

Field techniques for Chiroptera & Rodentia and Zoo Management Training in Pakistan-- Short Report

Field Techniques for Volant and Non-Volant Small Mammals

When this training was originally conceived, it was to be a training on field techniques for Chiroptera to be held in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The inspiration for the workshop was a request by six field biologists from Pakistan at a C.A.M.P. Workshop for Pakistan Mammals where it became clear that there was no current information on bats and not enough on rodents. It was thought at the time that getting a resource person to visit both Pakistan and Bangladesh on the same overseas visit would be less problematical than getting him over to South Asia twice, hence the Pakistan/Bangladesh combination.

By the time the workshop came about, a whole different scenario was in place. First, we held a CAMP/GMA workshop last February for South Asian Rodents and Insectivores. As a result of discussions held at that workshop for Non-volant Mammals and a field training which followed, it was decided to combine training for both bats and rodents -- Volant and Non-volant Mammals. The reasons for this decision have to do with the massive volume of work which needs to be done on both groups of volant and non-volant small mammals, and our observation that a large number of the field biologists specializing in Volant or Non-volant field research actually were working on both groups. We decided to try and evolve a perfect technique for studying both of the groups in the same field trip. In this way, more field hours and more field workers can study more small mammals for the same investment of time and finances.

Logistical, temporal and financial constraints led to a decision to conduct the workshop in Pakistan now and Bangladesh later, but in three cities instead of one -- Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore. It was easier and less expensive to move trainers to three cities than to bring all the Pakistani field biologists to one city. Thus more people could be exposed to the training. We managed to get our two favourite trainers, Dr. Paul Racey, Chair, Chiroptera Specialist Group and Regius Professor of Natural History, Aberdeen and Dr. Mike Jordan, Curator of Chester Zoo, Chair, Reintroduction Specialist Group for Europe and Central Asia, and noted rodent expert and field biologist formerly of Sparsholt College, UK. The Agendas for each workshop were similar. Generally the programme took up practically the same subjects each in turn for Chiroptera and Rodentia with some shared as common.

There were even more changes ! A zoo management training course which was to have been held before these field techniques workshops had to be conducted simultaneously for various uncontrollable factors. Fortunately, the audience for the zoo workshop was different and it posed little problem. Zoo managers joined field biologists for some sessions such as animal handling and conservation. The whole senior staff of Karachi Zoo attended the zoo management training in Karachi including two vets, a curator, an educator and several other staff persons. The major topics and presentations of this

training were Elephant Management, Population Management, Display of Rodents and Insectivores, Welfare measures for zoo animals, Environmental Enrichment, Collection Planning, Management of Captive Birds of Prey, Organising Zookeeper Training, Zoo Design and Education, Conservation and Education, the new World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy, Exhibiting bats in the zoo. Uzma Khan, Sally Walker, Mike Jordan and Paul Racey delivered these lectures. Fortunately both Mike Jordan and Paul Racey had zoo experience as well as field experience. Paul's first job was a zookeeper at London Zoo and Mike just joined Chester Zoo last year as Curator after several years in the field.

That is how our training plan evolved. It is good to be flexible !

Karachi

In Karachi, the field techniques training workshop was conducted in the new Karachi Zoo Natural History Museum (which was also inaugurated on the same day for the occasion) and attended by a variegated mix of biologists from different institutes and universities, such as Zoological Survey Department, Sindh Wildlife Department, World Wide Fund for Nature, Pakistan, Karachi University and other institutions. Please refer to attached list. Of particular note was the attention of the Zoological Survey Department participants and the Sindh Wildlife Department participants. ZSD is the nodal agency for collecting and cataloguing species of animals in Pakistan, much like the Zoological Survey of India in India. The Sindh Wildlife Department was represented by two persons, one being the Director ? of the Department. His enthusiasm for the workshop was boundless. He stated that although he was familiar with field work, he learned a very large amount in a very short time and asked if it would be possible to organize the same workshop for all the people in his department. Also of note in Karachi, an elaborate Inaugural Ceremony was conducted and attended by the Mayor of Karachi as Chief Guest with very good press coverage of the need for attention to studies of small mammals. We held the zoo management training in the Director's office which had been made into a conference room for the purpose. After the training we took a tour to the dramatic Karachi Safari Park before leaving for Islamabad.

Islamabad

In Islamabad the training was hosted by the Pakistan Museum of Natural History in collaboration with the CDA, Capital Development Authority. The head of CDA graced the Inaugural function and gave an excellent address. The field techniques workshop was very well attended by scientists from the PMNH itself, WWF, Pakistan, IUCN Pakistan, Punjab Wildlife Department, and individuals from different universities and colleges. The training demonstrations were held close to the PMNH which is practically inside the Margalla Hills National Park and some of the areas in which the workshop practiced were indeed inside the national park. The Science Foundation of Islamabad was also a collaborator and the Director was Chief Guest at the

Validictory. The same basic formula was followed in Islamabad for lectures and demonstrations with good results. Participants and hosts were very much satisfied with their experience and made recommendations for further work.

In Islamabad, the Punjab Wildlife Department officers who manage the numerous deer parks and breeding farms nearer to Islamabad in the Punjab as well as the senior staff of the Islamabad Zoo attended the zoo management sessions.

Lahore

The workshops in Lahore were conducted at the Lahore Zoo in collaboration with the Punjab Wildlife Department. We lost Paul Racey for Lahore as he had to get back to UK for a meeting so Mike Jordan carried on focusing on Non-volant Small Mammals. Sanjay Molur from Zoo Outreach Organisation, who facilitated the CAMP workshop on Pakistan Mammals and is currently doing field work on both Volant and Non-volant small mammals, linked the two in his lecture on Conservation and the Pakistan Mammal CAMP, as he had done for the other two workshops as well. Since Mike also had to leave we had a one-day field training in Lahore for the Punjab Wildlife Department officers with some of the zoo staff also in attendance.

In Lahore, the staff of the Lahore Zoo and the wildlife officers looking after captive animal facilities in or near Lahore attended the second day which focused on zoo management. In Lahore we also had a beautiful formal inaugural function and valedictory with some good press coverage. In Lahore also we had dinner on two occasions with the Director General Wildlife, both current and past, whom we knew, and the Secretary, Department of Environment, which was useful.

These workshops seem to have been very useful and we all felt our time had been very well spent. The workshops were truly collaborative partnerships with ZOO and WILD, CCINSA and RILSCINSA, CBSG South Asia and RSG South & East Asia pooling expertise and resources to get resource person to Pakistan and move and house them in three cities. The hosts in each city sponsored the venue, preparation, equipment and hospitality, e.g. Karachi Zoo/Karachi Municipality Corporation,

Karachi ; Pakistan Natural History Museum and Capitol Development Authority, Islamabad; and Lahore Zoo & Punjab Wildlife Department, Lahore.

The donors from abroad were :
Universities Federation for Animal Welfare
Chester Zoo/North of England Zoological Society
Bat Conservation International
North Carolina Zoological Park

Value added :

North Carolina Zoological Park sponsored two Kabul Zoo staff, the Director, Mr. A. Latif Shah Nuri and Education Officer, Mohammed Faizel, who attended the zoo management component. They had a special status being from Kabul where their zoo was destroyed and is currently being rebuilt. They were given special zoo tours by people in Pakistan who spoke either Dari or Pashtu.

Conclusion

For a reasonable donation from western zoos and welfare organizations, about 50 persons in each of three cities were given an introduction to bat and rodent field techniques and zoo management by knowledgeable and experienced specialists. The donation was matched in cash and in kind by the Pakistan hosts and collaborators. Perhaps thousands of persons in Pakistan got some idea from the press coverage that conservation involves more than just large mammals. Government officials got a similar message loud and clear. The Zoo Outreach Organisation specialist networks gained quite a few more members. Three other big events in Pakistan could be fine-tuned during the visit, the upcoming SAZARC meeting, an upcoming CBSG/RSG meeting and an upcoming CAMP for Freshwater Biodiversity in December 2004.

We will be doing it all again in Bangladesh in February where we will have a PHVA for Hoolock Gibbon, three Teachers for Tigers training workshops, a field techniques training for volant and non-volant mammals for Dhaka and Jahangirnagar University staff and students.

