

Elephant Management Training Workshop in Sri Lanka 2011

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Introduction

ASERC, the Austrian Sri Lankan Elephant Research and Conservation project <www.aserc.org> is an ongoing and joint initiative of the Vienna Zoo, the Friends of the Vienna Zoo and the Sri Lanka Department of Wildlife Conservation. It entails several aspects including elephant research and management, veterinary medicine, technical resources and environmental education. It helps in managing the human-elephant conflict in the communities, but also improving the lives of captive elephant and other animals.

This is one in a series of workshops focusing on building expertise in managing animal collections in general and elephant management in particular. A special module focuses on elephant management with basic training and veterinary procedures, such as foot care, as well as advanced veterinary methods and development of a breeding program, leading to the establishment of an *ex situ* and *in situ* conservation strategy which also takes the human-elephant conflict into account.

Since 2006 ASERC marks a cooperative effort between the Vienna Zoo and Sri Lankan experts in elephant research and management, veterinary medicine and technical resources. It conducts research and conservation on elephant in-situ and ex-situ and is designed to guarantee species-appropriate management and to help settle the animal-human conflict in habitat use.

Project description

From June 27 to July 3, 2011, A workshop on “Zoological collection planning and management in Sri Lanka” was carried out at the Dehiwala Zoo (Fig. 1). The “Elephant management course” was held at the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage and at the Elephant Transit Home at Udawalawe. These programs were carried out by Vienna Zoo in the project framework of ASERC, funded by WAZA and the Vienna Zoo.

The Instructors were Harald Schwammer, Zoological Curator and Vice Director of the Vienna Zoo, Gaby Schwammer, Head of Education at the Vienna Zoo, and Wolfgang Zenker, Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarian. Harald



Figure 1. Workshop at the Dehiwala Zoo, Colombo.

Schwammer and his team have experience in carrying out such programs for over 10 years.

Primary goals and objectives of the animal collection planning and management workshop are the understanding, the capacity and knowledge to implement basic principles of animal management and husbandry as well and understanding the theoretical background. Principles of keeper routines are discussed such as their own behaviour with animals and the need to carry out basic animal observation.

An entire module focuses on education and awareness, not only for keeper staff but also for management staff who need to develop an institutional master plan for conservation education and train their on education team to reach different age groups within the animal keeping institution as well as in the local communities.

Elephants are chosen as a model species to carry out such basic husbandry principles since these are widely kept in Sri Lanka and not only at zoos, but also in wildlife orphanages and private holders. In addition, they require special safety standards and routine veterinary care procedures, such as regular foot care (Fig. 2). Also the importance of education, awareness and outreach can be highlighted due to the need of reducing the Human-Elephant conflict on the island.

The target audience for the training program is top management staff of Colombo Zoo as well as management staff of the Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage. These are the stakeholders who are in charge of developing and in turn implementing a strategy, are leading and training their staff members and are woven into the network of local animal keeping institutions and private holders.

“Zoological Collection Planning and Zoo Management in Sri Lanka” - Dehiwala Zoo

From June 27 to June 30, 2011 the workshop was carried out at the Dehiwala Zoo in Colombo. In total 58 persons participated, they had the profession of curators, veterinarians, wildlife rangers or animal keepers. The workshop



Figure 2. Foot care demonstration.

consisted in part of lectures, but also includes an important practical component (Fig. 3) wherever possible and encourages discussion.

*“Elephant Management and Care Workshop”
Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage*

23 participants, mainly veterinarians and curators, joined the meeting and workshop from July 1 to July 2, 2011. Pinnawela is the world best known elephant orphanage with currently more than 90 elephants.

“Elephant- Orphans, First Aid, Treatment and Care Workshop” - Elephant Transit Home

The third Workshop took place in the Elephant Transit Home (ETH) in the Udawalawe National Park with 35 participants. ETH is an elephant orphanage with recently 39 elephants in the age up to about 5 years. Main topic was first aid for rescued elephants, treatment and care management. The participants were veterinarians and wildlife rangers.



Figure 3. Practical enrichment program for monkeys using specific prepared natural food.