching their website. Even as a site-visitor only, there is much to learn there.

The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort

Press reports of the meetings held in Al Ain hosted by the Al Ain Wildlife Park hailed them as a landmark and exciting new phase in its evolution. His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of UAE, proudly continues his commitment to conservation and environmental causes. The Al Ain Wildlife Park was formerly known as the Al Ain Zoo, and was established by late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan in 1968.

HH Sultan Bin Tahnoun Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort describes it as "a place for people to experience and learn about wildlife and conservation in a unique natural desert setting." The board and staff are making a committed attempt to create an international platform and display for right action in living with nature and wild animals. A national treasure, the wildlife park will find the most committed, dedicated and highly skilled personnel to carry out this noble work which includes educative recreation, sustainability, protection, and conservation. The values, Mission and Vision of this exciting venture follow.

Vision

To become pioneers in harmonious living with wildlife and nature.

Mission

To become the pride of our community by providing sustainable, world-class destinations, where cultures, people and wildlife live in harmony and mutual respect. This will be achieved through innovative ideas, operational excellence and strategic partnerships.

Values

- Respect: Respect the cultural values and principles of our local community, the expectations of our guests, and the needs of our employees
- Learning: Play an active role in shaping learning experiences
- Partnership: Build and enhance strategic partnerships which support achieving our vision
- Sustainability: Provide environmentally and financially sustainable world-class destinations
- Credibility & Trust: Instill credibility stemmed from our cultural values through interactions that reflect our transparency, ethics and morals
- Quality: Adopt quality principles, communicate best practices and have pride in providing differentiated product offerings
- Innovation: Appreciate creativity, encourage new ideas and reward innovation
- Happiness: Offer wholesome and joyful experiences, which create everlasting pleasant memories

Facts about the Park

The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is not a new endeavor, but builds on the forty-year heritage of the Al Ain

Zoo. Evolving from the far-sighted vision of the late Sheikh Zayed, the Father of the Nation, the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage and values of the Abu Dhabi Emirate and Al Ain in particular.

The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort offers a unique leisure, learning and living experience founded on a vision of harmonious and respectful living with wildlife and nature. The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is undertaking a multi-billion Dirham development to transform the area of the core zoo into a recreational facility, displaying desert habitats of Africa, Arabia and Asia, and will offer luxury resort accommodation, themed retail outlets and tranquil residential communities for sophisticated people who want to experience and learn about wildlife and nature.

Conservation and education are among the founding principles of the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort, and it has close conservation partnerships with the San Diego Zoo, Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and World Wide Fund for Nature. The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort actively participates in conservation efforts throughout the world, leading initiatives to reintroduce the Arabian Oryx and Houbara Bustard and other species of critical importance.

The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort follows the strategic direction of the Abu Dhabi government which has launched various successful environmental initiatives in the past and is continuously striving to implement sustainable practices into all new developments. Currently, the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is home to 180 different species of animals. There are more than 4300 animals including 2500 mammals, 1200 birds, and 600 reptiles. At least 70% of the animals are considered endangered. Today, 250 people work for the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort. In the future, the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort may employ as many as 2500 people in veterinarian medicine, botany, sciences, as well as tour guides, hotel staff, ground and animal keepers, security, and other specialized professions.

The Park has the great advantage of being sited centrally in Al Ain, Garden City of UAE. Now, extensive works are going on to further evolve the Al Ain Zoo into a 21st Century Wildlife Park with larger, more naturalistic enclosures and enhanced facilities for visitors. UAE denizens are emotionally attached to the city which is a very historical and spiritual place as well as being a refreshing oasis with natural mineral springs and lush greenery.

On the occasion of plans being displayed, Majid Al Mansouri, Managing Director of the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort commented that "Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is the beneficiary of a rare, clear vision of how the environment, people and wildlife can co-exist in a

sustainable and viable manner. It is based on the ideas of conservation and education, what we term 'Leisure, Learning, Living'.

Majid Al Mansouri, Managing Director of the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort said that as the UAE continues its dynamic transformation into a booming economic and tourism hub, a mixed use development has been planned and designed, creating a world class, sustainable leisure and learning destination with a wealth of opportunities for the astute investor or developer. He said "Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is the expanding exhibits and improving facilities are turning the former zoo into a world class wildlife park and resort.

This project is unique in that investors and residents will contribute and support wildlife conservation efforts and community development in UAE and abroad. It could well serve as a model facility for others to emulate as a new way of living embracing sustainability of environment, wildlife, and ecology to create an model environment which "does no harm". In addition to being surrounded by the wildlife park and Jebel, visitors to the facility will find a range of family oriented accommodation conveniently located near shopping, an oasis theme waterpark.

The new core Zoo is a compact area that's easy for families to walk around. It's filled with exciting

displays of desert animals featuring exhibit zones of the world's great ocean-edge deserts. The wildlife park is set amidst the splendour of a rugged landscape with a surprising and rich variety of flora, botanical gardens, native birds and butterflies. The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort occupies 900 hectares (2000 acres) of land including that of the former Al Ain Zoo.

Construction of the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort will be completed in three phases. Phase 1, including the African Safari and the Sheikh Zayed Desert Learning Center, is currently under construction. It is scheduled to be finished by December 2010.

Phase 2 will be completed in December 2012, whereas the completion date for Phase 3 is December 2013. The Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is located in Al Ain – 150 kilometers to the east of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, near the border of Oman. Jebel Hafeet, the tallest mountain peak in the UAE, forms the majestic backdrop of the Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort.

A website for Al Ain Wildlife Park & Resort is under construction but has an address, e.g. www.alainwildlifepark.ae (soon to be uploaded) or if required you may call +971 3 782 8188 for more information.

Visit to President's Wildlife Facilities

Al Ain, nestled at the foothills of the majestic Jebel Hafeet mountain adjacent to Oman, is a lovely city which increasingly hosts centres of wildlife conservation, such as the Al Ain Zoo and all its expansions and President's projects.

Interest in wildlife in UAE is historic and the interest of the current President of United Arab Emirates is reflected in many wildlife projects and facilities created by his personal interest. The participants of the Mid-year meetings were honoured to be invited to two of these facilities for a late afternoon visit which went on enjoyably into the night.

Mr. Abdul Jalil, the Director General of Management of Nature Conservation, MNC, President's Affairs invited participants of the mid-year meetings to visit their facility located on the outskirts of Al Ain, next to the Green Mubazzarra, right after the close of CBSG Steering Committee meeting. Mr. Willie Labuschagne, a colleague and past President of WAZA when he was Director of Johannesburg Zoo in South Africa made all arrangements and played the gracious host and facilitator of the visit. Participants gathered in front of the Rotana Hotel to board a bus for the antelope camps at Jebel Hafeet followed by a tour of the well-appointed Research and Diagnostic laboratory and Veterinary hospital. Staff of the

laboratory gave short presentations about their current research and department. The visit was concluded with a leisurely dinner on the premises of the new 150 Savannah camp currently under development.

We met a number of Indians and other South Asians are working at the President's facilities. Of particular interest to us at ZOO was Dr. Feroz who was Deputy Curator of the Dhaka Zoo in Bangladesh during the period 2002 when SAZARC had their 3rd conference there. Feroz has been working for the last six years on an island called Abu Al Abyad about 90 km west of Abu Dhabi. It is 35 km long by 15 km wide and is the largest island of UAE where there are more than 23 thousand mammals (Gazelles, Oryx, Sable, Gerenuk, wild sheep etc) and 2 thousand wild birds of different species, all ungulates and waterfowl. Most of the collections are free roaming; only 5-10% are kept in big enclosures. In addition, thousands of wild birds are coming in the island throughout the year.

The hospitality of the Management of Nature Conservation officers and staff was much appreciated by the Mid-year meeting participants. It was an opportunity to see wild animals in a unique facility and to learn about the most recent research of the facilities researchers.



What is the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund?

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund is a significant philanthropic endowment established to do the following:

- Provide targeted grants to individual species conservation initiatives
- Recognize leaders in the field of species conservation; and
- Elevate the importance of species in the broader conservation debate.

The fund's reach is truly global, and its species interest is non-discriminatory. It is open to applications for funding support from conservationists based in all parts of the world, and will potentially support projects focused on any and all kinds of plant and animal species, subject to the approval of an independent evaluation committee.

In addition, the fund will recognize leaders in the field of species conservation and scientific research to ensure their important work is given the attention it deserves and to elevate the importance of species in global conservation discourse.

The fund has an initial endowment of 25,000,000 (Twenty Five Million Euros). It is envisaged that the fund's establishment will act as a catalyst to attract additional donations from third party sources to ensure the Fund's annual contribution to direct species conservation initiatives increases over time.

How does the fund work?

The fund is managed by an independent board, comprising leaders in the field of species conservation, and will allocate grants on the basis of a detailed application form to be completed by potential beneficiaries.

The fund aims to reduce the unwieldy processes usually associated with grant applications, especially for smaller projects where onerous administrative processes can negate the benefits of financial grants and contributions.

Why species conservation?

The provision of this significant contribution is consistent with a long-standing tradition of philanthropy and conservation established in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Locally, significant conservation programs have been introduced to protect nearby species as diverse as the Arabian oryx, gazelle, houbara bustard, dugong and marine turtle, among others.

The people of Abu Dhabi have witnessed first-hand the tangible benefits of targeted and well-resourced species conservation initiatives. For example, the population of the Arabian oryx, hunted to near extinction in the early 1970s, is currently on the rise again and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi is leading efforts to reintroduce the species to its traditional desert habitat.

Through the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund this tradition continues, in the form of an innovative and genuinely international approach to philanthropy and species conservation.