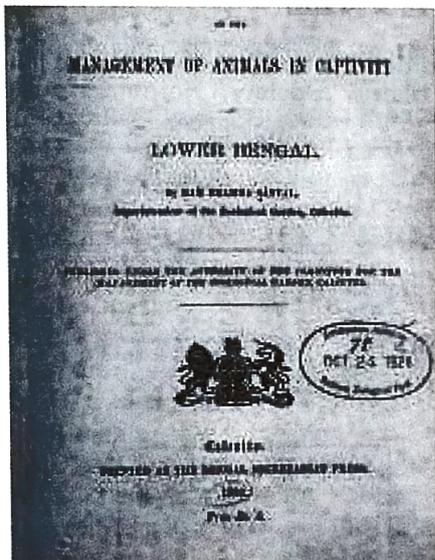


The 'First And Only' Zoo Management Book in India

The preface to India's "first and only" Zoo Management book contains the following quote from the Report of the Managing Committee of Calcutta Zoo for the year 1888-89:

As the Zoological Gardens have now been in existence for 13 years (since 1875-76), it is presumable that many events have taken place among the large number of animals, birds, etc., exhibited from time to time which would be of interest to the scientific world and to persons interested in zoology; also, that considerable experience must have been gained in the management of animals, birds, c., in etconfinement, and their treatment in sickness, which would be of practical use to the managing bodies of other Zoological Gardens and to individuals who have private collections.



Thus Babu R. B. Sanyal, Superintendent of the Gardens was requested to prepare a hand book from the written records and his personal recollections of the care and feeding of the animals housed in Calcutta Zoo in the 13 years since its beginning.

The Handbook ran to some 350 pages and describes 241 mammals and 402 birds in sickness and in health with amusing and useful anecdotes about their idiosyncracies and detailed descriptions of their appearance and habits.

One fervently wishes to know more about Mr. Sanyal. Where did he come from? Why was he chosen as Superintendent. How did he manage to amass so much detailed information in only 13 years under the conditions that prevailed over 100 years ago.

The handbook was published in 1892. That means Mr. Sanyal wrote the entire volume in about two years!

Western Zoo Management books (such as the undisputed classic by Lee Crandall of the New York Zoological Society *Management of Mammals in Captivity* quote Sanyal extensively. Much of the husbandry information is valid even today and as a record of captive species in India a century ago it is invaluable.

If anyone is interested in purchasing a copy, forget it. It has not been reprinted since 1992 and it is almost impossible to find a copy:

Mr. Sanyal begins the volume with an authors preface which is highly interesting for its irony: "Should this book fall into that hands of European Naturalist or Manager of a Vivarium, I trust that he will consider the fact the it is intended for India where trained supervision is a desideratum". (*This was written nearly 100 years ago and trained supervision is still a desideratum*).

Another passage states: "Besides, its publication may stimulate others more experienced and competent to record and publish the result of their experience; (*it hasn't*). So that, in time, a more accurate and extensive literature on the treatment of a animals in captivity may be produced." (*No such luck*).

With this book review Zoo's Print will start a regular series of excerpts from Sanyal which will be interesting for a variety of reasons. Perhaps these excerpts may stimulate some of our contemporary zoomen to record and publish the results of their experience. Over 96 years have passed with no zoo book in India. Surely many events would have taken place among the large number of animals, birds etc. exhibited from time to time which would be of interest to the scientific world and to persons interested in zoology. There are alive in India today several men who have spent their whole careers in the zoo and who could write such book. We hope they read this and start writing.