

## Anti-plastic Activities in Zoos in India, and some Facts and Statistics of Plastic

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Zoos are special places for animals. It is very important to know what one should do in zoos. Often visitors disturb the feeding habits of animals, by feeding them wafers, biscuits, *vadas*, etc., and sometimes they will throw this food along with its plastic covers. This leads to indigestion, impaction, gastrointestinal problems, loss of appetite and ultimately death of the animal. Various zoos have encountered plastic materials during post mortem examinations.

Visitors need to be educated about the natural feeding habits of animals in wild, as they presume that they are helping the animals by feeding them. For educating visitors, information on feeding habits of particular animals can be displayed on the information boards, outside enclosures. **Thus, educating the visitors is the best way to control the plastic menace in zoo.**

### Anti-Plastic Activities In Zoos:

**S. V. Zoological Park, Tirupati**, celebrates its New Year 2007, with a first step to ban plastic bags and other plastic articles in the zoo premises.

Various activities were carried out on 1 Jan 2007, wherein all the zoo staff have actively participated for the successful implementation of the programme, by creating awareness and educating the visitors. The team of zoo was present at the main entrance (Figs. 1 & 2), canteens and at some of enclosures, to educate the visitors.



Fig 1. Zoo Plastic team in a group photo at entrance.

— Lucknow zoo, distributes almost 20,000 papers bags, free of cost to visitors every month.  
 — Mumbai zoo had banned the plastic bags, and plastic bottles inside the zoo premises.  
 — Hyderabad zoo, has taken initiative steps to have tea, coffee and ice-cream in paper cups; besides that, they have opened a counter near entrance, where paper bags of different sizes are made available at reasonable cost.  
 — New Delhi Zoo, has been declared as a 'No Poly Bag Zone'



Fig 2. Zoo Plastic team in a group photo at entrance.

### Facts and Statistic of Plastic:

— The wonder material (Plastic) of the 20th century has invaded every aspect of life primarily because of its flexibility and relative lightness. However, plastic is non-biodegradable and poses serious environmental and health problems. In addition, the additives used in processing plastics results in the presence of substances that cause serious health hazards. The popular plastic pots are actually unsuitable for storing drinking water because of the presence in them of cadmium, mercury and lead, which are mainly used to impart colours to them. Plastic takes 1000 years to decompose on land and 450 years in water, and awareness among citizens, along with a concerted initiative on their part seems to be the only solution out of this message.

— In India, the load of plastic waste on the environment has increased dramatically in the last two decades. Consumption of plastic has more than doubled since 1995-96 - from about 1.8 million tonnes to about five million tonnes.

— Data released by the United States Environmental Protection Agency in 2001 on U.S. plastic bag, sack, and wrap consumption are somewhere around 500 billion and a trillion plastic bags consumed worldwide each year. Of these, millions end up in the litter stream outside of landfills.

— Every year 35,000 tonnes of non-biodegradable plastic films, made from this irreplaceable precious natural petroleum resource is being used to choke the earth.

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