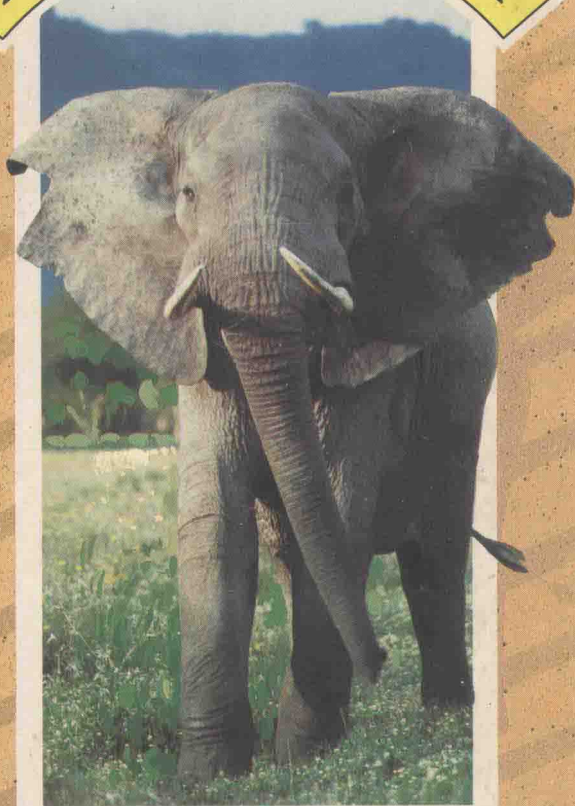




BEYOND THE BARS

THE ZOO DILEMMA



Edited by
Virginia McKenna, Will Travers
Jonathan Wray

Foreword by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan

RICHARD ADAMS • ROLAND BOYES MP • MARK GLOVER • W.J. JORDAN • SIR CHRISTOPHER LEVER
VIRGINIA MCKENNA • MARY MIDGLEY • SPIKE MILLIGAN • KIERAN MULVANY • ARJAN SINGH
BILL TRAVERS • HUGO VAN LAWICK

BEYOND THE BARS

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1. Animals, zoo
2. Zoology - Economic



THORSONS PUBLISHING GROUP
Wellingborough, Northamptonshire

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Goodwin

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BEYOND THE BARS

The Zoo Dilemma

‘As a child I accepted happily the idea of zoos as a natural part of life. As an adult I have been forced to think again. This book explains why.’ – *Michael Aspel*.

‘A vital contribution to the cause of wildlife protection everywhere which will hopefully convince anybody in doubt as to the urgency of the situation.’ – *Bryan Forbes*.

‘There is no excuse for keeping wild creatures in captivity for our amusement. I hope this book hastens the day when all animals live their lives as nature intended.’ – *Tony Soper*.



Pole Pole 'in the wild'. (Artist's Impression)

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Acknowledgements

Dear Reader,

Book acknowledgements are often the page that most people skip. A few florid sentences or a dry list of names cannot really do justice to the contributors. So, in this case, I thought I would try to write a personal letter to you explaining just how unusual *Beyond the Bars* really is.

No contributor to this book works for Zoo Check – they all have highly specialized full-time jobs that take up almost every waking moment. But, somehow, they ‘made’ time. Each chapter represents many days – sometimes weeks – of careful thought, writing and re-writing. And for what reward? To communicate to you their own philosophies, and their concerns for wildlife and nature.

I believe very much in visual impact and so it was very important that the writing in this book was supported in a significant and compelling way. This, I believe, has been achieved thanks to the many wonderful photographs given to us by a number of other animal organizations and individual photographers. It is impossible to list each one, but I would especially like to thank Hugo van Lawick for his marvellous cover photograph as well as for the others which illustrate his chapter, to Ian Dobbie for his evocative photos of Pole Pole and to Wolf Suschitzky for his unforgettable ‘Guy the Gorilla’.

Not only photographers but artists as well. Original work by Robert Gillmor, Mandy Shepherd and Tessa Lovatt-Smith. Artists for whom the world of animals, in all its dimensions, inspires their creativity.

These are the people you ‘see’ in this book. There are others you will not. Each an important and indispensable member of the team – Tricia Holford, Nina Wiltshire, Carrie Baird, Janet Booker, Marjorie Russell, Jan Adams, Liza Fury.

Above all my gratitude to Thorsons and in particular John Hardaker for inviting us to undertake this project and for the subsequent encouragement and support.

Animal organizations are often criticized for spending too much time arguing amongst themselves, and too little time campaigning for the things they hold so dear. But perhaps as significant as anything written in *Beyond the Bars* is the unity of compassion, care and concern for the world we live in that every contributor has expressed.

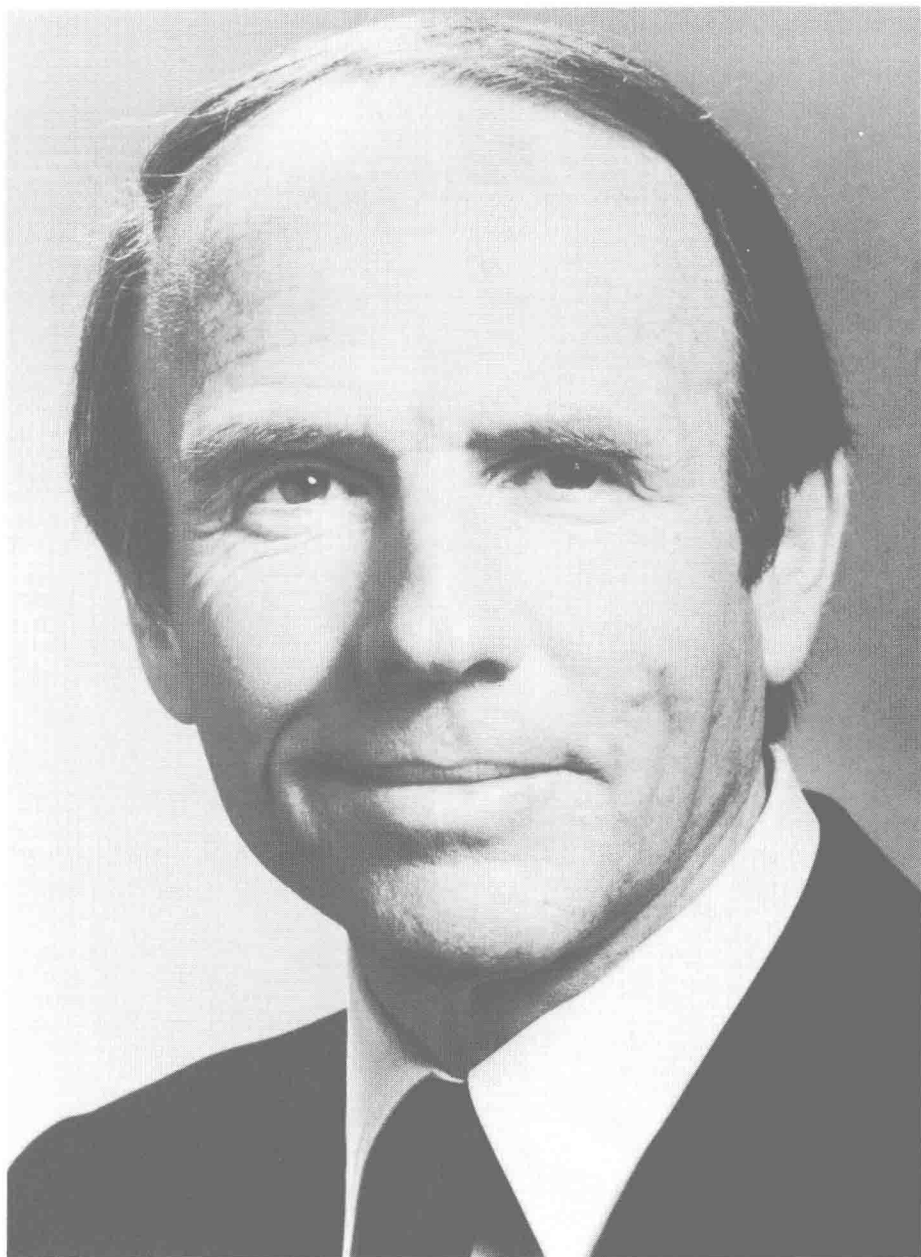
Yours sincerely



Virginia McKenna

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Bellerive Foundation

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TO THE PRESIDENT

22nd January, 1986

Rarely before, if ever, has the subject of zoos been treated with such depth and insight. Zoo Check, under the tireless leadership of Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers, as well as Thorson's Publishing Group, deserve congratulations for the way they have succeeded in bringing to the public, in such compelling and readable form, an impressive array of well-documented arguments covering all aspects of the debate.

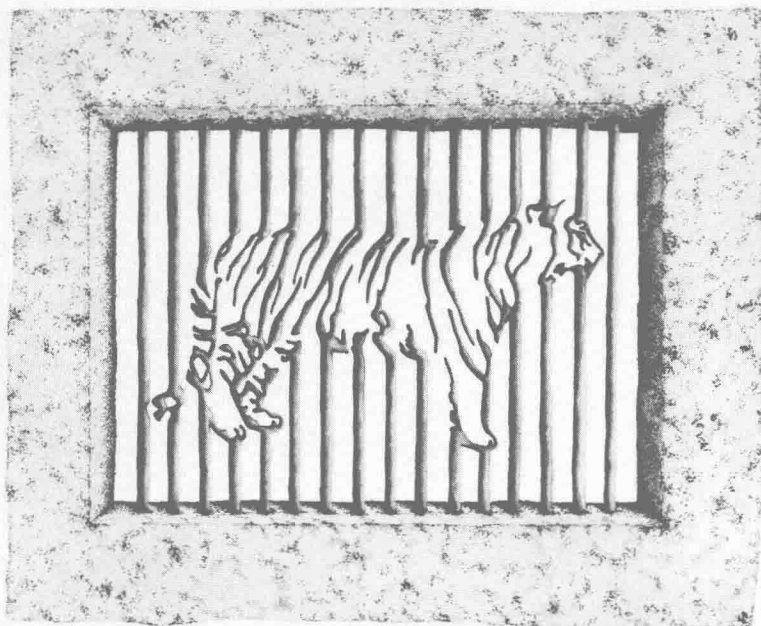
Above all, the book succeeds in avoiding the tendency to view zoos in isolation rather than as just one link in a chain of interrelated issues having global repercussions. The chapters that follow contain a wealth of information to convince even the most sceptical of readers that traditional justifications for zoos - ranging from conservation to educational value - may now be seriously challenged as obsolete - not only on ethical but also on purely scientific grounds.

The time has surely come to explore new methods involving, for example, increased emphasis on the establishment of national parks for the study and protection of indigenous and endangered species in their natural habitats as well as the promotion of comprehensive conservation education through increased resort to modern audio-visual techniques. These methods have a clear advantage over most zoos when it comes to bringing home the ultimate futility of preserving wildlife without parallel efforts to preserve the fragile ecosystems on which all living creatures depend. For the animals it is a question of survival. More and more, as this book highlights so forcefully, we are coming to realise that on their survival depends our own.

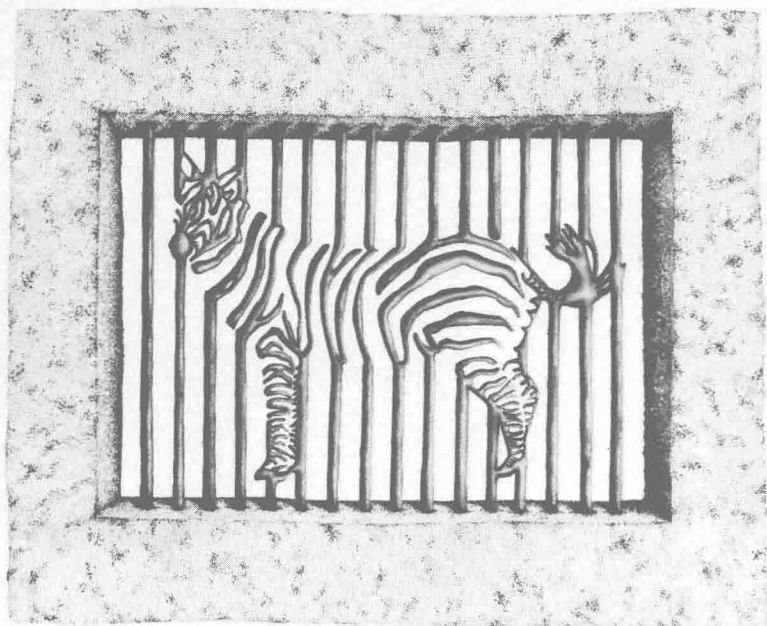
We can perhaps do no better than to reflect on the example of one particularly enlightened zoo which has installed a mirror behind bars. Visitors can look into this and read the caption "Homo sapiens ... species endangered by its own doing!"

Sadrudin Aga Khan

Sadrudin Aga Khan

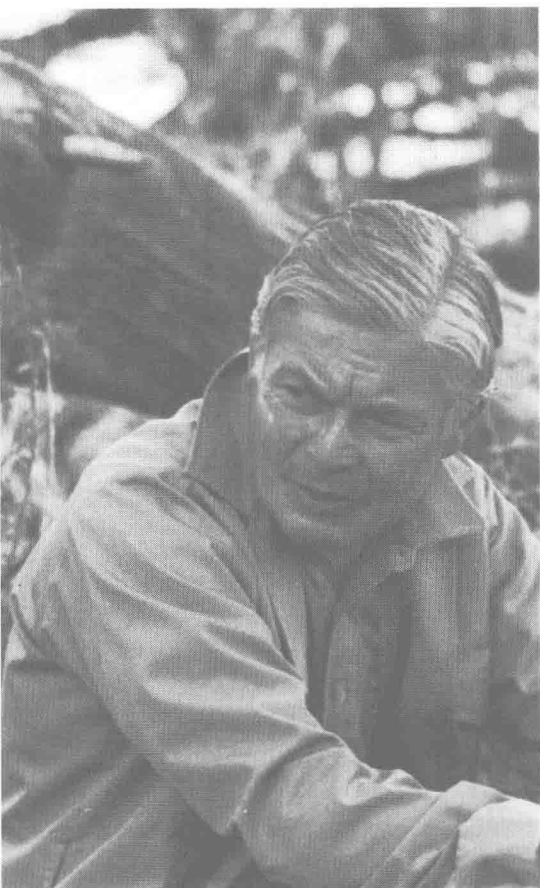


Illustrations by Tessa Lovatt-Smith



Sir Christopher Lever

Introduction



Sir Christopher Lever worked in the City as an accountant and a stockbroker before becoming a director of his family textile business. Two of his books, *The Naturalized Animals of the British Isles* (Hutchinson, 1977) and *Naturalized Mammals of the World* (Longman, 1985), have become the standard works on the subject. A companion to the latter, *Naturalized Birds of the World*, is due to be published by Longman in 1988. As well as being a Consultant for Zoo Check, he is Vice-President of the International Trust for Nature Conservation, and has recently been appointed Chairman of the British Trust for Ornithology's National Centre Appeal. He is also a trustee of several other conservation and animal welfare organizations. For many years he has been a regular visitor to north and east Africa. He lives in Berkshire, where he runs a flock of Soay sheep and feral goats.

The 'zoo dilemma' in the title of this book has arisen as a consequence of recent trends in contemporary life; it is a manifestation of current thinking.

During the past quarter of a century or so there has been a great upsurge in people's awareness of the marvels of the natural world. This has come about largely as a result of the very high standard of wildlife films on

television, which have brought the sight and sound of wild animals in their natural surroundings into people's homes, and have opened the public's eyes to the wonders of animal intelligence and behaviour. The increasing popularity of 'package' wildlife safaris has put the viewing of exotic animals in their own countries within the budget of an increasingly large number of people. Together, this has led to a burgeoning realization of the consequences, both actual and potential, of man's rape of the world and its resources, and to a growing determination to do something about it before it is too late. Conservation has, in stockbrokers' idiom, become a 'growth industry'. This has all contributed to a change in the general attitude of man in his relationship with other animals.

In her opening chapter, Virginia McKenna describes the catalyst (the death in 1983 in London Zoo of the elephant, Pole Pole) that transformed her from the ordinary animal-lover that she had for so long been to the activist whose 'breaking point' had been reached, and which led in the following year to the formation of Zoo Check.

Although it would be wrong, as she points out, to sentence all zoos to a blanket condemnation, or to say that no species are suitable for keeping in captivity, it is equally foolish for the directors of zoos to claim, as they so often do, that all such establishments are today totally different from those of the 'bad old days', and that they are now universally models of enlightened management. Some undoubtedly are (the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust and San Diego Zoo in California spring to mind), but the vast majority are still – despite their vehement denials to the contrary – simply places of public entertainment.

In a previous book I have written: 'the reintroduction to the wild of endangered species bred in captivity is increasingly becoming accepted as the only justification for keeping wild animals in confinement. The umbrella pretexts of "education" and "scientific research" are no longer – if, indeed, they ever were – valid.' Better still, of course, than breeding endangered species in captivity, is the construction in their native habitat of fenced sanctuaries, where they can live and breed in security until it becomes possible to return them to the wild. Virginia McKenna describes the construction in Kenya of the Tsavo Rhino Sanctuary, which was partially funded by Zoo Check. Other sanctuaries for black rhinos in Kenya (in Nakuru, Nairobi, the Aberdares and Meru) are currently being built by the Rhino Rescue Trust. In *New Scientist* (26 September 1985) I advocated the formation of similar sanctuaries for the Sumatran rhino in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Are we, as Virginia McKenna suggests, ignoring our indigenous wildlife in favour of captive exotic species? The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Royal Society for Nature Conservation and the National Trust, among other organizations, do what they can to encourage people to watch our native animals in their natural surroundings, but more still needs to be done to educate the public to the glories of our native wildlife.

The British have for long enjoyed a world-wide reputation as a nation of animal-lovers. We react, as Virginia McKenna rightly says, with horror to *active* acts of cruelty against both wild and domestic animals, yet remain apparently unmoved by the *passive* cruelty of imprisonment in zoos. Most of us would probably agree on the cruelty of perpetually confining a *domestic* dog to a kennel, but many remain unconcerned by the sight of a permanently caged *wild* animal. This ambivalent attitude is hard to understand.

‘There is no doubt in my mind,’ Virginia McKenna writes, ‘that a huge and unstoppable tide of public opinion demanding change is already taking place.’ That this is undoubtedly true is confirmed by the ever increasing number of newspaper reports and magazine articles condemning the keeping of wild animals in captivity. On a personal note, since my involvement with Zoo Check, more and more of my acquaintances have confessed their secret dislike of and reluctance to visit circuses and zoos – secret because such a view has, until fairly recently, been regarded as unfashionable and even somewhat eccentric.

For Bill Jordan, the catalyst that led to his ‘breaking point’ was his first visit to Africa in 1964. For the previous fourteen years he had found fulfilment in his work as a vet at Chester Zoo, but on his return he saw his patients for what they really were – mere parodies of the magnificent creatures he had observed in the wild. I have myself noticed the same reaction among people whom I have taken on safari.

‘What then’ asks Jordan, ‘is the purpose of a zoo? What are the reasons for keeping animals captive?’ To these questions zoo directors reply that they are places of education, entertainment and conservation, and that they carry out important biological research. But the educational facilities and contribution to conservation provided by the majority of zoos is negligible, and the value of biological research conducted on animals kept in unnatural conditions is, to say the least, questionable. Only the claim of zoos as centres for public entertainment stands up to examination.

Zoos also assert, as Mr C. G. C. Rawlins, then Acting Secretary of the National Federation of Zoological Gardens, did in *BBC Wildlife* magazine (May 1984), that ‘television and films, however beautifully and realistically they portray the wild, are still no substitute for seeing a live animal.’ Having for some years been a regular visitor to Africa, where I have been privileged to see wild animals in their natural surroundings, I am left in no doubt whatever that the splendid natural history films now being produced give an incomparably truer picture of the wild animals they portray than does the caricature of the same creature seen live in a zoo.

‘This,’ Jordan continues, ‘poses two further questions; are zoos essential to conservation, and are there acceptable standards for captive animals?’ On the first point Jordan feels we should keep an open mind. On the second, he draws attention to the deficiencies of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 which, although it sets minimum criteria for zoo management, does not and cannot eliminate or address itself to all the problems. For example, it imposes no