



**Zoo animals that need immediate  
attention**

**at**

**Amirdhi Zoo**

**Vellore Forest Division**

**Tamil Nadu**

**Published by Elsa Foundation**

India

**Copyright @ Elsa Foundation**

**First Limited Edition: May 2022**

**About us:**

Elsa Foundation is a non-profit charitable trust that focuses on the conservation of biodiversity, prevention of cruelty to animals and animal rights issues of both domestic and wild animals. It opposes keeping wild animals in captivity.

We have travelled to several countries to study best practices and implement them in India. The foundation supports various government bodies, in informed policy-making and decision making on critical issues impacting biodiversity and the rights of animals.

Our work areas are research, advocacy, awareness, publication, support in policy and decision making.

**Website:** [www.elsafoundationcharity.org](http://www.elsafoundationcharity.org)

**Cover photo:** A group of visitors crossing the barricade and shouting at the animal (civet) kept inside an unnatural cage which is exposed on all sides, violating the Central Zoo Authority animal exhibit rules.

# Contents

---

Introduction .....	4
Wild-caught Asian Palm Civet exhibited in an un-natural small cage .....	4
History of animal cruelty and killing of an animal in the same cage .....	6
Problems faced by this civet .....	7
Problems faced by deer .....	8
Other Issues .....	10
Violation of constitution, laws and rules:.....	10
CZA documents regarding statutory compliance and guidelines .....	11
Notorious past of Amirdhi zoo (few images from past) .....	12
Recommendations.....	15

## Introduction

---

Amirdhi zoo in the Vellore forest division of Tamil Nadu was originally a mini zoo. Later it was upgraded to the status of a small zoo.

The zoo acts more like an entertainment centre for the public and as a lovers' park and does not serve any specific objectives or purpose as defined by National Zoo Policy

This zoo has a notorious history of ill-treating, abusing animals and keeping animals in appalling living conditions.

There are several problems in this zoo. This document tries to highlight a couple of problems related to animals that need immediate attention and corrective actions. The conditions of these animals violate the Constitution, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, Wildlife Protection Act, National Zoo Policy and Recognition of Zoo Rules.

## Wild-caught Asian Palm Civet exhibited in an un-natural tiny cage

---



- Nocturnal civet exposed to humans on all sides during day time and kept in a tiny cage.
- Due to fear of humans, it never walks inside the cage.
- The whole day it curls-up its body and stays on a very small platform

- Civets are classified as Schedule II animals in the Wildlife Protection Act
- This civet was captured from wild
- The Forest department needs to initiate an enquiry to find:  
the location of capture, who captured it, the need for capture and why it was not released back into the wild?



**Tiny civet cage exposed on all four sides. A visitor hitting the cage and disturbing the civet**



**Tiny civet cage exposed on all four sides. A visitor trying to disturb the civet with a stick**

## History of animal cruelty and killing of an animal in the same cage

---

In the year 2005, a wild-caught pangolin (schedule-I endangered) was kept inside the same cage.

Similar to the present civet, the nocturnal, shy pangolin wound itself into a ball, inside the cage, due to fear of humans and disturbance by humans.

### **Pangolins don't have teeth.**

Their primary diet consists of ants and termites. They insert their sticky tongue into the ant or termite mounds. When the ants or termites stick to their tongue, they swallow the ants and termites.

As providing ants and termites is not possible at a zoo, the zoo staff starved this pangolin without any food and killed it.

Photos of this killed pangolin follow



**Schedule -I endangered Pangolin killed by Amirdhi zoo staff, by starving it, in the year 2005**



**Schedule -I endangered Pangolin killed by Amirthi zoo staff, by starving it, in the year 2005**

## **Problems faced by this civet**

### **Nocturnal, secluded animal fully exposed to public disturbance during sleeping time:**

Nocturnal animals are active during the night and they sleep during day time. In the zoo during this sleeping time (daytime) the animal is exposed to non-stop disturbance by the public.

Civets always sleep in hideouts (tree hollows, rock crevices or dense foliage)

Due to lack of hideouts and lack of sleep the animal's health will deteriorate and there are very high chances of the animal being killed due to these abnormal living conditions.

### **An arboreal animal kept without any environmental enrichment**

Civets are arboreal animals (animals that live on trees). In the wild, they hide on top of tall trees with dense canopies for seclusion and protection

In this small cage, it is forced to live in an abnormal, empty cage without any environmental enrichment that mimics its natural living conditions.

This is unbearable torture and extreme cruelty to the animal.

### **Complete lack of movement**

This animal is arrested in a small cage not allowing any scope of movement. In the wild such animals are in constant movement foraging for food. Lack of any movement will lead to serious health problems (both mental and physical)

## Unnatural food



Civet provided with unnatural diet - Oranges and Bread

Bread and oranges are never part of civets' natural diet. Their natural diet consists of various other species of fruits, nectar, birds, insects, worms, rodents, seeds, eggs, reptiles, lizards and more. Forcing the animal to eat such an unnatural, restricted diet has a serious impact on its health.

## Problems faced by deer

---

### No drinking water for deer

The sambar deer enclosure does not have drinking water. The deer are forced to depend on algae infected water on the moat. Algae species such as Blue-Green algae (Cyano Bacteria) are poisonous and not suitable for consumption. It was observed that the deer were avoiding these algae infected water. There are high chances that these algae could be toxic.

To avoid any misconceptions about this water problem, a second visit was made after 10 days, and the condition of the drinking water tank was the same (empty without a drop of water)

It is extremely cruel to starve the animals without drinking water in peak summer.

**Important:** The spotted deer enclosure had the same situation as the sambar deer. On the second visit after 10 days, it was noticed that very little "dirty water" was found in the drinking water tanks.



Deer enclosure: **Empty drinking water tank without a single drop of water in peak summer**



Deer enclosure: **Algae infected water (could be toxic blue green algae (cyano bacteria))**

## Other Issues

---

### The zoo does NOT have

- A wild animal clinic
- Quarantine facilities for sick animals
- In-patient wards
- A full-time veterinarian
- Medical diagnostic equipment
- A wildlife biologist acting as a consultant

The interpretation centre (that was built with a huge investment) is opened only occasionally

The zoo is used by the public as an entertainment venue and as a lovers' park

There is absolutely no purpose or any kind of education objective served by running this zoo

### Statutory requirements not fulfilled

- The zoo master plan published by CZA is completely different from the actual zoo's plan.
- Enclosure design approvals are not found on the CZA website.
- Zoo annual reports beyond the year 2018-19 are not found on the CZA website.

## Violation of constitution, laws and rules:

---

### Violation of constitution

#### Article 51A (g) in The Constitution of India 1949 - Fundamental duties

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures

#### Article 48A in The Constitution of India 1949 - Protection and improvement of environment and safeguarding of forests and wildlife

The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country

### Violation of "Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act"

#### Section 11. Treating animals cruelly:

Has multiple sub-sections explaining various types of cruelties inflicted on animals

#### Section 3 - Duties of persons having charge of animals:

It shall be the duty of every person having the care or charge of any animal to take all reasonable measures to ensure the well-being of such animal and to prevent the infliction upon such animal of unnecessary pain or suffering.

### Violation of Rule 10 of Recognition of Zoo Rules:

Veterinarians not inspecting the diet, drinking water supply and taking corrective actions.

Non-availability of: a full-time veterinary doctor, quarantine facilities, animal clinic, in-patient wards

## **Violation of “Wildlife Protection Act” (specific for civet)**

### **WPA Section 38-I. Acquisition of animals by a zoo:**

(1) Subject to the other provisions of this Act, no zoo shall acquire, sell or transfer any wild animal or captive animal specified in Schedules I and II except with the previous permission of the Authority.

(2) No zoo shall acquire, sell or transfer any wild or captive animal except from or to a recognised zoo.

### **WPA Section 38J. Prohibition of teasing, etc., in a zoo:**

No person shall tease, molest, injure or feed any animal or cause disturbance to the animals by noise or otherwise, or litter the grounds in a zoo.

## **Violation of multiple sections of “National Zoo Policy” and Rule 10 of “Recognition of Zoo rules”**

### **Few violations are given here (specific for civet)**

- A zoo cannot capture animals from the wild and exhibit the same
- Single animals should not be kept at the zoo
- 360-degree exposure of the animal to the public, subjecting the animal to a vulnerable condition
- Animal allowed to be teased, disturbed, attacked and tortured by public
- The animal is not allowed to have any form of physical movement.
- Animal subjected to extreme physical and psychological stress
- Lack of any sign board providing details of the animal
- Enclosure design not as per norms and standards
- Enclosure design approval not found on the CZA website
- The enclosure is a tiny cage without any environmental enrichment, water points
- The enclosure is not as per standards described in CZA’s scientific management of zoo animals
- Inappropriate diet
- The zoo does not have a wildlife biologist (acting as a consultant), who can study the animal behaviour, and psychology and advise on creating suitable living conditions for the animal.
- Animal collection plan approval is not found on the CZA website

## **CZA documents regarding statutory compliance and guidelines**

---

1. National zoo policy
2. Recognition of zoo rules-2009 (Rule 9 amended in 2013)
3. Scientific management of zoos (Has details for implementing Rule 10 of Recognition of zoos)
4. Innovative enclosure design
5. Guidelines for releasing zoo animals into wild

## Notorious past of Amirdhi zoo (few images from past)



**These bears exposed on all sides in this old style concrete menagerie had become mentally insane due to non stop teasing and harrasment by pubic, every day.**



**Cage dumped with garbage by vistoris and completely soiled drinking water provided for monkeys. These were never cleaned. Monkeys exposed on all sides were harressed by visitors. There is not a single tree inside the cage**



**Parrots trapped in a tiny abnormal cage and exposed on all sides enabling harassment by visitors. There is no provision for birds to build a nest.**



**Rabbit with heavily infected ear was never given any medical treatment**



**Top:**

**Nocturnal porcupines trapped in a concrete cell and fully exposed to disturbing public during day time.**

**They don't have an opportunity to hide inside burrows or caves and sleep inside it**



**Right:**

**A jackal that was trapped alone in a concrete cell and abused by people had become mentally insane.**

**It was moving around the cell in non stop circles**

# Recommendations

---

## Professionals who are qualified to manage captive wildlife

Managing captive wildlife is a highly complex scientific subject. Professionally managed wildlife rehabilitation centres in various countries have three important people working full-time to manage the setup

- Wildlife veterinary doctor
- Wildlife biologist (Duties: To design the enclosures and enrichments that are suitable for the animals' physical and psychological welfare. To study the animals' behaviour, psychology and welfare regularly and document the findings. Take corrective actions based on findings)
- Wildlife dietician

The majority of them are doctorate (PhD) degree holders in their respective fields.

If people without any of the above qualifications try to manage the zoo, then it is equivalent to laypersons trying to run a multispeciality human hospital. The result will be a disaster

Amirdhi zoo is an example of the above scenario

## Civet (need immediate action):

- The wild civet needs to be immediately released back to its natural habitat (location from which the civet was captured.)

## Deer (need immediate action):

- The deer enclosure drinking water supply to the water tank is to be done immediately.
- Algae contaminated water to be removed immediately and completely
- The contaminated water needs to be sent for laboratory testing to identify the type of algae
- Regular cleaning of the moat water and supply of fresh drinking water to the moat, to be ensured

## General

- The cage that exhibits the civet needs to be demolished fully and immediately
- Disciplinary action to be taken against the officer-in-charge of the zoo and veterinary doctor for not doing their duties and violating the laws and rules.

## Closing the zoo permanently

The zoo lacks in various important aspects

- Does not have human resources (in various capacities as per CZA rules).
- Does not have facilities such as a clinic, in-patient wards, quarantine wards etc.
- Does not have any medical diagnostic equipment
- There are no surprise audits done
- Does not have a wildlife biologist acting as an expert consultant
- Does not have enclosures designed as per the norms and standards of CZA.
- Violates several laws and rules of the country that protects animals.

It is strongly advised to close this zoo permanently and release the healthy and fit animals into the wild using the soft release method. It is unbearable torture to the animals to be caged in such appalling conditions till they die.

## **A zoo cannot mimic the natural habitat, life and natural behaviour of any animal**

### **Despite any kind of facilities (or) human resources deployed at a zoo:**

- No animal can exhibit its natural behaviour (or) live its life similar to living in its natural habitat.
- Animals are forced to live in abnormal conditions seriously impacting their physical and psychological health
- The gene pool is confined with very few animals inside four walls of the cage, thus producing unhealthy, weak and disease-prone offspring that die very soon (or) are born with disabilities.
- Zoos do not serve any useful purpose either to people (or) animals.
- Zoos do not do any conservation, in fact, they destroy the animals that would have lived to the full extent of life in the wild.
- Migratory birds that travel several thousand kilometres from one continent to another are trapped inside a small enclosure unable to fly for their entire life
- Arboreal animals that live on trees are trapped inside a concrete cell without any trees.
- Elephants that migrate several hundreds of km are chained 24/7
- Animals in the wild choose their mate among the vast options available, but at zoos, forced mating is done, which is equivalent to rape.
- Animals' instincts and behaviour such as foraging for food, choosing a mate based on choice, encountering various forms of biodiversity, hunting, family hierarchy, protecting young ones, travelling through vast forest landscapes, and freedom are deprived at a zoo

The above are a few facts about the horrible reality of zoos.

## **Zoos teach wrong lessons to the younger generation**

The younger generation who see the zoos create a very wrong impression, that

- It is completely OK to deprive an animal of its freedom for its entire life.
- An animal can be exhibited just as a show-case object for human entertainment.
- The emotions and feelings of an animal can be ignored.
- An animal can be teased, tortured and abused etc.
- Animals' welfare and rights can be ignored

## **Plan to shift animals from Coimbatore corporation mini zoo to Amirdhi zoo to be stopped**

There is a plan to shift animals from Coimbatore mini zoo (license cancelled) to other zoos in Tamil Nadu. Amirdhi zoo is one among them, but Amirdhi zoo does not have any professional set-up from infrastructure to human resources to handle wild animals. The existing setup is already doing cruelty to animals. In such a scenario bringing new animals to this zoo will only be a grave injustice done to animals from Coimbatore Zoo

The animals that were kept at Coimbatore corporation mini zoo, had already undergone enormous abuse and suffering. If real justice has to be given to those animals, then, fit and healthy animals should be released back to the wild using the soft release method.

Such exercise, if done, will be greatly appreciated globally and will also serve as a great role model for other zoos in the country to follow. National zoo policy also has the important agenda of releasing the animals back to the wild. CZA had published a guideline for releasing animals back to the wild.

## Wonderful themes as an alternative to running zoos

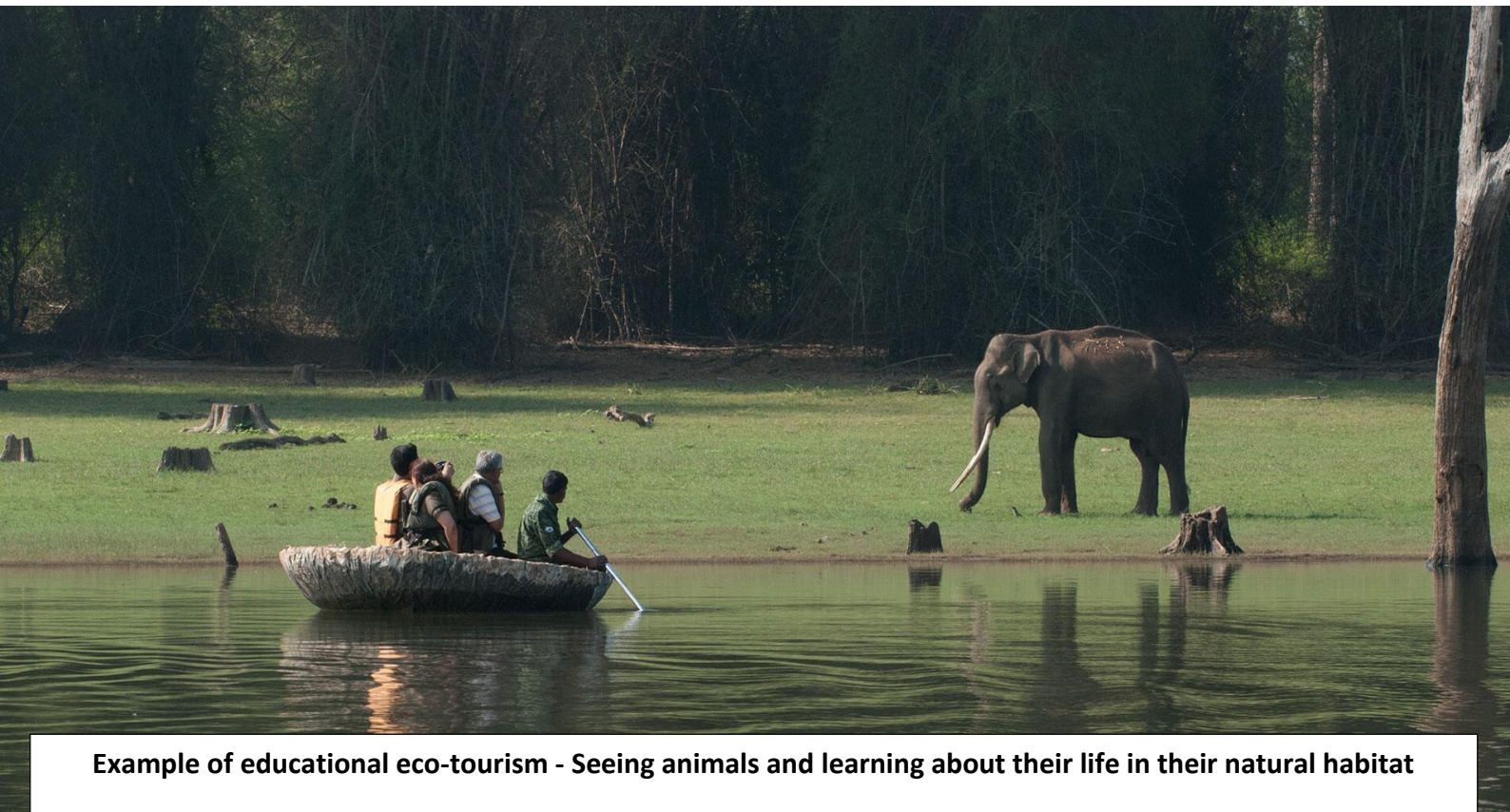
- This zoo can be converted into a nature park by displaying the botanical names, benefits and usage of various plants and trees in and around the zoo
- The interpretation centre can be used to explain about animals.
- Guided nature walk to school students can be arranged
- Wildlife biologists, ornithologists and wildlife photographers can be invited for guest lectures
- An ecotourism centre can be opened that provides facilities such as trekking.
- Wildlife documentary films can be projected.
- Bird watching and education about birds can be encouraged.
- Professional wildlife photography can be allowed for a fee
- A library that has books about wildlife, ecology, biodiversity etc. can be operated.
- Jungle lodges can be operated with limited rooms for nature enthusiasts to pay and stay in (**Role model:** Multiple Jungle Lodges successfully operated by Karnataka forest department)
- <https://www.junglelodges.com/> (website of Karnataka forest department jungle lodges)



Example of educational eco-tourism - Image of a jungle lodge operated by Karnataka forest department



**Example of educational eco-tourism – Hall for projecting wildlife films and slide shows  
At a Jungle lodge operated by Karnataka forest department**



**Example of educational eco-tourism - Seeing animals and learning about their life in their natural habitat  
At a Jungle lodge operated by Karnataka forest department**



**Example of educational eco-tourism - Seeing animals and learning about their life in their natural habitat  
At a Jungle lodge operated by Karnataka forest department**



**Students going on a guided nature walk and learning about forest and wildlife**



*Elsa Foundation*