

READERS' LETTERS

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Mycobacterial Infections

As editor of *The Proceedings on Mycobacterial Infections of Zoo Animals*, I feel compelled to respond to the unfavorable review given the volume by V.J.A. Manton in the October 1979 issue of *International Zoo News*. Many of the comments appeared rather unjustified, and even seemed to have vindictive overtones. The Proceedings was not intended to be a comprehensive textbook with a complete bibliography on the subject, but was rather an honest effort to assemble some current information, particularly on tuberculosis, that could be applied to zoo animals. Although new information about methods and experiences did surface, there was also no intention of updating any previous meetings on the subject.

The insinuation that information derived from this symposium would have no applicability outside of North America illustrates some shortsightedness and apparent lack of objectivity used by the reviewer in his critique. Most of the diseases covered could affect zoological species in any country.

No claims were made that all of the papers in this Proceedings were entirely conclusive. The aims of the symposium, however, were met at the time, but it was also understood and pointed out that a void in the knowledge concerned particularly with tuberculosis in zoo animals still exists.

The volume has been well received by many colleagues interested in the subject despite international boundaries.

The intention is to continue this type of important forum by holding another similar workshop in the near future.

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Come back, taxonomy!

It was stated in an article in *IZN*, several years ago, that "taxonomy is a lost art in zoos". I have visited many zoos in recent years and I have seen not only birds or reptiles but also mammals wrongly labeled. I have seen a lot of unnecessary hybridisation, and on several occasions I found out that the zoo staff were not aware of this.

There are sufficient numbers available of gibbons, spider monkeys, lemurs, or Eglectus parrots for example, that the different species or subspecies could be bred pure. But if the present situation continues, in the future we shall only have a uniform "zoo gibbon", a uniform "zoo spider monkey", and so on. Most zoos already have a mixed zoo lion and a mixed zoo leopard and in some cases these subspecific hybrids have been brought back to their native country for releasing.

The diversity of wildlife is not only threatened by extirpation of species, but also by mixing up several subspecies. This occurs not only in zoos but also in the wild, following "wildlife management" where often one subspecies is translocated to the range of another subspecies.

This trend can only change if more people would show an interest in taxonomy.

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Three-horned rhinos

I recently purchased a copy of *Big Game Hunting and Adventure 1897-1936* by Marcus Daly, published by Macmillan & Co., London, 1937.

It contains a photograph of a black rhino shot in Tanaland, showing the growth of a third horn. I remembered seeing such a photo in *IZN* No. 150, March 1978, of a black rhino in Lisbon Zoo, which also had a third horn. The position, size, and shape of these horns on both rhinos are identical. Although there is not mention of the rhino concerned in the text of Daly's book, it does seem unlikely that it was artificial as the old rhino was photographed just after it was shot.

Pierre Brouard states in his article on the Lisbon rhino that others may be seen in museums with identical third horns. Is it possible that all these rhinos came from the same area in Africa, and that it may be a hereditary genetic defect?

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Ethology in zoos

I totally disagree with part of your editorial in *IZN* 164, which reads: "We must I think beware of conducting ethological research in zoos. We might merely be studying the behaviour of captive animals, or even animals confined in one particular kind of captivity, so we should be careful not to assume that their behaviour is necessarily the same as it would be in the wild."

I agree that animals kept in laboratory cages or in small, naked cages in roadside menageries do not show their natural behaviour. However, animals living in well-designed enclosures with

the necessary furniture and the normal social grouping have the same qualitative behaviour as their wild counterparts.

What differs is the quantitative behaviour, e.g. more food-searching and enemy-avoiding in the wild, versus more play and sexual behaviour in zoos. I do not just say this because I undertook my Ph.D. on Social Behaviour of Collared Peccaries on a zoo-group only, but the above-mentioned was definitely proved in studies on hamadryas baboons undertaken in Zurich Zoo and in Ethiopia by Prof. Dr Hans Kummer. Obviously Dr L.G. Goodwin is of the same opinion, for he writes in the same number of *IZN*: "Collections of animals in good zoos provide unique opportunities for learning about their behaviour"

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Nigel Sitwell writes: I, too, agree with Dr Schmidt. What I intended to draw attention to is that the behaviour of captive animals is not *always* the same as those in the wild. I certainly believe that much valuable research can be done in zoos. However, it is important that the zoo is "good", and that the researcher is aware of possible behavioural differences, as outlined by Dr Schmidt.

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