

Visitors Enrichment - An indispensable perspective in Zoo Management

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Human development without animals is always incomplete. The importance of animals for human being has also been described since *Vedic* period. Even today human beings are directly or indirectly dependent on animals. Therefore, animals especially wild animals, that play an important role in our ecosystem, need protection and conservation. The zoological parks are one of the major players in fulfilling the noble cause of animal conservation. In this age of urbanization, when forests are losing their cover, zoological parks also serve as a wildlife and environment education center. Since most of the zoological parks follow somewhat same pattern of enrichments hence for the current study Kanpur zoological park was selected as a standard due ease of access to for the authors.

Kanpur being an industrial city breathes on pollutants, however, Kanpur zoological park which is situated in the heart of the city serves as lungs for the city of Kanpur. The Kanpur zoo is spread in an area of around 76.56 hectare with its peaceful environment and sights. The zoo is currently having 1307 animals of 116 species.

The Kanpur zoo witnesses a large number of visitors daily which annually accounts around eight lakhs. The zoo is main attraction during national holidays and festivals.

Several steps have already been taken by Kanpur zoological park authorities to make it more visitors friendly and educative; few of them are essential to be described here, such as:

- A beautifully decorated new entrance gate.
- A vast parking area for the visitor's vehicles.
- A board at entrance giving information regarding Kanpur zoological park.
- Swings and cradles for the kids.
- Battery operated cars (pollution free) to roam inside with provision of a driver for each cab.
- Polythene free zoo programme together with a NGO is running successfully.
- Free wheel chair for disabled and handicapped persons.
- Free prams for small kids.
- Zoo bicycles are also being provided to the visitors at nominal cost.
- Reverse osmosis plants with water coolers at various places to provide safe and cold water.
- Boards with messages of wildlife richness and importance.
- Sign boards and direction-images on the ways.
- A food court and four other canteens at equal distance for refreshment.
- Wooden bridge and a new concrete bridge on zoo lake.



Direction board for visitors in Kanpur Zoo. Photo: Jitesh Pandey

- Sitting arrangement on plastered bedrock and bench of tiles with covered platforms.
- Arrangement of rain shelters at equal distance in whole of the zoo.
- Renovation of benches and pathways in the lawns and parks.
- Clean toilets for visitors especially for women and handicaps with provision of dustbin and soap.
- All the animal enclosures are open type with wet or dry moat and/or are encircled by chain link and to give them natural look they are covered with green hedge, bamboos and creeper plants.
- Every enclosure of animals consists of information regarding the species.
- Zoo train with four bogies and two halts at newly constructed platforms in order to facilitate visitors to visit more areas.

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Wall magazine of Kanpur Zoo. Photo: Jitesh Pandey

- Construction of an emergency pathway for visitors so that during any eventuality the zoo visitors can be taken out immediately with shortest route.
- Provision of several picnic spots at various places is attracting zoo visitors.
- A visit to jungle safari and lake of the zoo on every Saturdays and Sundays with guide in order to educate the visitors regarding importance of the jungles and birds.
- Construction of viewpoints around the zoo lake in order to facilitate the bird watching. The place is no less than a paradise for the bird watchers as the Kanpur zoo is home for around 52 types of birds (Singh *et. al*, 2016).
- A day with zoo vets program has recently been started by zoo authorities for the school going children so that they may become acquaint with wild life skills.
- A monthly wall magazine named "Abhivyakti" has been initiated with the help of a media house and is drawing huge response from school students.

Beside this various visitor enrichment programmes have been incorporated in the master plan of the various zoological parks. As there is no limit of innovations therefore beside above enrichment programmes there are certain other facilities if made available to the visitors then it may result in more interest and awareness among zoo comers. The following measures are need of the hour to attract more visitors to the zoological parks in order to develop awareness towards wildlife protection and conservation among masses.

- Provision of a guide within the battery vehicles to give information regarding wildlife.
- A zoo souvenir shop for visitors with affordable prized mementos.
- Monthly/weekly competition may be organized for the visitors with the help of media to know the mindset regarding animals like:
 - a. Comment of the week
 - b. Suggestion of the week
 - c. The best suggestion or comment may be given

coverage by the concerned media and rewarded with two free tickets with one month validity.

- To increase participation of schools there must be one half yearly magazine published by zoo authorities containing essays, arts and photographs etc. related to wildlife. And the students who participate in the magazine may be awarded free tickets to visit zoo along with parents.
- Most strong tree in the zoo may be selected to make a platform on the top of that tree with stairs and a nominal charge should be provisioned to control the rush. From this place the viewers shall be able to see our natural heritage i.e. forest preserved by zoo authorities who will also inspire them for afforestation and they may also compare the concrete jungle with the natural one.
- Waste tree logs can be brought from the fallen trees of the zoo itself and can be utilized by making certain objects like bench, table and platforms etc.
- To make any signage more attractive, attentive and knowledgeable following things can be done:
 - a. Along with species information other species of that family may be included in that signboard such as in case of tiger we can also include other members of the cat family with names only it will be helpful in knowing the relative size etc. of the other cats.
 - b. The species displayed should also be represented in food pyramid indicating the position of animal in food cycle.
 - c. Energy movement in food cycle can be demonstrated very interestingly in signage.
 - d. In large zoos paid cold and safe drinking water facility, sitting arrangements, lawns, rain water shelter arrangement should be done at regular distance with proper signages. Usually visitors use RO water for hand and face washing hence paid drinking water shall be helpful in saving precious water. However the charges should be nominal.
 - e. A weighing machine may installed at two places in the zoos which will be capable of comparing most heavy and light animals with the human beings and will be a crowd puller. This will generate additional revenue for the concerned zoo along with this height scale can be developed in which viewers may compare their height with animal heights.
 - f. List of extinct species and rare species can give message for conservation among masses.
 - g. To inspire corporates of the city to adopt the wild domestic animals (Singh and Srivastava, 2015) yearly seminar on adoption may be the best tools in which industrialists, corporates and entrepreneurs may be invited to participate. Such persons and/or business houses may help in maintaining lawns, fountains, and all other facilities which attracts visitors and alternatively

they may be given one or two specified places to advertise their products according to zoo rules.

Above measures if taken may enhance the interest of public in the wild life as well as it will also help as a tool to increase the number of visitors. It is well said that a satisfied customer is worth millions, as improved visitor services will lead to mouth publicity of the zoo.

Due to globalization a zoo not only need to be more interesting and educational but is a demand of time and then only our zoos can achieve their objectives. Our next generation will then only be able to realize the importance of these rare natural treasures and their richness given by our mother nature. In current scenario zoological parks can forward message for awareness and conservation of precious wildlife.

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Announcement

National Seminar on Dwindling Wetlands Impacts on Livelihood and Ecosystem Services (DWILES-2017) 30-31 January 2017

Organized by Department of Life Sciences, Christ University, Bengaluru.

Major thematic areas for submission of papers

- Habitat loss from development and land reclamation
- Altered water regime
- Lake pollution and ecosystem modifications
- Introduction of exotic species
- Wetland conservation, monitoring and evaluation
- Wetlands for livelihood of local communities
- Economically and environmentally sustainable farming business in the wetlands
- Joint Lake management programmes and creation of long term partnerships
- Wetland biodiversity and conservation
- Sustainable ecological sanitation
- Remote sensing and GIS applications in wetland management

The seminar will be held in the Central Block of Christ University, Bengaluru. It features keynote address, panel discussions, lead talks, paper presentations by participants, best paper awards and cultural programs. A field trip to study the biodiversity of a large wetland in Bengaluru is also on the cards.

Call for Papers

Participants are requested to send papers related to the above mentioned themes for presentation. Kindly submit an abstract of your proposed presentation by email word attachment of 250 words in 1.5 line spacing and 12 size in Times New Roman fonts to greenarmy@christuniversity.in with subject line as 'Abstract for DWILES-2017' on or before 7 January 2017.

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