

participating zoos which exhibit the animals. There are species action plans for some taxa only. For identifying individuals CZA is providing transponders and other appropriate equipment as well as using DNA analysis for identification. Identifying founders is a problem. Genetic and behavioural considerations should be borne in mind. People that attend should be at a sufficient level to make or influence a decision.

Several dozen taxa have been identified and prioritized for the programme which are threatened or of particular interest for some other reason. Other species can be added later but not included now because either there are none in captivity, such as Pallas cat, or large number in captivity such as gharial. Many of the species selected could be grouped into taxonomically similar animals to reduce the numbers of experts. Taxon Advisory Groups could be a focus for selection and this method was suggested to be followed in drawing up a list.

A tentative list was drawn up by the working group which could be used not only for inviting people to the meetings but in future for research seminars, requesting advice, etc.

Dr. Sharma will follow up this exciting project also during WAZA with numerous delegates.



CBSG Gharial Working Group

Members: *Ivan Rehak, Brij Raj Sharma, Sally Walker, Virginia Lindgren, Christian Schmidt, Michael Jorgenson, Sophie Oliver, Don Boyer*

Background

The gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) is a large crocodile native to India and Nepal. A PHVA was conducted on the gharial population in 1995, when the population was estimated at 2,500 animals. Since that date, habitat destruction and persecution of gharial have led to a significant population decline, and the current population is approximately 200 adults, with a breeding nucleus of about 100 animals.

The last viable population of gharial is located in the Chambal Sanctuary of India. A 2006 survey there found 82 females and four males. A large captive population exists, but to date, public resistance has prevented reintroduction of these animals.

A proposal for a resolution to conserve the gharial has been submitted to WAZA, and the working group's first action was to review the resolution and support its passage.

The group discussed barriers to gharial conservation, which include a lack of knowledge about the genetic health of the captive population, local resistance to reintroduction, persecution of gharial, lack of law enforcement in protected areas, and misuse of protected areas by local people. The group also agreed that pressure from outside

groups may be necessary to encourage conservation of the gharial.

Possible strategies for gharial conservation were discussed and prioritized by the group, leading to the development of four goals for gharial conservation.

Goals

- The IUCN should advocate urgent action by the Indian Government to reduce biotic pressure in critical gharial protected areas.
- Investigate the need for both range country *ex situ* populations, and non-range country *ex situ* populations as assurance colonies. Improve scientific management of captive gharial by developing an international studbook, and identifying the genetic diversity in the current *ex situ* population.
- Involve local communities in gharial conservation. Develop special educational materials designed for stakeholders including the non-literate population
- Raise funds to support *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation efforts.

Note: The Gharial resolution passed by CBSG was taken to WAZA, reviewed by the WAZA Conservation Committee and passed unanimously by WAZA. The resolution will be forwarded to IUCN with the hope of a communication from IUCN to the concerned governments.