A Proposal for Further Evaluation of Wildlife Conservation Education at Zoos

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Introduction:

- Increasing efforts towards conservation in today’s zoos
- Children’s future of natural resource preservation
- Attitudes acquired at a young age carry into adulthood
- Education of younger generations is important in wildlife conservation
- Evaluation of conservation programs at zoos is important in assessing their effectiveness

Approach:

- Analyze previous studies conducted on wildlife conservation education at zoos
- Use the results of these studies to determine the most effective methods of evaluation
- Interpret the results of these studies to establish the most effective education strategies

Results of past studies:

Table 1. Mean positive affect and meaning-making scores according to extent of up-close encounter from a study conducted by Luebke, J.F. et al

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extent of up-close encounter</th>
<th>1 = not at all</th>
<th>2–6 = somewhat</th>
<th>7 = very much</th>
<th>ANOVA test results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive affect</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>F(2, 261) = 33.59, p &lt; .001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meaning-making</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>F(2, 296) = 11.20, p &lt; .001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From this study, Luebke, J.F. et al found that an increase in up-close animal encounters led to a higher score for positive affect and meaning-making. A greater number of animal encounters led to the guests having a more positive feelings in response to seeing the animals. Visitors that experienced a greater number of animal encounters reported that the exhibits made wildlife conservation issues more meaningful to them.

Figure 1. Graphs A and B were created from the results of a study conducted by White, T.G. and S.K. Jacobson on the effectiveness of conservation education programs at a South American Zoo. Overall there is an increasing trend from pretest to posttest knowledge and attitude for each of the treatment groups.

Figure 2. The mean self-ratings for knowledge, attitude, and behavior for all camp programs within a study conducted by Kruse, C.K. and J.A. Card. The camp programs Zooventures, Terratrekkers, Advanced Terratrekkers, and Zoo Careers have increasing animal interaction components, respectively.

Implications:

- Surveying and pre- and post test examination methodologies are a successful means of evaluation and could be implemented in future studies
- Up-Close animal encounters leads to a more positive experience for zoo visitors→ create zoo exhibits that allow guests to get close to animals and view them from multiple locations

Future Improvement:

- San Diego Zoo Summer Camps:
  - Increase the number of animal presentations per day
  - Develop a pre- and post-camp survey
  - Send magazines/conservation articles to campers after they have attended camp (i.e. Zoonooz)
- Evening zoo programs:
  - Visit animals that are active at night
  - Increase number of educators at each exhibit

Literature Cited: