

Escape !

Animal escapes, escapades and bites by venomous reptiles are the two most serious zoo emergencies. No matter how secure the cages are sooner or later, somehow or other an animal can escape.

While handling an animal which has escaped, the following aspects should be kept in mind.

-- Each animal has its own flight distance. This is the distance within which the animal will flee from a pursuer. Stay beyond the flight distance so that the animal will not flee. Most animals can be approached in a vehicle more closely than on foot. Flight distance of an escaped animal is greater than its flight distance when inside its enclosure.

-- Each animal also has a critical distance. This is the distance at which the animal will attract a pursuer if it can not retreat. If an animal is cornered and you have gone inside its flight distance, you will be approaching its critical distance.

-- Animals usually have a strong attachment for their home enclosures. Thus, if the animal has not ventured far from its enclosure it may be possible to lure it back inside the cage. Keepers should shift cagemates out of the home enclosure so that the door or gate can be left open. Bait the enclosure with preferred food.

An escaped animal is in a strange situation and will feel frightened and desperate. This is because it is in strange surroundings, sees strange people, experiences unfamiliar loud noises and sudden movements, and may see items with which it identifies negative consequences (nets, guns, hoses). All of the above negative stimuli should be avoided as much as possible.

Examples of positive stimuli that will calm the animal are being near a familiar area, sensing familiar people or animals, or other positive things such as food or coaxing sounds the keeper normally makes.

Note- The recapture strategy may involve chemical immobilization, netting or trapping or simply encouraging the animal to return to the home enclosure. Patience, planning and cooperation are the ingredients of a successful recapture.

Zoo Emergency -- Nandankanan Zoo's Contribution

The Nandankanan Zoo has done itself and the Indian zoo community a great service by compiling the book Zoo Emergency.

In the book, in addition to the articles and charts which are given in this feature, there are dozens of case studies of accidents and diseases which occurred in the Nandankanan Zoo which can be used to learn and project what they might do by other zoos. The names of these are printed in the next column. Nandankanan Zoo is unique in their willingness to come out with so many of their mistakes in print. They may be called foolish by fools but this action is really very wise. They have gone through this exercise for the welfare of the animals in their zoo, for the welfare of their visitors and the welfare of their own staff and the public. By admitting that things go wrong and detailing how, when it happened and how they met the contingency, they have probably made others more free to come out with their own case studies. This is helpful and admirable and we at Z.O.O. salute them as zoo emergencies and the need for preparedness has been one of our concerns for several years. We have published several issues of ZOO ZEN with this theme and articles taken from different sources.

We call on all zoos to emulate Nandankanan and take up this topic with the enthusiasm that they have done. Try and obtain a copy of this book compiled by Manoj Mahapatra. You may also order copies of ZOO ZEN on this topic. If you are interested, write to us for a list of same. Sally Walker

Escapes

Bhola A. Bull Elephant Shot Dead on 13.09.1986 as Rogue
Escape of Prema Elephant due to Incidence of fire on 11.03.1999
Escapes of Basanti, The Female Elephant on 09.03.2001
Escape of Hippopotamus from its Enclosure on 16.02.1999
Escape of a Tiger (Nabin) from Encl.No.31"C" & Consequent Human Casualty on 13.02.2000
Scaling on Fence by Manipuri Deer on 2.07.1999
Escape of Pangoline from Enclosure No.82 on 03.05.2000
Escape of Python from Enclosure No.45 "A" on 04.08.2000
Escape of Lesser Sulphur Crested Cuckoo 02.03.2001
Escape of White Tiger "Laxman" in Tiger Safari Feeding Cubicle on 19.06.1999

Inter Species Confrontation

Attack on a Zoo Worker by Tiger on 16.10.1995
Intrusion of Miscreants and Killing of a Nilgai on 31.03.2000
Intrusion of Miscreants and Killing of Caiman on 27.07.2000

Equipment failure

Operational Problem of Aerial Ropeway on 11.01.1998
Detracking of Ropeway on 23.10.1998
Casualty at Boat Ghat on 12.06.2001

Natural disaster

Incidence of Super Cyclone on 29th and 30th October, 1999

Disease and Epidemics

Death of 13 tigers between June 23, 2000 and 7 July 2000