

# Symposium on "Zoo Experiences and the Human Dimensions of Saving Wildlife at the Zoological Society of London", 24-25 May 2007



A 2-day joint symposium of the Zoological Society of London and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Zoos and aquariums tend to focus on animal preservation and science learning. They provide opportunities for cultural and moral development, and social change but, without focusing their attention on these human dimensions, zoos and aquariums could jeopardise the ability to succeed as conservation organisations that are relevant to society.

This symposium seeks to advance a global conservation agenda by investigating scholarship on the moral, psychological, social and cultural aspects of zoos and zoo-going from the perspective of the social sciences, including the presentation of new information from conservation psychology. The goal is to help zoo professionals frame an understanding of their cultural importance and to help zoos become more effective conservation advocates.

Organised by John Fraser, Carol D. Saunders and Tom Webler.

## Contributors

Contributors to the program include noted scholars and authors from outside the traditional zoological sciences community, who will challenge traditional zoo pedagogy by applying a rigorous assessment of how the social sciences might redefine the role of zoos and aquariums in society and how that role can be more effectively used to advance the conservation agenda.

## Audience

The audience for this symposium includes advanced-thinking zoo/aquarium directors, senior managers and other conservation professionals. This symposium is designed for professionals with extensive experience in the field of zoo/aquarium management that recognize the need to advance conservation values in their communities, but do not have training in the social sciences. The discussion sessions will allow the audience to help shape the conversation by helping develop a shared language that will allow the presenting scholars to contextualize their work for the audience.

A special poster session will focus on recent research findings that demonstrate how zoos and aquaria can contribute to the development of a shared set of values regarding wildlife conservation.

## Draft Programme

### THURSDAY 24 MAY

#### Visitor experiences at zoos and aquariums and contributions to biodiversity literacy.

#### Session 1: Role of Zoos in providing visitor experiences of animals and nature

09.00–09.30 hours

#### Introduction and Welcome

09.30–10.15 hours

#### Linking zoos and aquariums to the social sciences: where do zoos/aquariums need to be in the future to best support their conservation missions?

- Revising the future of zoos: a new paradigm for measuring the conservation mission

- The under-appreciated ocean: rethinking how we describe our world
- European perspectives on culture and social responsibility

10.30–11.30 hours

#### Introduction to the contributors, the perspectives they bring and how this could contribute to understanding how zoos/aquariums are situated in the conservation movement

11.30–12.30 hours

#### Overview of visitor-studies literature related to visitor experiences of animals/nature

- Considering the social value of zoos and aquariums. Reconsidering how and when zoo and aquarium learning happens
- Describing the experience of social learning in terms of zoo/aquarium visits

#### Session 2: Philosophies of learning at zoos : the social development of biodiversity literacy and zoos in the nature space

13.30–15.00 hours

- What we are learning about environmental concern from leisure- studies research?

#### Case studies. Witnessing learning experiences and the antecedents of social change

- Three case studies. Family experiences in zoos and aquariums, and results of audience research
- Three case studies. Reframing the exhibit design pedagogy to avoid denial and rejection: thinking about ecophobia, trauma and the emotions attached to conservation activism

15.30–17.00 hours

#### Thinking about the social sciences: developing a shared vocabulary

- Questions from attendees. What do we need to know from the social sciences?
- Open discussion of the poster presentations and concepts from the morning session intended to create a shared vocabulary, ensure that the burning questions are framed for the following day and challenge the speakers to bring their scholarship to bear on the role of zoos/aquariums in the contemporary conservation debate

#### Closing commentary. Peopling the environment: the impact of community engagement and information flow on biologists

### FRIDAY 25 MAY

#### What Impact do Zoos and Aquariums have on Visitor Conservation outcomes

Morning Session: Contributions from Conservation Psychology and Links between Individual Caring and Action

09.00–10.30 hours

#### Zoos as social-change institutions with a

### conservation mission

- Introduction to conservation psychology and its relation to zoos/aquariums
- Two likely pathways toward encouraging conservation behavior in zoo/aquarium settings and research needs

### What do we know about the impact of zoos and aquariums on conservation knowledge: effects, attitudes and behaviors from a national study in the United States?

- Presentation of the multi-institutional research program

### What do we know from psychology about the links between connections with animals and to engage in conservation action?

- Nature experiences as precursors for pro-environmental behavior
- Role of nature experiences in promoting environmental concern and positive attitudes and behaviors toward the environment
- Measuring the impact of zoo and aquarium programs on environmental perceptions and values
- Connectedness, caring and commitment: implications for designing the zoo experience

10.30–10.45 hours **BREAK**

### 10.45–12.15 hours Commentary. The importance of animal and nature experiences for promoting empathy, moral development and conservation behaviors

### Panel discussion and open discussion

12.15–13.30 hours **LUNCH**

### Session 4: How Social Processes and Concepts of Community Influence Environmental Action

13.30–14.50 hours

### The development of societal beliefs and cultural transformation

- Overview of sociological theory and the building blocks for thinking about social-change activism in zoos and aquariums

### The evolution of environmental discourse. What happens when individuals start to change their narratives about nature-protection behaviors? What roles can zoos and aquariums play?

- An assessment of assets available to zoos and aquariums that can be used to foster social change
- An anthropologist's view of how zoos and aquariums can rethink their role in social change

### The importance of language, re-modeling nature as valued, and the role of zoos and aquariums

14.50–15.15 hours **BREAK**

### 15.15–17.00 hours Commentary

- What are the possibilities of ethical tensions at zoos that can be informative/provocative?
- How do these theories inform the understanding of the role zoos and aquariums can play in the conservation movement?

### Open discussion and final summary

### LOCATION

The Zoological Society of London's Meeting Rooms are next to its Main Offices, on the Outer Circle, Regent's Park. Cars may be parked in the London Zoo visitors' car park at the special rate of £9 per day. The nearest public transport is by the 274 bus (to the Zoo), or by Underground (to Camden Town).

Booking and enquiries please contact: Joy Miller, Scientific Meetings Coordinator, Zoological Society of London Regent's Park (Outer Circle) London NW1 4RY, UK.  
E: [joy.miller@zsl.org](mailto:joy.miller@zsl.org); T: +44 (0)207 449 6227  
[www.zsl.org/science/scientific-meetings/](http://www.zsl.org/science/scientific-meetings/)



## ASIAN ZOO EDUCATORS' CONFERENCE 2007 Engage, Educate, Conserve

Singapore Zoo  
6–10 September 2007

Zoo education was once largely limited to programmes for school children. But modern zoos have moved on and become important centres for educating visitors on all aspects of our natural world. With rapid depletion in Earth's biodiversity, the need for conservation education has become ingrained in the direction and philosophy of most zoos. As natural resources diminish, zoos need to take on an added responsibility in promoting sustainable living.

The need for a platform for the exchange of ideas among Asian zoo educators has always been deeply felt. We hope to bring about this platform with the Asian Zoo Educators' Conference 2007. The conference will showcase important aspects of zoo education through talks, tours and interactive activities. It will present an opportunity for zoo educators to strengthen ties, as well as to learn from one another and generate fresh ideas in our common quest to "Engage, Educate, Conserve".

The conference will take place from 6–10 September 2007 at Singapore Zoo. Please join us, and share your passion for saving our natural world.

### CALL FOR PAPERS

You are invited to share your valuable research and experience with us in the form of:

- An oral presentation (10 minutes) with written paper to be submitted before the conference
- A poster presentation (with 2 minute introduction by the author)

All presentations should discuss the theme of "Engage, Educate, Conserve" and its relevance to the zoo.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please visit the conference website at [www.zoo.com.sg/AZEC2007](http://www.zoo.com.sg/AZEC2007) for constant updates. Or drop us an email at [AZEC2007@zoo.com.sg](mailto:AZEC2007@zoo.com.sg)

We hope to see you at Singapore Zoo in September 2007!

