

125 YEARS OF CALCUTTA ZOO
(1875-2000)



Published by
THE MANAGING COMMITTEE
ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN, ALIPORE, CALCUTTA

CONTENTS

Pages

Section-I

History of Alipore Zoo with special reference to the history of last 25 years

The Alipore Zoological Garden after its Centenary	..	1
Sri A. K. Das		

Late R. B. Sanyal, the first Indian Superintendent of Alipore Zoo

Remembering Rai Bahadur Ram Bramha Sanyal	..	9
Dr. D. K. Mittra		

Articles of any other matter related to Alipore Zoo

Pheasants in captivity with special reference to Calcutta Zoo	..	12
Sri S. Bhattacharyya		
Contribution of Alipore & Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar, in breeding of Tigers	..	15
Sri S. K. Patnaik, IFS		
Calcutta—City of Zoos	..	18
Ms. Sally Walker		

Section-II

Articles on wildlife other than veterinary aspects

Management of Indian Pangolin in captivity	..	27
Dr. L. N. Acharjyo		
Blackbuck, the elegant Antelope	..	31
Lt. Col. S. Banerjee (<i>Retd.</i>)		
A Zoo Director's dilemma	..	33
Sri R. Bhattacharjee		
Pelicans bred in Assam State Zoo	..	34
Sri R. Bhattacharjee		
Red Panda conservation programme	..	35
Sri D. Biswas, IFS		
Elephants menace and a probable solution	..	37
Dr. R. Chakraborti		
Evolution of Zoo concept <i>vis-a-vis</i> management	..	38
Dr. S. K. Chaudhuri		
Role of Zoos in conservation of wildlife	..	41
Dr. S. K. Das		
The role of Indian Zoos in conserving the wildlife of India	..	47
Sri S. C. Dey, IFS (<i>Retd.</i>)		
Education in Indian Zoos strategies for the next millennium	..	50
Sri N. Krishnakumar, IFS		
Arignar Anna Zoological Park's approach to breeding of endangered species of Western and Eastern Ghats	..	52
Sri N. Krishnakumar, IFS and Sri A. Manimozhi		
Redesigning the Indian Zoo	..	57
Sri A. Pal		

	<i>Pages</i>
Role of zoo in educating students Ms. Kasturi Pal ..	61
Breeding of Bengal Tigers in captivity Dr. A. K. Roychoudhury ..	62
Management and captive breeding of Indian Rock Python (<i>Python molurus</i>) at Jawaharlal Nehru Biological Park, Bokaro Steel City, Bokaro Dr. M. A. Salam, Dr. G. Chakraborty, Najm Ahsan Saifi and Om Prakash	64
Status of Asiatic Lions in Indian Zoos Sri A. Srivastav and Sri B. Chakraborty ..	66
Trapping cage for Deer Sri K. L. Velodi ..	69
Contribution of Zoos to conservation Dr. M. V. Wani ..	71
Captive husbandry of the King Cobra (<i>Ophiophagus hannah</i>) and other commonly kept Indian Snakes Sri N. Whitaker ..	72

Section-III

Articles on diseases, treatment and its control in wild animals

Tuberculosis an impediment to wildlife conservation Dr. B. M. Arora ..	81
Profile of a zoonotic disease: Japanese Encephalitis Dr. S. Bhattacharya ..	92
Case history of Emu at V.J.B. Udyan Zoo, Mumbai Dr. M. V. Wani and Dr. M. S. Karawale ..	97

THE ALIPORE ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN AFTER ITS CENTENARY

A. K. DAS

Director, Zoological Garden, Alipore, Calcutta

The Alipore Zoological Garden, Calcutta which is one of the oldest and finest zoos in India had completed its 100 years of existence in 1975 and celebrated the occasion commemorating the Centenary Year on the 30th September, 1975 in a befitting manner. A souvenir was brought out on the eve of the said celebration where it was given in brief, how the Alipore Zoological Garden came into existence and how did it attain new heights. It also described its long history filled with examples of its pioneering role and significant contributions towards management of wild animals.

The history of management of the Alipore Zoo during its last 25 years is also eventful and interesting. A brief account of the said period is given below highlighting its progress and growth in modern lines, important births, deaths of animals and the episodes.

With the passage of time, the concept of zoo has been expanded and the management is now looking forward to keep the animals in captivity as free and comfortable as far as practicable. These are maintained outside the cages by creating suitable large open areas with moats and fences between them and the visitors. Due to the change in perception of zoo management, the Alipore Zoo has started adopting the modern concepts of animal management by constructing open air moated enclosures for different wild animals. The first attempt of modernisation of the zoo was made in 1957 when the authorities of the zoo constructed an open air moated enclosure for tigers. Thereafter, more and more open air moated enclosures have been added gradually for better housing and display of wild animals in the zoo.

The construction and opening of a freshwater aquarium in 1977 added a new dimension to the Alipore Zoo. It was the first significant addition to the zoo after its centenary. It is one of the largest freshwater aquarium in the Eastern India having 17 large and 48 small tanks. It has now about 1500 freshwater fishes belonging to different species both exotic and indigenous. It stands just opposite to the main gate of the zoo. A system of running commentary both in English and Bengali on different fishes exhibited in the aquarium has recently been introduced that enables

the visitors to learn about the origin, distribution and behaviour of the different fishes exhibited in the aquarium.

The accommodation in the old Reptile House for exhibiting lizards, snakes and monitors was very poor and became out-dated and out-moded, a spacious (1063.67 Metres Square) New Reptile House was established in 1979 for better housing and display of different reptiles. As the new house has enough space inside, the movements of zoo visitors have become smooth and easier specially during the rush period. It has 48 exhibition cages arranged in circular fashion for display of different species of reptiles and a big central pool with a canopy of dome shaped wire netted roof for exhibition of crocodiles and gharials. For improvement of the environment some of the cages have been provided with small plants and bushes.

The construction of New Small Carnivora House in 1981 with twelve large cages, each having two dens and a very large cage with wire netted roofing behind the entire house has provided a good opportunity for better exhibition and breeding of jaguar and other carnivores like leopard, puma etc.

The old Chimpenzee enclosure has been suitably renovated in 1982. It has now a wide wet moat around the oval shaped enclosure having two spacious cages, each has two compartments for night shelter of the animals. There is a big dried tree standing in the centre of the open space for climbing of the animals and also for their acrobatic movements. Swings, over-hang nylon ropes have also been provided for swinging and playing of the animals. There is a stand off barrier around the oval enclosure with a green hedge between the moat wall and the visitors.

An open air moated enclosure for Bear Tribes having six dens have been constructed in 1985 by the grants sanctioned by the State Government for breeding and exhibition of different species of Bear. It has wide and deep water moat encircling the open space of the enclosure. There is also a stand off barrier with hedges in between the outer moat wall and visitors.

With the establishment of Central Zoo Authority of India in 1992, the work of modernisation of the Alipore Zoological Garden got a momentum. All the work

pertaining to development of the zoo which were so long being executed by the financial assistance of the State Government, started to be executed by the grants sanctioned by the State Government and the Central Zoo Authority of India. With these assistances, the Zoo Garden Authorities have completed the installation of a deep tubewell with over-head reservoir for providing drinking water to the zoo visitors, in 1998. The work of protection of the bank of the Zoo Lake against gradual erosion of land causing depletion of the bank area was completed in 1997. This saved the trees standing on the bank against uprooting. The lake of the Alipore Zoo becomes the greatest attraction to the visitors in the winter months every year when thousand of migratory birds throng into the lake.

One of the long-felt needs of the Alipore Zoo was the construction of an open air moated enclosure for elephants which has recently been constructed on modern line at the site of the old Director's Bungalow in 1999. The cost of construction of the said enclosure has been shared equally by the Central Zoo Authority and the State Government. The salient features of the said open air enclosure are:

- (i) A large arena with an ornamental central pool.
- (ii) Dry concrete moat, 320 ft. long, 11 ft. wide and 5 ft. deep to separate the arena from the visitors.
- (iii) Retiring room with folded plate roof to accommodate resting space for three elephants.
- (iv) Cess pool at the deepest point of dry concrete moat to pump out storm water.
- (v) Visitors gallery paved with chequered tiles and fenced outer side of moat for viewing elephants from a safe distance.

The Central Zoo Authority has been now very generous with its financial support for improvement of the old zoos of India on modern line by renovating and replacement of the old cages and enclosures. It has

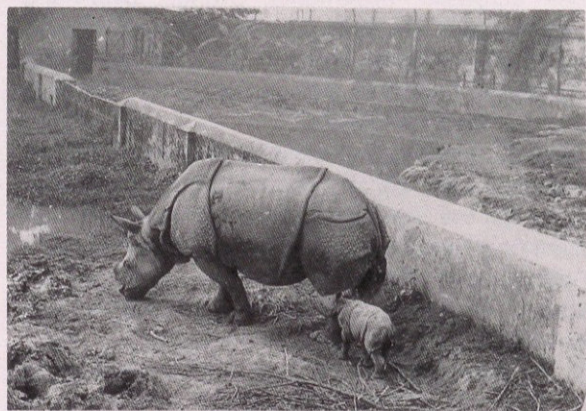


Fig. 9. First surviving Rhino calf with her mother 'Sneha'

started to provide full financial assistance for better housing and health care of the zoo animals. An amount of Rs. 60.79 lakh for construction of two open air moated enclosures—one for exhibition and breeding of Primates and the other for white tigers has already been sanctioned by the Central Zoo Authority. The work of execution of these enclosures are in progress and is expected to be completed within this year.

Births

Besides the breeding of Great Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros, the most significant and striking achievement of Alipore Zoological Garden during its 125 years of existence is the breeding of giraffe in 1988 when a giraffe calf was born and survived for the first time. Thereafter, further breeding of giraffes was made and mother giraffe, 'Uttara' and her three daughters gave birth of 14 calves from April, 1988 to July, 1998. The Alipore Zoological Garden had supplied a pair each of zoo-bred giraffes to the Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Chennai and the National Zoological Park, New Delhi in 1998 and 1999 respectively.

It is for the first time in the history of Indian Zoos, the Alipore Zoological Garden could only breed and supply giraffes to other Indian Zoos.

This zoo has also bred successfully the fishing cat, an extremely threatened species having less exhibition value and the marsh crocodile for the first time in 1988 and 1998 respectively.

Deaths

In August, 1982, the female rhino, "Sneha" was found in oestrus when the male rhino, "Meghnad" was put in her enclosure. The rhino "Meghnad" had immediately started chasing "Sneha" very severely during their prelude of mating. "Sneha" was also found running very fast inside the paddock and the male rhino was following her, dashing her repeatedly. In course of chasing and dashing, the male rhino, "Meghnad" has suddenly lifted "Sneha" putting its head below her belly and thrown "Sneha" about 15 feet away when she got hurt very severely and succumbed to death.

This zoo had procured one male and two female giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis rothschildi*) from Kolon Zoo, Germany in 1986 in exchange of a zoo-bred female Rhinoceros, "Gomoti". But unfortunately one of the females died on 28.03.86 within 15 days of its arrival at this zoo. It happened due to accidental strangulation of its neck when she poked her head and neck between the two iron flats of the fencing to access a blade of grass lying outside the fencing.

The oldest male giraffe, "Sagar" was kept alone from 15.03.99 in a smaller enclosure of the giraffes' house for feeding nourishing diet with vitamins & minerals for sustaining its reproductive health to combat advancing

senility. As a proven sire, proper maintenance of its breeding capacity was needed. Accordingly, "Sagar" was kept separated from the other giraffes for about a month and a half for giving healthy diet. During its absence from the bigger enclosure, the other adult male giraffe, "Salem", the eldest son of "Sagar" was in company of the three breeding female adult giraffes of the zoo which made "Sagar" jealous against "Salem" leading to a severe fighting on 5th May, 1999 between "Sagar" and "Salem" at the time of shifting to their respective enclosures. As soon as "Sagar" had found 'Salem' in its enclosure, he came rushing to "Salem" and started lashing on its body, with its long head and neck repeatedly. At first "Salem" had also tried to defend him from the attack of his father but later on became exhausted. About 15 zoo garden employees had tried in vain to drive "Sagar" away and to save "Salem". Ultimately, "Sagar" was lassoed simultaneously by two strong ropes and by tying the two ends of the ropes with the trunk of a big Banyan tree standing inside the enclosure. "Salem" was, thereafter, managed some-how to put in a separate room and was rendered necessary treatments but the animals died on the same day in the evening.

Bijoli, a 52 years old female Indian elephant of this zoo killed her Mahut, Nabi Mian (47) in a sudden fit of temper in the early morning of 7th August, 1980 when he was cleaning the floor of elephant enclosure. Bijoli was procured by the zoo in August, 1946 and was under Nabi Mian's charge for the past 11 years. For some reason not clear the elephant picked Nabi Mian up by holding his waist with her trunk and after swaying him to and fro, repeatedly dashed his head against a concrete pillar of the enclosure till he died. The zoo was closed for the day after the incident.

On the 1st January, 1996 at about 11-30 hours a Police Constable was on duty in the zoo, informed the Director at his chamber that two persons (Shri Joyprakash Tewari and Shri Suresh Rai as disclosed later on) had entered into the open air moated enclosure for Tigers by crossing the moat water and thereafter, scaling the fencing of the enclosure. On hearing the Alarm Bell of the zoo, the garden employees belonging to different categories including the Director of the zoo rushed to the said tiger enclosure. On reaching there it was noticed that the tiger "Shiva" who was on display in the said enclosure had grabbed one person by holding his neck and was dragging him towards the central water pool of the enclosure. Several thousand of visitors standing around the enclosure were watching the incident. The Director immediately asked a keeper of the said enclosure

to open the door of the den of tiger "Shiva" by operating the winch of the den from above and try to drive the tiger, Shiva inside the den. Accordingly, when a keeper had lifted the door of the den and called the tiger by its name, "Shiva", the tiger had immediately gone inside the den leaving the seriously injured person from its grab. As soon as the tiger had entered the den, the door of the den was dropped and locked. The entire operation of getting the tiger inside the den was done so quickly and successfully that the tranquillising gun which was made ready for shooting was not needed to be used.

It was later disclosed by the Police investigation that both Shri Joyprakash Tewari and Shri Suresh Rai had entered inside the open air moated enclosure for tigers with a garland of coloured paper for garlanding the tiger, "Siva". They also carried a musical steel pipe. It was taken by surprise and irritated when one of the persons touched the tiger. The tiger slapped Suresh with its fore paw. He then went to Joyprakash and mauled his neck, face and chest and pinned him down to the ground. Suresh got up and tried to drag Tewari away from the grab of tiger and gave a blow on its body. Shiva had immediately caught hold of Suresh by putting his jaws around his neck and was dragging him towards the Central Water Pool when the zoo employees reached there and got the tiger locked in its den. Both the seriously wounded persons were immediately admitted to the nearby S.S.K.M. Hospital with the Police help. But Joyprakash Tewari had died on its way to the hospital and Shri Suresh Rai had recovered after prolonged treatment.

The zoo is still holding proudly one Aldebra Giant Tortoise in its collection which came to the zoo along with three other tortoises of same species at the time of establishment of this zoo in 1875. The probable age of this tortoise is now over 250 years.

Research works on conservation of wildlife in captivity were regularly done by the Officers and the Veterinarians of this zoo during the last 25 years who had also contributed many papers on their research activities which were published in different scientific journals in India and abroad. Moreover, students of Natural History Sciences belonging to different Universities had carried out their research activities in this garden. Furthermore, the schools and colleges both within and outside the State are conducting educational excursions for their students to this zoo regularly.

It may be concluded with a hope that Alipore Zoo will play an even more active role in future for conservation, recreation, research and education on wildlife in captivity and the Celebration of its 125th Anniversary will be marked by further efforts in this direction.

Fig. 1. Building of the Alipore Zoo Aquarium ➤



◀ Fig. 2. New Reptile House

Fig. 3. New Small Carnivora House ➤





Fig. 4. Newly renovated Chimpanzee Enclosure



Fig. 5. New open air moated enclosure for Bear



Fig. 6. Development of the bank areas of the zoo lake



Fig. 7. Newly constructed open air moated enclosure for Elephant



Fig. 8. Ceremonial opening of the newly constructed open air enclosure by Shri Jyoti Basu, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal



Fig. 10. Zoo bred giraffe with her mother

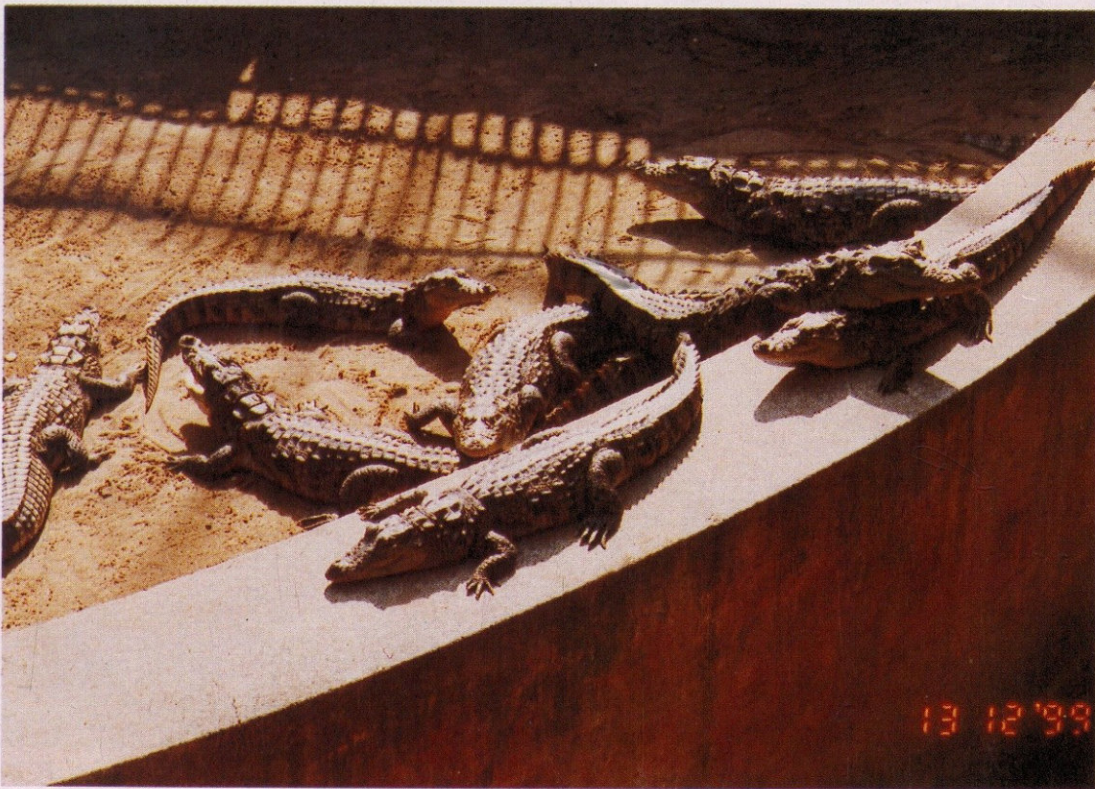


Fig. 11. Zoo bred marsh crocodile

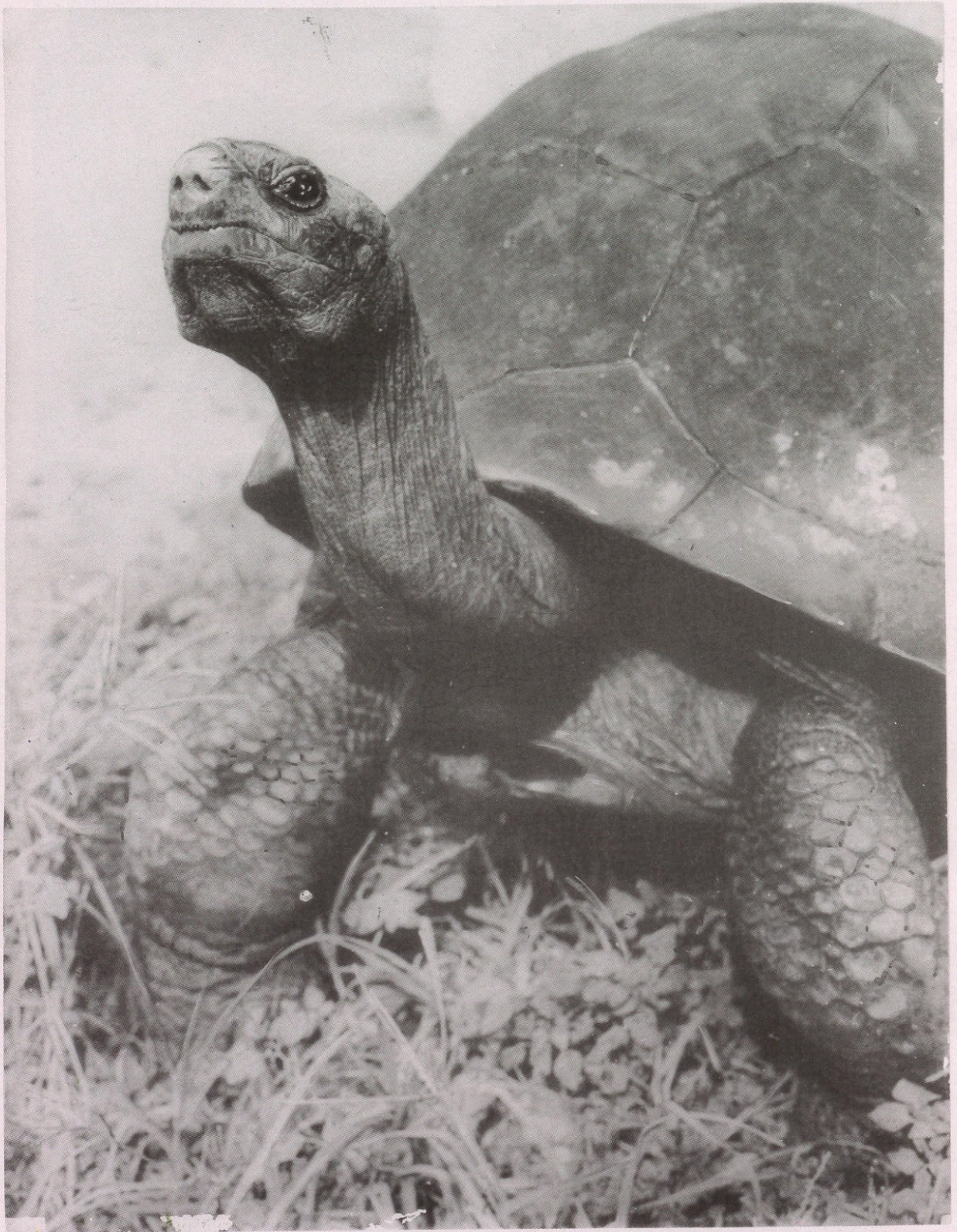


Fig. 12. Aldebra Giant Tortoise the oldest exhibit of the Zoo