

## The Evolution of the AAZPA

Since it established its independence from the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) in 1971, the AAZPA has undergone many changes in its effort to be recognized as an association of professionals seriously dedicated to the purposes of "conservation, education, scientific studies and recreation" in zoos and aquariums. Since 1971 it has dramatically increased in size. From 671 members in 1971, the AAZPA's membership roll has increased to 2,815 members in 1979, a growth rate of 13% over the 2,500 members reported in 1978 (Wagner, 1979, p.10). There are also more than 220 member institutions in AAZPA, which number should be compared to the more than 1,200 exhibitors of captive wildlife listed as registered or licensed by the USDA under the Animal Welfare Act. Clearly, not all so-called "zoos" are subject to the sanctions of the AAZPA, and do not derive the benefits of the Association's educational activities. AAZPA members do appear to take advantage of the Association's efforts to encourage the sharing of information; the Executive Director reports that "more than 50% of AAZPA members attend Association meetings [regional workshops and annual conferences] on an annual basis" (Wagner, 1979, p.10).

Recognizing the need for scientifically trained individuals to determine the future course of the zoo profession, AAZPA has created categories of membership to distinguish between levels of training and experience. In 1977 the AAZPA began publishing in its NEWSLETTER a list of candidates for the Professional Fellow and Fellow classes of membership (AAZPA NEWSLETTER, 1/1979:6). By this means the members are given the opportunity to question the suitability of proposed candidates. The requirements for both classes are quite specific: Professional Fellows are required to be graduates of an "accredited institution of higher learning,"

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employed for a minimum of three years in a zoo or aquarium; Fellows must have been employed continuously in a zoo or aquarium for two full years. The educational requirement may be waived if the candidate has been employed for eight full years in a zoo or aquarium, and during four years of that time has been "in a management capacity on the administrative, scientific, maintenance or supportive staff" of the institution (AAZPA 1978-79 Directory, p.18). Candidates in both categories must be sponsored by three current members (Professional Fellows or Fellows)--only one of which may be affiliated with the candidate's own institution--who will attest in writing to the candidate's "qualifications, attitude towards the Association and professional ethics." Fellows may apply for Professional Fellow status when they can meet the requirements. New members must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Board of Directors after an initial review by the Membership Committee (Wagner, 1979, p.10).

All members are required to be reviewed every three years "to determine their qualifications for continuance in their membership classification" (AAZPA 1978-79 Directory, p.17). In 1978 a review of all the Institutional/Society (I/S) members was undertaken by Professional Fellows who volunteered for the task. As a result, three I/S members were required to undergo three separate visits because of questions raised about the operation of their institutions. Two institutions voluntarily cancelled their memberships and one other was reinstated after suspension (Wagner, 1979, p.10).

Additionally, the membership of an animal dealer was withdrawn in 1976 "for cause" (AAZPA NEWSLETTER, 5/1976:2), and despite repeated appeals, has not been reinstated (Wagner, Personal Communication). AAZPA members are discouraged from doing

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business with animal dealers who are not members. Members do inquire about the membership status of animal dealers because special mention has been made of these requests in the NEWSLETTER over the past few years. AAZPA members may have learned a valuable lesson about doing business with non-member dealers after several major zoos were charged in 1977 by the government with receiving illegally obtained reptiles from the Philadelphia Reptile Exchange (Holden, 1979 and Campbell, 1978, pp.32-36; See also: Zoos: Pro and Con/The Zoos' Consumption of Wildlife).

In a further effort to regulate its membership and demonstrate its willingness to respond to criticism from within its own ranks, the AAZPA set up an Ethics Committee in 1975 (the only committee other than the Executive Committee to be elected by the membership). By January 1979 the Committee Chairman reported that 15 formal complaints had been reviewed, though no indication was given of action taken by the Committee (AAZPA NEWSLETTER, 1/1979:1). Although AAZPA members are required by their Code of Ethics to report violations, the provision requiring them to state the nature of any violation in writing, which will be made known to the accused along with the name of the accuser, probably has an inhibiting effect on the reporting of ethics violations (Wagner, Personal Communication).

Another major effort at self-regulation in the zoo profession is the AAZPA's Accreditation Program. A Study Committee was appointed in 1971 to investigate accreditation just prior to AAZPA's separation from the NRPA. Among the existing programs examined, that of the American Association of Museums was considered to be most suitable because both AAZPA and AAM members "maintain valuable collections for which scientific staffs are held responsible," and "both [have] education of

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the visiting public and conservation as major themes in their programs" (Wagner, from course material prepared for AAZPA's Management School).

The Accreditation Program, AAZPA acknowledges, was, in part, a response to the growing expression of public concern for the welfare of captive wildlife. AAZPA considers such legislation as the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Animal Welfare Act, and the various Zoo Accreditation Board bills to be expressions of this sentiment. According to a statement included in materials prepared for AAZPA's Management School:

It became evident that if the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums did not initiate an Accreditation Program of its own, the federal government would be forced to enact legislation requiring accreditation of zoo and aquarium institutions and that such institutions would have to meet federal standards rather than standards imposed by professionals in the zoo and aquarium industry.

Inspections leading to accreditation are conducted by 3 Professional Fellows, serving voluntarily, and their traveling and accommodation expenses are borne by the institution seeking accreditation. The average cost to an institution seeking accreditation is estimated at approximately \$750.00.

The three member Visiting Committee normally includes a veterinarian, and the members are chosen by the Director of the applying institution from a list of five willing volunteers. The official application must be signed by the institution's chief administrator and the chairman of the governing board. As is the case with The HSUS's own Accreditation Program, the idea is to insure that the governing authority "has formally considered and approved the submission of the application" (from AAZPA's Management School course material).

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The sixteen-page application and its accompanying documentation is reviewed by a nine-member Accreditation Commission appointed by AAZPA President (each incumbent President appoints three members to the Commission to insure continuity). If the Commission considers the institution to meet the requirements based on information contained in the application, it is granted the status of "interim approval." At each of the two annual meetings required of the Commission, accreditation of applicants is awarded, denied, or tabled. Applications may be tabled for a period of one year only, after which time they must be reconsidered and either approved or rejected.

Accredited institutions are given special recognition in the AAZPA's official Directory in addition to being mentioned in the NEWSLETTER. While no special announcement is made of institutions which are denied accreditation, that information is considered to be "public" and will be made available to persons making "reasonable inquiries" (AAZPA Management School course material).

AAZPA has accredited slightly more than 30 of its more than 200 member institutions since the program was begun in 1974 (See: Appendix B). The first series of reaccreditation inspections, required every three years and performed at no cost to the institution, was undertaken in 1979. The pace of accreditation has begun to accelerate, and the Executive Director estimates there will be 50 institutions accredited by the time of AAZPA's Annual Meeting in 1980 (Wagner, Personal Communication).

AAZPA acknowledges that accreditation currently offers "little more than self-satisfaction" (AAZPA Management School Course Material), but accredited institutions

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have recently been given a special vote on Association matters, and the use of the AAZPA's official logo is permitted on the institution's letterheads. Dr. Ted Reed, Director of the National Zoo (See: Appendix C), says the National Zoo has not benefitted appreciably from accreditation and believes that AAZPA has not made its program sufficiently known to foundations so that zoos might begin to benefit financially from accreditation (Personal Communication).

Since 1977 all new Institution/Society members of AAZPA are required to apply for and be granted accreditation within a 24 month period or they will not be permitted to remain members of the Association. There are apparently a number of members who feel that accreditation must be made mandatory for all Institution/Society members. Those arguing in favor of mandatory accreditation point out that since Mr. Whitehurst continues to introduce his National Zoological Foundation Bill in Congress session after session, the possibility of federally imposed accreditation cannot be ruled out.

Supporters of mandatory accreditation also make reference to the likelihood that the Institute of Museum Services (IMS), which has made grants to several zoos (including Los Angeles and Topeka), will begin to require that institutions applying for grants be accredited by their professional associations. As more and more zoos are showing an interest in pursuing grant monies to supplement static or diminishing municipal funds, this caveat may be an incentive for more of them to pursue accreditation. This argument may not be convincing, however, to the smaller institutions in the AAZPA. According to Robert Wagner (Personal Communication), more than half of the member institutions have annual budgets of less than \$250,000.00 and half of that number have budgets of less than \$125,000.00. If the smaller

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institutions are unable to compete with the larger ones for grant money, it will be of little concern to them what requirements are imposed by the IMS.

### The Definition of a Zoo

One of the most important aspects of the Accreditation Program may well be its definition for a zoo or aquarium. That definition is:

An organized and permanent institution, essentially educational and aesthetic in purpose with professional staff which owns and utilizes wild animals, provides them with proper care and exhibits them to the public on a regular schedule.

The key words in the definition are further defined as follows:

1. Organized Institution: a duly constituted body with expressed responsibilities.
2. Permanent: the institution is expected to continue into perpetuity.
3. Professional Staff: at least one paid employee who commands an appropriate body of special knowledge and the ability to reach zoological park and aquarium management decisions consonant with the experience of his peers and who has access to and knowledge of the literature of the field.
4. Wild Animals: non-domesticated animal life.
5. Educational: providing information to develop and cultivate the mind.
6. Aesthetic: pertaining to the beautiful.
7. Scheduled Hours: regular and predictable hours which constitute substantially more than a token opening, so that access is reasonably convenient to the public. (AAZPA's Management (Course Material)).

It is clear that if all so-called zoos were required to meet the criteria of this definition, most of those which cause problems from the animal welfare standpoint (both municipal and "roadside") would be excluded from using the term "zoo" to describe their operations (See: Conclusions and Recommendations).

It is worth noting that most of the zoos and aquariums accredited by the AAZPA are

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classed as 1's or 2's by The HSUS; however, there are a small number of class 3 zoos which are also accredited (See: Appendix B).