

## Zoos Respond to their Critics

There are frequent references in the AAZPA conference proceedings from the mid-1970's to the threat against the continued existence of zoos from the activities of anti-zoo "protectionists" which had already resulted in increased legislative restrictions upon the acquisition and disposition of animals. Some zoo people referred to zoos as an "endangered species" being legislated out of business by fanatical, uninformed "tree-huggers" who had good intentions but no understanding of biological realities (Todd, 1973).

In a presentation to one of the AAZPA's regional workshops in 1975, Frank Todd (1976, pp.2-3), Corporate Curator of Birds for Sea World, Inc. of San Diego, described the accumulation of protective federal legislation which the zoos were coming slowly to regard as inimical to their continued existence:

The incredible saga of zoo problems began in earnest in August of 1972 when the USDA imposed retroactive avian importation ban [due to Newcastle's disease] went into effect. This was closely followed in December by the Marine Mammal Protection Act. In 1973 the New Endangered Species Act became effective, as well as the beginnings of the International Treaty [CITES] concerning endangered species. During 1973 USDA came out with their overly restrictive avian import and quarantine requirements and importers began to drop like flies. 1974 was no better as the first proposal [to amend the Lacey Act] from USDI regarding the so-called "injurious species" was presented. In addition, the concept of a federal zoo bill was being received favorably in Washington. The situation between USDA and American zoos continued to deteriorate. 1975 has started out just as poorly for us. The second, and just as bad, proposal from [US] FWS on injurious species has been made public and the concept of a Federal Zoo Control Board is gaining wider acceptance.

Zoos were frustrated by the paperwork and the delays in getting permits to import animals or move them across state lines "in commerce." In his presentation, Todd (p.3) gave an illustration of the sorts of restrictions zoos could encounter:

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Examination of a seemingly simple importation will serve to illustrate some of the problems; importation of a pair of Laysan teal from Canada. First it is required to apply for a USDA import permit. If that is approved, space must then be secured in a USDA approved quarantine facility which frequently takes many months. Then the bird has to survive quarantine, and while in quarantine must even not be 'exposed' to anything such as VVND [Newcastle's Disease]. If so, they are destroyed. Now, unfortunately for the teal, they are considered an endangered species; hence an endangered species permit is required from USDI. Waiting periods up to one year are not unusual, even if approved. In addition, a \$50.00 application fee is required, even though the birds are only worth \$20.00 a pair. In the meantime, the birds may have died of senility. Assuming that they have not and are at least legally imported, and breeding is ultimately achieved, still another endangered species permit to [sell] the offspring is necessary. Laysan Teal are prolific breeders, so the only solution is to separate them to prevent the breeding of endangered species. . . . So, in effect, the bill that was conceived to assist endangered species is, in reality, the most detrimental thing that has happened to them in some time. In essence, they are being legislated out of business.

In spite of this rather dramatic illustration, other zoo people, such as Warren Iliff (See Appendix C), contend that federal regulations pose few problems if one is "organized." Earl Baysinger of the USDI believes there have been just enough problems with the implementation of federal regulations to lend credibility to the "screamers." Baysinger says he urged the government on many occasions to create a clearinghouse for permits, but to no avail. In 1977 it was taking an average of 120 days for an applicant to get a permit from the Federal Wildlife Permit Office.

Those "screamers" decided that zoos and aquariums had to protect themselves by "fighting fire with fire," and a number of them contributed funds in 1974 to establish the Zoological Action Committee, ZOOACT, to represent their interests in Washington and keep them informed of objectionable legislation before it was passed. ZOOACT slowly began to draw more support from AAZPA members, but they were not unanimously

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in support of zoos and aquariums being represented in Washington by someone outside their profession.

Two of the individuals interviewed in the course of preparing this paper were particularly critical of the AAZPA's approach to legislative representation in Washington. Dr. Wayne King (See Appendix C) thinks it is "appalling" for zoos to be represented by a professional lobbyist. He believes the AAZPA should do its own lobbying. He further believes the AAZPA does not understand the way the "political establishment" operates in Washington, but it could learn and could represent itself more effectively and at less expense.

Steve Graham (See Appendix C) apparently shares Dr. King's opinion. He believes that ZOOACT's Executive Director George Steele suffers from the image of being "too slick," and that is not the image AAZPA should be conveying to Congress. He also feels it is of no benefit to AAZPA to have ZOOACT working "on the outside"; he would have George Steele continue to represent AAZPA, but from within the Association.

These criticisms evidently represent the minority view, but it is apparently a vocal minority as the reports of the AAZPA Presidents and the Executive Director repeatedly defend the need to maintain "legislative services" in Washington. In his defense of those services in his "Presidential Farewell Address," outgoing AAZPA President Edward Maruska reminded the membership at the Annual Conference in 1979 that "the protectionist, conservationist and other pressure groups maintain million-dollar lobbies in Washington." He also stressed the need for AAZPA to "be involved in all conservation issues" (Maruska, 1979, p.6).