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Source: Neotropical Primates, 12(3) : 158-159

Published By: Conservation International

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1896/1413-4705.12.3.158b>

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WAZA PRESENTS HEINI HEDIGER AWARD TO SALLY WALKER

On 4 November 2004, Sally Walker received the Heini Hediger Award from Ed McAlister, President of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA). Sally Walker is Coordinator for South Asia for the IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group. The following paragraphs are from McAlister's comments describing her life and conservation achievements.

Sally Walker was born in the United States of America. She first travelled to India in the early 1970s as a scholar of Sanskrit, the ancient and sacred language of the Hindus. A heightened awareness of Asian cultures encouraged Sally to become a student of Yoga. This deep cultural immersion also awakened a profound interest in the concept of a "wholeness of nature," increasingly expressed in a concern for the welfare and conservation of the threatened wildlife in India. Sally's first practical commitment to this concern was as a volunteer at Mysore Zoo, where in 1981 she established the Friends of Mysore Zoo Society—an educational, public relations, and scientific support group, the first of its kind in Asia. So began a life-long dedication to Indian, and subsequently, all Asian Zoos and a firm commitment to develop, through education and science, their role and mission in conservation.

Walker's early success resulted in an appointment to the National Zoo Advisory Board of the Department of Environ-

ment, Government of India. Government officials encouraged Sally to set up the Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO) in 1985. Although based in India, the organisation now extends throughout South Asia, including the nations of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. This is a region that contains a tremendous amount of biodiversity but is bedevilled by problems such as language differences, political differences, economic, cultural, and social differences, not to mention ongoing conflict. We are all aware of the recent devastation wrought in Afghanistan. The Zoo Outreach Organisation, with Sally's guidance and support, has successfully tackled these problems.

Working both for zoo and field conservation, the zoo organization has become a model for successfully building networks to facilitate or catalyse conservation action. It brings together stakeholders, e.g., scientists, other specialists, and laypeople, to form a consensus on a variety of conservation issues. Two monthly publications, ZOOS' PRINT and ZOO ZEN, founded and edited by Walker, carry the work of the organization far beyond South Asia. A number of other publications have emanated from this organization, one of the most recent being the excellent "Mammals of Afghanistan."

Walker's other work has included lobbying initiatives, provision of educational material, and the development of scientific training programs. In particular, as Convenor of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group – India, she has been instrumental in establishing the now-celebrated CBSG Regional Networks. Walker's early work with zoos led to a six-year membership on the Central Zoo Authority, an autonomous body of the Ministry of Environment, Government of India, and membership on Ministerial committees – rare and unusual honours indeed for those born outside India.

An expert in seeking support for her many initiatives; Walker has become an institution within the Zoo profession, and has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for achieving successful outcomes, often from extremely limited resources.

Walker is a dedicated conservationist and has achieved a great deal, not only in the region in which she had decided to live and work but all around the world. She is an inspiration to all of us, and I have great pleasure, on behalf of the WAZA Council and you, its members, in handing over the Heini Hediger Award to her today.

Ed McAlister, President, World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, P.O. Box 23, CH-3097, Liebefeld-Bern, Switzerland.