

Review of Handbook for Indian Zoo Directors, by Kamal Naidu Sally Walker

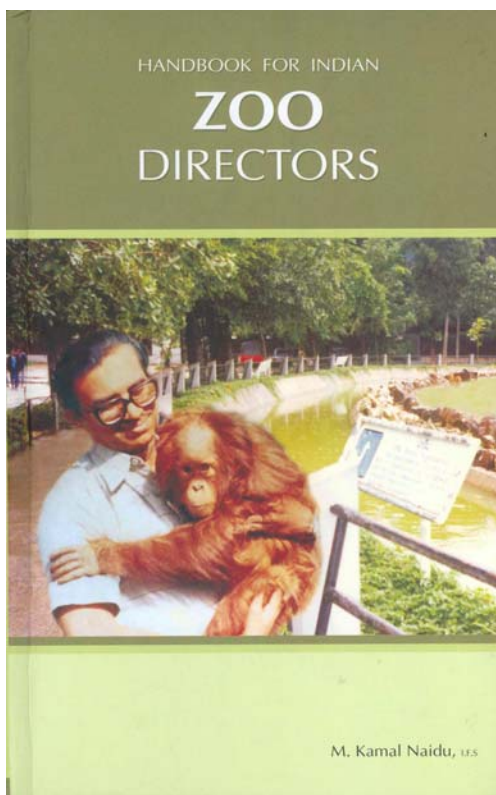
Kamal Naidu's zoo handbook, published in 2006 in Hyderabad, is the product of a lifetime of love of animals, both wild and domestic. He spent a goodly portion of his career as a forest officer heading two of India's most prestigious zoos, the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, where he served Curator and at the National Zoological Park, New Delhi as Director. Upon his return to his state he ultimately served as Chief Wildlife Warden of Andhra Pradesh which is a sort of equivalent to Director of Andhra Pradesh Zoos. He also served (and still does) the Central Zoo Authority as an Inspector of zoos.

It is not, however, Kamal's extensive experience which makes his Handbook more than just another zoo management book. It is his curiosity, and his concern to be as informed as possible, which manifested in his first zoo position as Curator of Hyderabad Zoo. Kamal describes his frustration when he could not use the books that his predecessor had locked away and praises Dr. Desai, then Director, National Zoo for lending him books from NZP Library and permitting him to take them back to Hyderabad. Kamal spent the rest of his zoo career like a starved waif making up for all the food he missed while lost; consuming zoo literature instead of food.

The book is entitled "Handbook for Indian Zoo Directors" but any literate person who works in or for zoos would find plenty to improve his work and his love of his work. Even a rank beginner, who had never entered a zoo before, could understand much of what a zoo is about after assimilating the contents of the Handbook, including laypersons and zoo volunteers.

There are ten chapters and ten topics: being zoo history, starting a zoo, zoo biology, zoo planning and design, zoo management, procuring and care of zoo animals, nutrition and feeding, conservation and breeding, education, interpretation & PR. These topics pretty much cover the arts and sciences involved in running a zoo.

The organisation of material within chapters is very good for the most part and the order of chapters within the book. History of zoos sets the tone and instead of following a totally historical path, Naidu's direction is to divide man's association with animals into different uses to which mankind has put animals, e.g. historically, as his gods or symbols of god (religious), or as partners or victims in sports, sports hunting and other means of recreation, which often were very cruel. Today also Man has many uses for animals such as to satisfy his scientific and intellectual curiosity: through research as well as well as observation for enjoyment. Man also uses animals to conserve their own species for their own survival as well as for mankind's future survival ...



whether to keep ecosystems healthy, for research, leisure, or other uses.

In covering the history of zoos of the world Naidu uses short, pithy paragraphs to review and highlight a large number and great variety of zoo beginnings or zoological events. The reader might be left as if having endured a whirlwind but he will have a sense of the evolution of zoos in different countries throughout history, from ancient to now. The author's convention of explaining zoo history through the different themes explained earlier lends a depth to this history that it might not otherwise achieve. The author brings in additional references to reinforce the atmosphere he has tried to create, such as the evolution of zoos towards a more scientific tendency, quoting of Kohlstedt recording the era as the 'century of science' with its support and advancement of science. Naidu also covers trends towards zoo cooperation and the start of the AZA, zoo

conservation with the signing of CITES and its impact on animal acquisition and export, as well as the concern for standards in zoos both for the welfare of animals and their acceptability to fill a conservation purpose. He also traces the evolution of zoo associations, including foremost the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which has risen like a phoenix from a group of animal dealers to its lofty position which includes defining the ethics and conscience of the whole zoo community. Through this relatively short but fact-packed history, India is not neglected. India's history is set in context with the history of other zoos of the world and it is possible to see how India may not have kept pace with the zoos of the world in some ways, but has outdistanced it in others.

Having been so assiduous in all this, it is a mystery why the author has given only the very merest mention in a list only to the Indian Zoo Directors Association (IZDA), which was founded during his reign as Director, National Zoo. The author also states that it was "contemplated Zoo Directors of south Asia as Associate Members" but does not mention that no effort was made to ever involve them ! Although the formation of SEAZA, a South East Asian Zoo Association was recorded in 1990, no mention of SAZARC, the South Asia Zoo Association for Regional Cooperation which was founded in 2000 is included. Likewise the Indian Zoo Bulletin, the first Indian zoo publication, published by the National Zoo, has not been mentioned, nor has ZOOS' PRINT, the only zoo publication to have regular monthly periodicity and feature articles from India and other South Asian countries, and for past eight years a peer reviewed scientific journal. A short section devoted to Indian publications would have been useful, as it could have

included R. B. Sanyal's world-first scientific zoo management book which was mentioned 19 times in the famous Crandall's book of practically the same name, obviously drawn from Sanyal as well as the IZDA's Indian Zoo Yearbook and Arora's zoo medicine books. However, plenty of mention of books and articles is given in the Reference section which is no less than 20 pages long and certainly lists all those I just mentioned and others as well.

It is also puzzling and a significant omission that Naidu did not cover zoo NGO's or zoo clubs, friends of the zoo, etc., which are so numerous and important in the world and increasingly in India, all the more so since Kamal and his son Srinath started the first very first zoo volunteer group in India at Hyderabad Zoo.

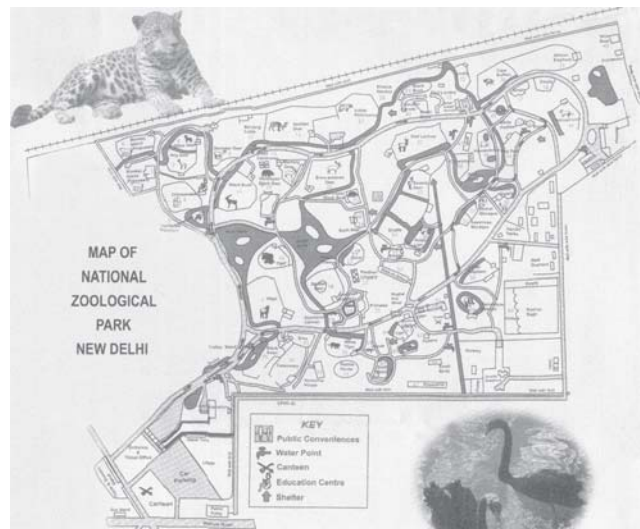
Since we have fallen from the perfection of Naidu's history of zoos to a bit of carping and sniping about lacunae, we need to go all the way to the last chapter and tackle zoo education. While the author has done a relatively good job describing some of how zoo education is carried out throughout the world, and also included some quite good instructional material for education in the Indian zoo context, he has not covered where an Indian zoo director with little expertise in this area, no time to spare, and/or minimal budget can go for help. The Centre for Environmental Education (CEE) should have been given a mention, at least, as it was formed by government to promote Environmental Education throughout India including in zoos, as was Zoo Outreach Organisation, originally mandated and funded by DOE to provide education and technical support to zoos, or the many conservation NGO's and zoo groups which sprung up in India over the years have been very successful in the last few years.

Another gap is the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy has not been mentioned. Well before this volume was published the 2nd version of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (2005) by WAZA had been published and widely distributed in India, yet only the 1993 edition has been mentioned. There is a world of difference in the two versions so this is a significant omission.

Aside from those crimes of omission, the Education Chapter provides much useful information and food for thought and further research by a zoo manager who is determined to promote this extremely important component of a zoo's mission. These two slices of bread, the first and last chapter, hold together a very rich and thick sandwich which can only be skimmed here.

The 2nd, 3rd and 4th Chapters taken together are a very important unit that is not normally given sufficient attention. The author describes things zoos starting out need to do to keep from becoming a very bad zoo. The conception and nurture of a new zoo, no matter what the size or theme is crucial. Neglect of this aspect is a fatal flaw particularly in India, which Central Zoo Authority has done much to rectify. Failure to contemplate fully the myriad complexities of founding a captive wild animal facility which permits, indeed, encourages leisure visitation, is to practically guarantee disastrous results. The Chapter devoted to setting up a zoo discusses objectives and criteria for same. Knowing fully one's purpose or objective(s) when starting such a complex project is of utmost importance.

CZA is widely quoted for criteria in setting up a zoo. Other examples are given from CZA, National Zoo and



Map of NZP from the Handbook

Hyderabad Zoo. Additional material describing the modern zoo by a team studying the Nagpur Zoo plan which, followed by Naidu's major components of a modern zoo, give a good perspective of what a modern Indian zoo involves. The author suggests that zoo planners prepare a pre-feasibility report and gives a plan for this in the assessment of a wide range of factors.

The subheading 'Importance of Visitor's Surveys in Zoo Management' has been given a big place in this chapter although it is unclear why. What visitors want in zoos in other countries is not necessarily valid for all. It is not suggested to try and survey potential visitors in a community to see what they want before investing in a multi crore facility so this topic would have better fit the slightly short Education & PR section.

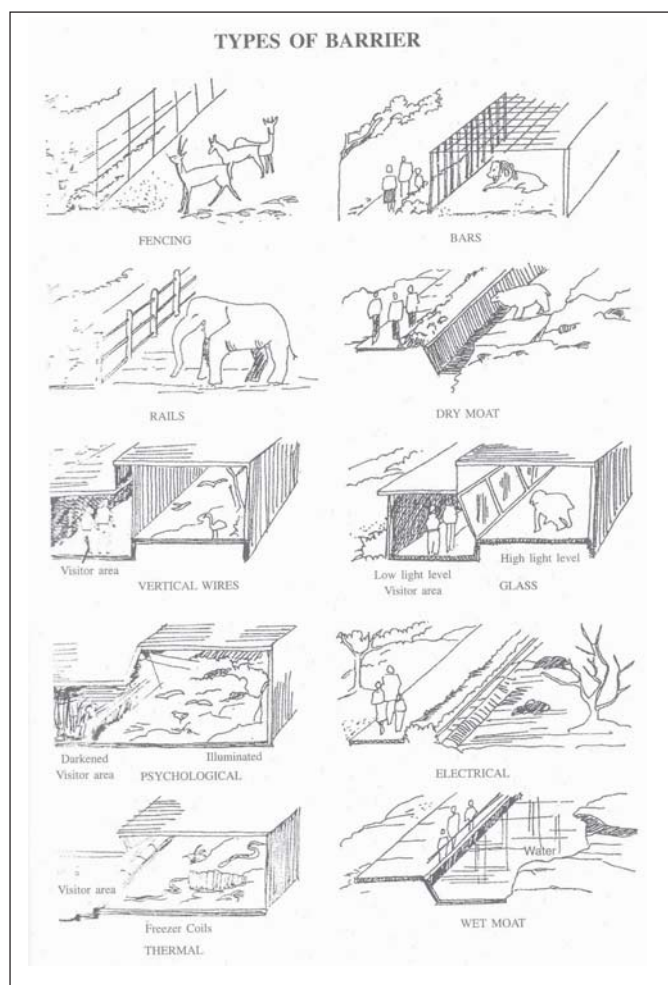
Under 'Techniques of Display and Presentation of Animals' the author lists different types of zoos, which, to some-one just starting out, even an architect or engineer or city planner provides a useful overview of the variety in zoo styles. Under types of exhibit display, the author gives very simple and comprehensible models. It would have been good to mention that modern zoo planners today have more or less rejected the systematic theme, which is actually only a menagerie concept; and also zoo geographic theme which is not at all feasible for India if done using a continental theme; and the "popular" theme which has no real underlying meaning or purpose. Modern zoos today want to integrate all elements of nature so that, with landscape immersion, a visitor can have a strong experience which might impact their attitudes and behaviour toward wildlife and nature generally. Even a small zoo can achieve this with innovative planning.

Biological considerations in zoo planning could be a whole book but Naidu has covered the subject well enough for a zoo planner to understand that this aspect must be a MAJOR consideration and start him in the right direction. Display and presentation also could fill volumes but the author has given good examples and set the stage for Principles of Planning in the zoo. It is the longest chapter in this book (75 pages) and presents a wealth of information and examples from around the world, always including Central Zoo Authority and some other Indian zoos among them. Master Planning is very

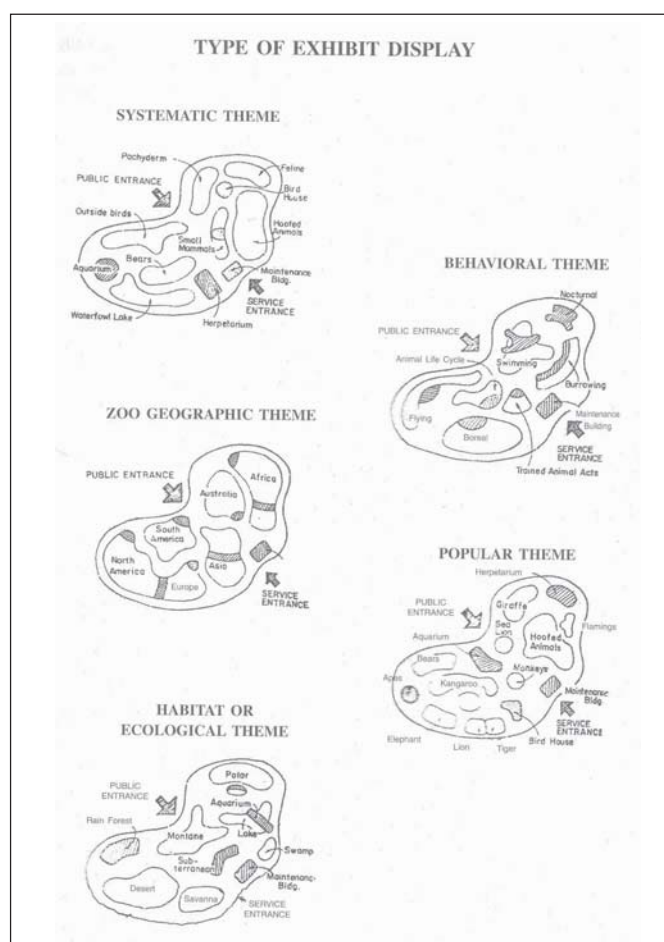
well covered with a special section for Master Planning of existing old zoos which essentially means a "face lift" of an old zoo to reflect or accommodate current trends in conservation, animal welfare, behavioural science, etc. Prescriptive standards of National zoo and again, the CZA, are included. Enclosure construction is a big topic. Barriers themselves are so very important to the overview and aesthetics of a zoo as well as security and appropriate viewing for animals and for people. For exhibits themselves many examples of photos and vignettes are given. Helpful tools such as an exhibit design checklist are included.

The next section of chapters cover the general theme of V. Zoo Management in its several main aspects, VI. Animal Procurement and Care, VII. Zoo Feeds and Nutrition, VIII Zoo Health Management and IX. Breeding and Conservation. Naidu covers these topics, again, with his own experience as well as a wealth of examples, lists, tools, and instructions. Although these chapter topics are huge, once again the author manages to cover them by supplying enough to help readers conceptualise the extent of the requirement and also references so they can learn more. These excellent chapters will have to go without further comment in this review.

This reviewer will beg readers indulgence in some personal comments. As a player in the international zoo community Zoo Outreach Organisation purchased and gifted them to all the major zoo periodicals of zoo



Types of Barriers from the Handbook



Types of Exhibit Display from the Handbook

association of the world. As host of a Regional Zoo Association ZOO purchased and gifted 2 dozen copies to major zoos in South Asia other than India which has been covered by CZA. As a Director of a zoo organisation, I will now require my staff persons who deal with zoos to read this book. As a friend of Indian zoos I regret that the zoo director I wanted to review this book refused. A zoo director would have had much more perceptive and useful comments than I. As a colleague and friend of Kamal Naidu and recipient of his thanks for my encouragement, I am so proud of this book of his. There will be critics, but many of them will simply be jealous that they didn't or couldn't write such a book. It was a great labour which took some years but clearly a labour of love for Kamal Naidu. I recommend the Handbook for Zoo Directors without reservation. Get it. Buy it. Read it and be proud to be a zoo person. Your knowledge will be enormously enriched.

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