

Indonesian Conservation Management Practices & the Australian Zoo Industry



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ISS Institute / The Pratt Foundation Fellowship

Fellowship funded by The Pratt Foundation



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Published by International Specialised Skills Institute, Melbourne.

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March 2008

Also extract published on www.issinstitute.org.au

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Executive Summary

For the zoo industry to effectively contribute to meaningful conservation outcomes in South East Asia, a sound understanding is required of the general principles of conservation and how these can be applied in the South East Asian region, as well as the specific challenges facing conservation in this region and successful strategies for addressing those. Zoos in western developed countries, such as Australia, have come a long way from the time when they contributed to the removal of species from the wild for public display and entertainment. Zoos now play an important role in conservation and this is seen as a key goal of the zoo industry in many parts of the world. Today, Australia actively addresses wildlife conservation through a range of processes, including:

- Protecting habitat through designation and management of national parks and reserves.
- Endangered Species Recovery Programs, e.g. Helmeted Honeyeater and Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby.
- Environmental planning legislation.

Conservation programs across South East Asia are numerous and diverse. They have a diversity of objectives, from single species conservation to large-scale ecosystem restoration. A wide variety of strategies and approaches are employed across these programs, including research, education, political and community awareness, enforcement, wildlife rehabilitation and habitat restoration. By examining a cross section of diverse programs, McKelson sought to evaluate the relative effectiveness of different strategies, and how the zoo industry may best contribute its resources and expertise to maximum benefit/gain. Following this, McKelson could return to Australia with the knowledge, skills and ideas to enable her to advise the zoo industry on how to make clearer choices in supporting and developing conservation programs.

The aim of the current Fellowship is to study and gain first-hand information on Indonesian conservation programs and the methods and practices involved for long-term successful outcomes. It is essential that knowledge of practical skills and techniques used in project design and management be acquired and then applied in Australian zoos to assist them to improve their capacity to support conservation programs. Indonesia provides a rich source of information having experienced significant success in ensuring positive outcomes on a broad range of projects and initiatives. The following site visits were identified as being most significant in terms of both providing inspiration and the information necessary to ensure that the study objectives were met:

- Erik Meeijard, Senior Forest Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy.
- Lone Droscher Nielson, Project Manager, Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rehabilitation and Rescue Centre. Central Kalimantan, Palankaraya, Indonesia.
- Sumatran Elephant Project, Wildlife Conservation Society Indonesia.
- Sumatran Elephant Conservation Program, Flora and Fauna International, Sumatra, Indonesia.

Specific areas of study and development were as follows:

- Develop an understanding of the general principles applied in conservation management.
- Investigate the practices used in the development and management of conservation projects.
- Investigate how these models are applied in South East Asia.
- Based on the general understanding of conservation planning, identify strengths and weaknesses of various approaches in South East Asia, and the skills needed in achieving success.

Executive Summary

- Develop practical skills needed in conservation planning in South East Asia.
- Provide zoos in Australia with information on how they can maximize their capacity to facilitate conservation programs in South East Asia and Australia.

In order to optimise the outcomes of this fellowship McKelson identified the importance of ensuring that the knowledge obtained on the study tour would be shared with others. Following an overview of the international experience, a series of recommendations have been made at the conclusion of the report regarding a range of initiatives and activities that the Fellow identifies as central to furthering the fellowship opportunity. Recommendations are also made for government bodies, professional associations, education and training providers, industry, business and the community.