

Report on study tour to Vanatar Zoo, Jamnagar by officials of Telangana from 18/09/2024 to 20/09/2024:

Officials visited:

1. Sri Ahmad Nadeem IAS., Prl. Secretary Forest.
2. Sri R.M.Dobriyal IFS., PCCF HoFF.
3. Smt Dr.C.Suvarna IFS., PCCF CAMPA & FCA.
4. Sri Dr.Sunil Hiremath IFS., Curator, Hyderabad Zoo.
5. Smt. Arpana IFS., DyCF Eco Tourism, PCCF office.
6. Sri. L.Ranjeet Nayak IFS., ED, Eco tourism, TGFDC.
7. Sri.D. Sudhakar Reddy SFS., DFO Ranga Reddy.
8. Smt. V.Tanuja, ADET, TGFDC.

Introduction

The study tour to Vantara Zoo, Jamnagar, aimed to observe and document the best practices in zoo management, focusing on animal welfare, habitat management, conservation efforts as a part of knowledge sharing for development of new zoo in Mucherla of Telangana. This report highlights key observations and best practices from the visit.

History of Vantara:

A proposal was submitted, on 7th January 2019, to the Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority (CZA) along with application for recognition under section 38 (H) sub section 2 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for the proposed establishment of Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (GZRRC). On 14th February 2019, CZA granted approval for the establishment under Section 38 H (1A) of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 for the establishment of GZRRC. On 10th March 2021, Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre Society (GZRRCs) was registered Societies Registration Act, 1860. Since then, the GZRRCs has been looking after the day-to-day operation of the GZRRC. Facilities include Satellite Rescue Facility for leopards, Satellite Rescue Facility used in housing Crocodiles, Bears, Animal Quarantine centre to cater the need for quarantining animals that are sick or acquired from other zoos/institutions. The One-horned Rhinoceros Conservation Breeding Centre used for conservation breeding programme of Greater One Horned Rhinoceros at GZRRC. The total area of zoo is 568.4 Acres.

Zoo Layout and Habitat Design:

One of the standout features of Vantara Zoo is its naturalistic design, which mimics the animals' native habitats. Enclosures are spacious and designed to provide a stimulating environment for animals, promoting natural behaviours. Each night shelter is provided with a paddock & crawl. Night shelters are equipped with central air condition. These shelters are made of SS material with keeper friendly feed outlet system and automatic water refill for animals. Paddocks have foggers placed on roof for cooling effect.

- **Best Practice:** The use of natural vegetation, water bodies, and terrain made of ferro cement mimicking forts, temples in display paddocks are never seen before in any zoo in India. Glass wall for crocodile enclosure gives a complete view of crocodile under water.
- **Animal Welfare Impact:** This enhances the animals' mental and physical health, reduces stress, and fosters natural foraging and hunting behaviours.



Animal Procurement & Enclosure Enrichment Programs

Vantara Zoo has implemented comprehensive enrichment programs to ensure animals remain active and engaged. These activities are designed to stimulate animals mentally and physically. As on date zoo accommodates 3000 plus animals with 150 Tigers, 230 Leopards, 150 Cheetahs and 850 Marsh crocodiles. These have been rescued from countries like Mexico, USA, Brazil etc.

- **Best Practice:** Regular enrichment through puzzle feeders, environmental changes, wooden bridges, waterfalls, animal den and bamboo wall between enclosures.
- **Animal Welfare Impact:** Promotes psychological well-being and reduces boredom-related issues such as repetitive behaviours.



Conservation and Breeding Programs

Vantara Zoo places a strong emphasis on conservation and breeding programs, particularly for endangered species.

- **Best Practice:** Collaboration with national and international wildlife conservationists and experts to run breeding programs for species at risk of extinction. Cheetah facility is one such example.
- **Impact:** Successful breeding programs help in repopulating endangered species and maintaining genetic diversity.

Veterinary Care and Animal Health Monitoring

The zoo has a well-equipped veterinary facility with a dedicated team responsible for animal health monitoring and disease prevention.

- **Best Practice:** Routine health checks, vaccination schedules, and a 24/7 veterinary emergency service, facilities like MRI, Xray and various other state of the art facilities were observed. First cataract operation for elephant was done in elephant hospital, which is the world's largest elephant hospital.
- **Impact:** Early diagnosis and treatment of illnesses improve animal health and longevity.

Education and Visitor Engagement

The zoo's education programs are designed to raise awareness about wildlife conservation and the importance of biodiversity. Though the facility is not opened to public till date.

- **Best Practice:** Educational digital signage near every animal display unit, interactive displays.
- **Impact:** Enhances visitors' understanding of wildlife conservation, fostering a greater appreciation and sense of responsibility toward nature.

Security and Safety Measures

Vantara Zoo has implemented stringent security protocols to ensure the safety of both animals and visitors. This includes CCTV surveillance, trained security personnel (retired military personal), electronic access and rapid response teams.

- **Best Practice:** Secure enclosures, and proper training for staff in handling emergencies.
- **Impact:** Ensures a safe environment for animals and visitors, reducing risks of accidents or animal escapes.

Human Resource & Training:

The zoo prioritizes staff training and professional development to ensure high standards in animal care and zoo management. As on date 300 animal keepers along with 4 curators apart from other workers are employed in Vantara zoo.

- **Best Practice:** Continuous training programs for zookeepers, veterinarians, and management staff in areas such as animal handling, health monitoring, and emergency procedures. Regular trainings in other zoos of the country is being taken up for animal keepers. Non stress methods to collect blood samples from animals is the unique practice being followed here.
- **Impact:** Enhances staff competence and ensures the highest level of care for the animals.

Conclusion

The study tour to Vantara Zoo, Jamnagar, revealed several best practices in zoo management, particularly in the areas of habitat design, animal welfare, conservation. By adopting a holistic approach to zoo management, Vantara Zoo sets a benchmark for other zoos in India and globally. These practices not only contribute to the well-being of animals but also promote conservation education and environmental sustainability.

Recommendations for new zoo in Mucherla.

1. **Ambience & Aesthetics :** Landscaping, Entry plaza, display boards can be replicated.
2. **Animal Display Enclosure Design :** Paddocks are easily accessible with glass wall for clear view of animals.
3. **Night shelter designs can be replicated.**
4. **Drip irrigation for green area to avoid manpower for watering**
5. **Hospital facilities can be replicated**
6. **Ferro cement works:** resembling heritage of Telangana in animal enclosures can be an unique attraction.
7. **Technology:** App for monitoring zoo keepers, Animal health and real time information feeding.
8. **MoU with Vantara will help in designing new zoo effectively. Vantara management is ready to sign MoU with Telangana Government.**