Exhibition
on
History of Zoology in India

20th May 2016

Organised by
Regional Museum of Natural History
Siddhartha Nagar, Mysuru-570 011

INTRODUCTION

Natural history in India has a long heritage with a recorded history going back to the Vedas.

In the present account of our knowledge of animal life in India, covering a period of over five thousand years, there is therefore little that man had not already learnt in the preceding centuries and to which he had not given concrete representation in the form of drawings, engravings, etc., although the earlier records are still far from complete.

The legendry or mythical elements of the Indian fauna referred to in this exhibition such as yali (the leonine elephant or the bovine-canine lion), the sarabha (enkalparavai), and the gandabherunda (the two-headed serpent eagle) are perhaps of the same status as the Loch Ness monster of Great Britain and the Yeti or 'Abominable Snowman' of the snow range of the Himalayas, but they seem to have persisted as a tradition in sculptures or emblems without a hitherto verifiable background. A fairly objective view of the knowledge of animals living in a wild or domesticated state in various periods of history or pre-history can be obtained, either from their representations in sculptures, paintings, engravings, etc., on rock or pottery, and in seals and such like objects.

Faunal study in early times was undertaken mainly by sportsmen-naturalists, amateurs, civil servants and army officers.

INDUS VALLEY

Evidences of animal life in the Indus Valley civilization (2500-1500 B.C.) and the adjoining territories of Sind, Punjab, and Baluchistan has been brought together by a careful study of the actual animal remains found in Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Amri, Nal, Nundara, and Rupar, and of animal representations engraved on seal amulets, and in the figurines and engravings and paintings on pottery and other ware. It is evident that the people were familiar to wild animals mainly tiger, bear, rhinoceros, hair squirrel and monkey.

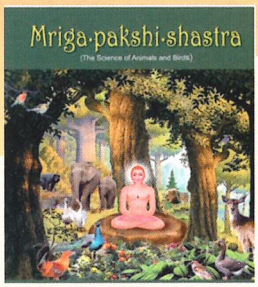
VEDIC TIME

The Vedas represent some of the oldest historical records available (1500 – 500 BC) and they list the names of nearly 250 kinds of birds besides many other notes on various other fauna and flora.

MAURYA DYNASTY

The protection of animals became serious business by the time of the Maurya dynasty in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. Kautilya's Arthashastra contains not only maxims on ancient statecraft, but also unambiguously specifies the responsibilities of officials such as the Protector of the Elephant Forests. The killing of an elephant was punishable by death in the time of Mauryas.

CHALUKYA PERIOD

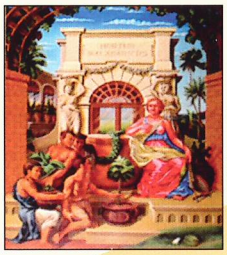


Glorious account of king Pulkeshin-II, Vikramaditya, Kirtivarman and their Chalukya Empire which brought grandeur to Kannada Nadu in not only preservation of 'nature-mother-earth' but also carving out wild life in each of their places of worship, in their routine cult of deities of wild animals amidst sanctuaries of their art, craft, relics and antics at Badami, Pattadakal & Aihole.

MUGHAL PERIOD

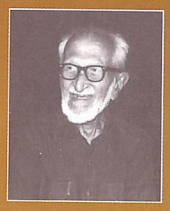
The memories of Babar and of Jahangir and the Ain-e-Akbari of Abul Fazl, and various other Islamic works have been the main sources of such knowledge. The Emperors themselves were great sportsmen and distinguished naturalists of their time, and their interest in the fauna of the country was so great that they could hardly allow their knowledge of it to remain unrecorded.

COLONIAL PERIOD



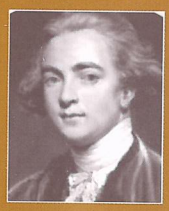
The Indian Civil Services brought many British naturalists to India. Some collected species on behalf of British and other European naturalists and museums, while others carried out their studies entirely on their own. Historians have linked the birth of museums to colonialism. These massive collections and their documentation led to the production of numerous works including The Fauna of British India, Including Ceylon and Burma series.

SALIM ALI



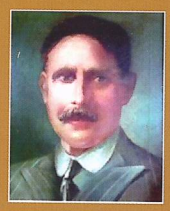
Sálim Moizuddin Abdul Ali was an Indian ornithologist and naturalist. Sometimes referred to as the "birdman of India", He was among the first Indians to conduct systematic bird surveys across India and several bird books that he wrote helped popularize ornithology in India.

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY



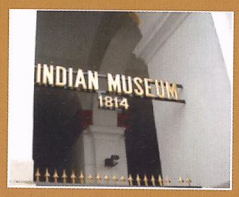
Sir William Jones in 15 January 1784 founded the Asiatic society of Bengal in a meeting presided over by Sir Robert Chambers, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at the Fort William in Calcutta, then capital of the British Raj, to enhance and further the cause of Oriental research.. Its aim was to enquire within this geographical limit whatever is performed by man or produced by nature.

GENESIS OF ZSI



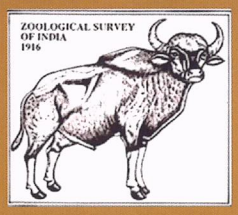
The Zoological Survey of India is a premier Indian organisation in zoological research and studies. It was established on 1 July 1916 to promote the survey, exploration and research of the fauna in the region. The activities of the ZSI are coordinated by the Conservation and Survey Division under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.

INDIAN MUSEUM



The Indian Museum is the largest and oldest museum in India and has rare collections of antiques, armour and ornaments, fossils, skeletons, mummies, and Mughal paintings. It was founded by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Kolkata (Calcutta), India, in 1814. The founder curator was Dr Nathaniel Wallich, a Danish botanist.

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF NDIA AND INDIAN MUSEUM



The zoological collection of the Asiatic society of Bengal had formally been handed over to the Board of trustees of the Indian Museum in 1875, and the collection became part of the Zoological Section of the Museum.

Between 1875 and 1916, the zoological section of the museum steadily expanded till it became the greatest collection of natural history in Asia. The faunal specimens, exhibits and artefacts have been designed and arranged to illustrate the zoology of the Indian Subcontinent. The six galleries under the ZSI are Animal Ecology, Ecosystem, Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians, and Fishes.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The NMNH owes its genesis to Smt. Indira Gandhi, the former Prime Minister, who while considering new projects to be initiated in 1972 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of India's Independence, decided that the country needs a Museum of Natural History to depict its flora, fauna and mineral wealth to provide an out of school facility for education of children and to promote environmental awareness among the masses. The NMNH opened its doors to the public on 5th June 1978, coinciding symbolically with the World Environment Day. From a single Museum located in New Delhi, the NMNH has extended its geographical range by establishing Regional Museums of Natural History (RMNH) in many parts of the Country such as Southern Region (Mysore), Central Region (Bhopal) and Eastern Region (Bhubaneswar). Two more Museums are being established in Western Region (Sawai Madhopur) and North-Eastern Region (Gangtok).

ENTRY FREE

10.00 am to 5.00 pm
on all days Except Mondays & National Holidays
Ph : 0821-2447046
Email : rmnhmysore@gmail.com