The Captive Environment: What the Visitors Think…

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The Modern Zoo: What is it?

- Tourist destination
- Conservation centre
- Not-for-profit organisation
- Commercial business
- Educational enterprise
- Community resource
- Animal husbandry facility
The Modern Zoo:

- Conservation
- Education
- Research
- Recreation
The Modern Zoo:

But the questions remain:

• “What is this thing called ‘recreation’?”

• “How is it related to the other zoo objectives?”
Wildlife and Entertainment

Frank Buck's
RARE WILD ANIMALS
BIRDS & REPTILES
ALL ALIVE!

Orang-utans
Chimpanzees
Amusing Apes

Educational & Thrilling

Tigers, Lions
Elephants
Leopards
The Zoo Challenge: Commercial Viability Versus Ethical Credibility
This Project

To compare the perceptions and attitudes of visitors at 4 Australian and 4 UK zoos to:

- The role of zoos
- Their visit (and level of satisfaction)
- Zoos and education
The 8 zoos selected

- **Australia**: Adelaide, Australia, Melbourne and Perth
- **United Kingdom**: Bristol, Jersey, London and Twycross
The Visitors

- 1439 surveys completed
- 64% female
- 88% domestic
- 96% with family or friends
The Visitors: Reasons for Visiting

- Lots of different animals
- Being with family and friends
- Pleasant outdoor environment
- Seeing rare animals
- Learning about conservation
- Contributing to conservation
Visitors think zoos should:

- Educate the public about wildlife
- Breed endangered species
- Support wildlife conservation
- Provide a pleasant day out
- Entertain visitors
- Support research
The Visitors: What Do They Get?

- A high level of satisfaction 8.5
- A “medium” level of learning 6.8
- Less conservation learning 6.1/10
Visitor Conclusions

- Main motivation – good time with family and friends
- Expect to learn about animals and conservation
- Don’t expect to contribute to conservation

- BUT - believe zoos are important for conservation
- Most important activity education
The Visitors: Satisfaction and Learning

Positive correlations found between

‘level of satisfaction with visit’

And

1. ‘level of learning’
2. ‘how much does this zoo do for conservation?’
Can conservation attract visitors?

- 48% would like to return within a year
- BUT
- 73% would **not** return if the zoo did nothing for conservation
Visitor Conclusions cont’d

The higher the ‘Satisfaction with visit’ the higher that zoo rated for –

- Level of learning
- Wildlife conservation
- Desire to return
Visitor Conclusions:

Why Is It So?

What aspects of the display influence visitor Perceptions?

- The character of the exhibit - naturalistic
- The behaviour of the animals - active
- The type of animal - ‘cuteness’
- The type of display - interactive
Visitor Conclusions: Why Is It So?

What aspects of the visitors are also important?

- Motivation for visiting
- Social interactions
- Visitor emotions
Australia Zoo – The Future Zoo?
Australia Zoo – tourism and conservation?
Australia Zoo – tourism and conservation?
Or...commercial exploitation?
Australia Zoo – The Results

Their Visitors – gave the highest ranking for:

- Satisfaction with visit
- Conservation learning
- Zoo’s contribution to conservation
- Importance of zoos for conservation
- Not returning if the zoo did nothing for conservation

AND.............
Australia Zoo – The Results

Their Visitors – gave the highest ranking for the importance of:

- Entertaining visitors!
Education and Engagement

Frank Buck's Rare Wild Animals, Birds & Reptiles
All Alive!

Orang-Utans, Chimpanzees, Amusing Apes

Educational & Thrilling

Tigers, Lions, Elephants, Leopards

Australia Zoo: Back to the future?

“Conservation through exciting education”
Future Research

- Critical assessment of the ‘attractive’ aspects of zoo displays
- Investigation of the impact of these displays on visitor behaviour
- Recognition/evaluation of the education/entertainment link
Questions?
The Staff

- 417 surveys
- 55% animal staff
- 61% employed for less than 5 years
- 69% believed conservation to be very important
The Staff: Attitudes to Conservation at their own zoo

- “Conservation is the main focus of our zoo” 42%
- “All staff working for our conservation goal” 22%
- “Visitors see all our conservation work” 12%
- “Govt conservation agencies appreciate us” 6%
The “Non-Zoo” Staff

- 101 surveys
- 75% employed for more than 5 years
- 80% believed conservation to be very important
Non-Zoo Staff: Attitudes to Conservation and to zoos

- “Zoos do a great deal for conservation” 12%
- “Conservation is the main focus of zoos” 8%
- “Govt conservation agencies appreciate zoos” 2%
What should zoos be doing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoo Activity</th>
<th>Visitors %</th>
<th>Staff %</th>
<th>Non-Zoo Staff %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educate public</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breed endangered species</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support wildlife conservation</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In situ conservation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertain visitors</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Who is important for conservation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Visitors %</th>
<th>Staff %</th>
<th>Non-Zoo Staff %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoos</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>National Governments</td>
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<td>87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation Groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Governments</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Local Communities</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff Conclusions

- Less than half think conservation is main focus of their zoo
- Few felt their conservation efforts were appreciated
- Staff not working together for a common goal
- BUT - believe that zoos are important for conservation
- Little priority to visitor entertainment
- Most important activity for zoos: education
Non-Zoo Staff Conclusions

- Few think conservation is main focus of zoos
- Few appreciate conservation efforts of zoos
- Believe that zoos are less important for conservation

BUT

- Most important activity for zoos: education
Australia Zoo – The Results

Their Staff – gave the highest ranking for:

- Conservation being the main focus of the zoo
- All staff working towards a common goal
- Their zoo’s contribution to conservation
- Importance of zoos for conservation

AND.............
Australia Zoo – The Results

Their staff – gave the highest ranking for:

- Entertaining visitors!