

19th International Zoo Educators'
(IZE) Biennial Conference
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Hosted by Zoos South Australia



Proceedings from
Open Space Sessions



At the 2008 IZE Conference in Adelaide, Australia, Open Space Sessions were held. These are brainstorming sessions in which a general topic is suggested and ideas and best practices are shared within the group. Hopefully these ideas and suggestions will be beneficial for your institution.

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Open Space Session Topics

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SESSION TITLE: Engaging Teenagers

1. What do teenagers want?

- Student driven programs/ideas in combination with teacher supervision, programs.
- Focus on animals.
- Treat this audience like adults.
- Empowering students to be active, positive leaders.

2. Techniques for teenagers

- Enrichment items
 - Teen and animal connection
 - Paying participants to get involved.
- Weekend and overnight programs.
- Ongoing connection with zoos: junior rangers, volunteer work, youth clubs.
- Moving away from traditional methods; e.g. 2-3 hour program moving towards extended programs/career focus (benefits-intense programs, long term relationships, small groups.)
- Train the teenagers to do the presentations to the public.
- Radio program targeted for teens and local areas and animals in those areas.
- Programs that enable the teenagers to express themselves via song, drama, and dance-with conservation focus.
- Tie into popular culture: poetry slams-opportunity for large groups to be exposed to zoo issues.
- Engaging in different ways, such as game show format.
- Alternative methods, approaches that challenge students, e.g. "nuclear river."
- "Environment Leaders"-Ask students what they want to know.
- Ongoing connection and contact, e.g. every Saturday over an extended period of time.
- Tie curriculum into zoo programs.
- Sculptures, art programs, I.T. presentations are engaging for teens.
- Teenagers get excited about training opportunities, e.g. bird trainers involving teens with the animal training.
- Keeping the teens moving, e.g. transporting food from kitchens to enclosures, using golf carts, bicycles.
 - Build better relationships between zoo staff and teenagers.
- Physical programs with clear guidelines, e.g. clearing landscape, soccer training.

SESSION TITLE: Partnerships for In-situ Education

1. What does a successful in-situ partnership look like?

- It should be both genuine and authentic;
- It should have common objectives between zoo and in-situ partner;
- It should have 2-way sharing of expertise between zoo and in-situ partner;
- Identify an audience and work together on a needs assessment to determine what the audience knows and needs.

2. Prioritize funding

- Is it a one time grant or long-term partnership?
- Discuss how to move towards financial independence of the in-situ partner.
- Is it offering expertise in training conservation partners.
 1. Is it better to participate in fundraising or shipping supplies?
 - Who benefits/what is the audience
 - Develop a timeline and exit strategy

3. How do people in the field know who will give grants?

- Endowment funds
- IZE conference brings funders and in-situ educators together.
- Zoos and Aquariums Committing to Conservation (AZA) conference brings funders and in-situ partners together;
- Talk with others in the field for ideas and suggestions for funders.

4. Develop an Institutional Criteria for in-situ Partnerships

- Develop a written document describing the types of projects your institution funds and why.
- Design a proposal form that includes information you want to know from your in-situ partner

5. Create a Conservation Committee at your zoo

- Pull together a diverse group of staff experts to review and vote on funding proposals;
- Designate a point-person who will notify funding recipients and those not accepted;
- Think global, act local.

- 6. Adapt curriculum/materials to a specific region**
 - Work with your partners to adapt program activities and materials to include local animals, ecosystems, cultures;
 - If you are working with school children, be sure to integrate your program into the national curriculum.
 - Make programs relevant to your audience.
 - Identify local resources and make them available to the school/group.

- 7. Clearly identify expectations for both funders and recipients of the partnership.**
 - Examine strengths and weaknesses and offer appropriate assistance;
 - What products do you expect?
 - Capacity building might include training of educators or providing supplies such as ranger uniforms or computers.
 - Try an initial short-term project, like a trial period, then build to a bigger, long-term commitment.

SESSION TITLE: Programs for Elderly Guests or Guests with Disabilities

1. What do we need to deliver a successful program to these groups?

- Need to know about the disability and level of function.
- How much support will they have and need? Ask these questions on booking or if it's a school, visit the school first.
- Meet with groups prior to program to address needs, fears, basic info about animals, such as size, scale to human. Relate to flora and fauna.
- Offer material beforehand so that they are prepared.

2. What techniques are successful for these special groups?

- Visually impaired-hands on artifacts/props.
- Workshops, involving other senses, such as smell, e.g. giraffe enclosure.
- Hands-on animal encounters
- Specific night for children with disabilities, such as DreamNight at the Zoo.
- Education staff needs training for different groups' needs, characteristics, and how best to help/educate them.
- Respect is important.
- We need feedback/evaluation when a special program is presented.
- Regular programs allow staff to get to know participants. Have a day for these different programs.
- Environmental enrichment programs work well.
- Bring manager, board of directors, leaders, into see the program.
- Financial aspect-especially for private organizations. Sponsorships? Funding sources other than government. Get sponsorship for subsidizing groups with disabilities.

SESSION: Sustainability Development in Zoos: ZOOS GO GREEN

Zoos want to do the right thing for the environment. By embracing sustainable practices in their every day operations, they can be convenient, fun, inexpensive, and make you feel good. For zoo educators, these actions can be shared with visitors as messages of how zoos are “walking the talk” for sustainable living.

Zoos can live up to this “green” responsibility by substantially reducing their environmental footprint in the areas of waste, carbon emissions and energy consumption. Each and every employee can be part of this endeavor and can inspire others to take action. Together, zoos’ collective efforts can make a big difference!

At the 2008 IZE Conference, educators shared “green” ideas from their zoos. Here is what they said. Maybe an idea below will spark your interest and take-off at your facility.

Zoos Victoria, Australia

- Assign a sustainability officer at each zoo whose job it is to work on policies for the zoo and action ideas for guests. He/she is able to research options and offer the best solution to challenges that arise.
- Retail departments should ensure that products and packaging are earth-friendly and create the least impact possible. They also need to be mindful of the amount of trash generated.

Paignton Zoo, UK

- Offer “fair trade” items as souvenirs. Five years ago, these products accounted for about 5% of sales, today it’s 20% of sales. Green products are not only the right thing to do, but also support consumer trends.
- Work with your restaurants to ensure food items do not contain palm oil and that suppliers understand that you will not buy non-sustainable items.

Busch Gardens, U.S.

- Focus one gift shop on environmentally friendly products. Develop a staff training lesson that presents information about the products and their level of sustainability. Have the education team train this lesson to the retail staff so that they can be knowledgeable when speaking to visitors about these environmentally-sound products.

- When there is a story behind the items, visitors purchase them more frequently.

Rotterdam Zoo, The Netherlands

- Create a "Green Team," that is composed of members from all areas of the zoo. Develop a list of green actions with input from all zoo areas and prioritize them.
- This team works on completing the list of desired items/action steps. This team has already installed solar panels and wants to build a windmill. Having a wish list of green ideas allows the zoo to purchase items when the budget allows.

Kadoorie Farm and Botanical Gardens, Hong Kong

- A sustainability officer determines energy and water use through audits. Ideas for reduction are suggested and implemented. Energy/water audits measure any change in energy consumption.
- Install solar energy panels and tell visitors about them through a display that depicts how much energy is generated.
- Use recycled paper and always print double-sided.
- Use zoo mules to transport items around the zoo.

Zoos South Australia, Australia

- Each zoo has its own "Green Team," which monitors water, energy, and transportation/vehicle use.
- The zoos participate in carbon offsetting for their vehicle use and are eliminating old buses.
- Currently, older buildings are being retrofitted with systems for water storage.
- New buildings are built to green standards, so no retrofitting is necessary.

Taronga Zoo

- The car parking lot is currently under construction, so nearby parking is limited and can only be utilized if you carpool.

Oregon Zoo

- Staff are only allowed to park their car 4 days/week. The other day carpooling or biking is encouraged.

European Zoos

- Some zoos are re-examining their zoo master plans and eliminating tropical houses because of the enormous cost to heat and cool.

South African Zoos

- Voluntary programs for environmental sustainability accreditation. These programs include which products are bought, their business partners, transportation system, energy management system, and visitor education.

How can zoos make sustainable practices a part of everyday business?

Disney's Animal Kingdom

Start with simple steps:

1. Recycle cans, bottles, paper, cardboard, cell phones, electronics, electronic media, landscape waste, and construction debris.
2. Eliminate individual plastic water bottle usage in off-exhibit operations and offices
3. Print and make copies using the duplex function (double-sided)
4. Use a minimum of 30 percent, recycled-content paper for every day printing and copying
5. Turn off unnecessary lights
6. Minimize driving alone during work hours by using environmentally friendly options such as teleconference, videoconference, carpools, and public transit
7. Educate staff, exhibitors, and attendees to ensure participation in environmental initiatives in place at the event or meeting.
8. Avoid printing materials and disseminate information electronically via email or a designated Web site.
9. When promotional products are necessary, choose recycled-content or reusable options. As an attendee, only accept giveaways that you will use.
10. Provide highly visible recycling bins. As an attendee, look for opportunities to recycle.
11. Request that food and beverages are served in bulk containers (i.e. condiments). Do not pre-pour beverages; offer pitchers (i.e. water) or individual servings (i.e. iced tea) upon seating
12. Request that the meeting or event venue completes and returns the Environmental Assessment Checklist (below) in advance of planning.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

VENUE:

CONTACT NAME:

LOCATION:

NUMBER:

MEETING/EVENT:

DATE:

The (name of zoo) is working to reduce our environmental footprint by minimizing waste, conserving water and energy, reducing carbon emissions, and protecting

ecosystems. To assist in our efforts, please let us know about the environmental options at your venue (location of meeting/conference.)

We are interested in knowing if you have an environmental policy that we can access online or that you can send electronically. If so, please provide the link or attachment of your document along with this completed checklist as soon as possible.

1. What recycling programs do you have in place? *(Select all that apply)*

- Paper
- Cardboard
- Glass bottles
- Aluminum cans
- Plastic bottles
- Shrink wrap
- Electronics
- Composting food waste
- Composting landscape waste
- Hazardous or universal waste handling
- Sorting recyclables at an off-site facility

Other: _____

2. Do you offer any of the following from which visitors can choose? *(Select all that apply)*

- Sustainable seafood
- Humanely farmed food options
- Organic food options
- Locally-grown food options
- Vegetarian options
- Reusable service ware, plates, beverage containers, and cutlery
- Fabric linens and napkins

Other: _____

3. Are your facilities equipped with any of the following energy-saving features? *(Select all that apply)*

- Natural lighting in lieu of electrical lighting
- Solar panels
- Light sensors
- Energy Management System
- ENERGY STAR appliances

Other: _____

4. Does your facility conserve water using any of the following? *(Select all that apply)*

- Low-flow plumbing fixtures
- Irrigation management system
- Wash only full loads of linens or dishware

5.a. Is public transit or other forms of group transportation available?

Yes

No

b. If yes, do you offer any of the following to make transit use easier for Guests, especially those from out of town?

Maps and schedules

Tickets or passes

Personal assistance for Guests

6. Are there any other environmental programs at your venue that you wish to share?

"Sustainability is a not an end point, but a journey!"

Ian Walton, Monarto Zoo

SESSION TITLE: What can IZE do for you?

1. What member benefits would you like?

- Positives:
 - Journal
 - Conferences
 - Networking Opportunities
 - Valuable face-to-face contact with other zoo educators
 - Exposure to different cultures, stimulates conversations
 - IZE helps to strengthen official support from governments

- Desires:
 - Would like more access to research papers to help educators strengthen their position with their own zoo and their program
 - Tools to help educators train/upskill their own staff; also materials to keep staff motivated and inspired
 - IZE advocating on behalf of members: i.e. writing to the DRC's National Park Ministry to increase membership and ensure sustainability of programs
 - Can IZE assist workshops in other countries to allow members to share in their own country?
 - IZE could help to identify talent/expertise and act as a broker to facilitate in-situ support.
 - IZE could make a global/regional directory of experts and contacts and sources of financial support. Prevents re-inventing of the wheel. Could be available on the website.
 - Support materials, teaching tools, evaluation tools, specific for each activity. Some suggestions for evaluation and lesson plans are already on the site.
 - A tool box for different education experiences, eg: facilitating, emotional connections, ecological understanding, driving actions.
 - Behavior change models.
 - At conferences, offer translators, programs/sessions in other languages.

- Other ideas on member benefits
 - Following up after IZE conference to see what has been implemented from ideas gathered at the conferences

- In-situ Education
 - IZE is prepared to provide support in-situ.

- In-situ educators are a rich source of knowledge, experience, and inspiration.
- Partnerships between IZE/other education associations/other zoos-sister zoos.
- Sponsored Delegates
 - Delegates complete a write-up of their experience and how it has affected their programs.
 - Providing ongoing support to delegates
 - What else could be done?

SESSION TITLE: WOW Experiences Without Animal Touching

1. Activities and methods that are fun alternatives to the touch experience

- Tell local stories to make a personal connection;
- Props
 - Be sure to:
 - Respect props, biofacts
 - Use them to tell your story and move the message forward;
 - Be sure that appropriate messages are associated with the props;
- Use models or sculptures in unique ways;
- Items that relate directly to the animals, i.e. food;
- Photo and video opportunities
- Animal Dissection – some European zoos have used this as support to a science lesson;
- Other sensory experiences, such as smell and sound;
- Games/role plays (different from the school experience)
 - Role playing in response to interpretation or observation of the animals.
- Introduce the people who work with animals and in the conservation field;
 - Facilitate observation skills
 - Meeting zoo staff, especially keepers; offering close encounters
 - Creating enrichment activities
 - Having “expert” zoo visitors interacting with other zoo visitors
- Look at exhibit design
 - Create immersive experiences and interpretive experiences
 - Recreating the animal exhibit or even being in the animal exhibit
- Have zoo visitors “leave their mark on the zoo,” creating part of the zoo landscape-growing art
- Educators-have fun!

SESSION TITLE: Zoos Facilitating Action/Measuring Impact

1. How do zoos facilitate and measure conservation action?

- Giving all staff Guidelines to Conservation Action messages, in a convenient pocket-sized form
- Connect » Understand » Act model-first you are connected to wildlife and wild places, then you understand these area and animals, and then you will act.
- Facilitating involvement, through teacher involvement, follow-up through email.
- Making the animals more known-Oregon Zoo's elephant have a My Space page.

2. How do we get people to ACT?

- Zoos have to walk the talk.
- Longterm involvement and behavior change, not just one time action (but keep in mind, that even 1 action will make a difference!)
- In meetings, ask, "What have you done since last time?" Schools/individuals may participate more because they have to share.
- Tarongo Zoo-offers overnight experiences; this allows more in depth interactions
 - Consider what you can share in 30 seconds vs. 50 minutes vs overnight
- Offering Prompts, friendly reminders
 - Oregon Zoo-has created Prompts for action-polar bear stickers for light switches
 - Giving self-addressed-stamped postcards
 - Having visitors sign a pledge
 - Zoos Victoria-visitors can pick up plastic mailing bags to recycle cell phones
 - Each bag has a barcode so it can be tracked to a keeper talk, graphic, website, etc.

3. How do we measure visitors' action? How do we know that WE caused the behavior change?

- In schools, how do we stand out amongst all of the other activities, events, fairs?
- Which behaviors are more measureable?
 - Measureable actions
 - Zoos educate about sustainable seafood and then give coupons to local restaurants, then they know which diners practiced the behaviors.
 - Recycling at the zoo

- Make the behaviors visible
 - Zoos Victoria has a “Weed Busters” program. Visitors who want to participate are sent a text message from the zoo, so they just have to reply to a message already in their phone.
- Are we missing out if we only focus on behaviors that can be measured? Should we keep doing what we have been doing?
- Is this a scary method? What if what we have been doing isn’t working?
- Should we focus on actions that can be measured and those that can’t so that we can influence the guests?
- Messages resonate at different times. We are laying the groundwork.

4. How do measuring the impact we have on visitors?

- Emphasis on graphs, facts, figures, scientific studies, evaluation.
- Forensic style: not focused on the student, but focused on us.
 - Self-evaluation, peer evaluation, video taping
 - Evaluating our own style
 - The above won’t product numbers, but allows us to feel effective.
 - Asking students what they want to learn
- Generally, the recall of animal facts is better than the recall of conservation actions.
- Painted Dog Bush Camps-have follow-up with the students, focus on behavior change long-term
 - Receive feedback from students-children who collect firewood report snare to elders-the camp was then told about the children reporting the snare.
 - Children are encouraged to have conservation camps and encouraged to visit other groups and share knowledge.
- Informal Evaluation of Indonesian Rhinos:
 - A story was written about a rhino and distributed in a village where poaching was common. After the book was distributed, a rhino entered the village and villagers followed the rhino and called it by the character’s name. This was the first incidence of a rhino entering the village and NOT being poached.

5. Involving teachers in conservation education and messaging

- It’s difficult to get long term behavior change without teacher involvement and some teachers already have so much to teach. How do we get teachers to integrate conservation into curriculum and not have to teach additional things?

SESSION TITLE: Controversial Topics

1. Zoos and Controversial Topics

- Since zoos promote conservation action they are often seen as leaders and “experts” in the field.
- However, certain actions are not supported by zoo administration, certain land-use issues or conservation issues such as palm plantations. How do we get zoos and zoo management to act on unpopular issues?

2. How do educators respond to a zoo – government conflict of interest?

- You can always act as a private individual outside of work to write letters to elected officials about the concern. In general letter writing has a greater impact than petitions.
- Again as a private individual, you can spread the word to others about the conservation issue and the potential conflict of interest via e-mails.
- How do we promote activism at our institutions?
- Offer areas in the zoo where visitors can write letters to specific individuals and the zoo will mail them. You can have a list of officials with addresses at the table.

3. How do you get all staff to communicate the same “appropriate” messages on sensitive issues?

- Use internal e-mails or newsletters to share consistent messaging about controversial or sensitive topics;
- Create agenda topics at staff meetings or departmental meetings on sensitive issues;
- Don’t forget the front of house staff since they are often faced with these difficult questions, i.e. ticket sales, food & beverage staff, etc. Provide training as part of orientation. It is handy to write responses out so that they can refer to them later.
- Speak the ARAZPA/IZE/BIAZA/EAZA line
- Do all zoos follow the same messages? What happens if one zoo doesn’t?

4. Intentional breeding of surplus animals knowing you will be euthanizing offspring.

- Welfare policy vs. euthanasia policy
 - Animal Ethics Committees (IAACAC)
 - Who should be involved?
 - Vets

- Science Representative
 - Animal Welfare Rep (external)
 - Academic institution Rep (external)
 - Non-zoo official, "lay person"
- The policy states it is based on animal science. What scientific studies have been published on this topic? What is the correct interpretation of the science?
- Natural behavior management model:
 - Female lions should be allowed to breed because "that's how it happens in the wild." They need to be allowed to have young and care for the young to fulfill their maternal instincts.
 - In one institution, painted dogs were allowed to kill another painted dog in front of visitors. This was deemed "natural" behavior of the species.
- Visitors have an expectation that zoos care for animals and may not understand these concepts or reasoning.
- Death is an important issue to discuss with children but is it an issue to be raised at the zoo? Or should that be discussed at home?
 - Other issue...some school teachers are not comfortable teaching about death and look to zoos as experts.
- Other options to breeding: Don't breed if you can't find room for offspring at your institution or another.
 - Contraception, contraceptive implants
- Do all zoos have a euthanasia policy? Talk with your zoo leaders to find out what it is and be able to share it with visitors if asked.
- Media issues – how do you talk to the media about your zoo's euthanasia practices?
- Are animal's being bred to increase visitor attendance ultimately leading to an increase in revenue, or, for "good" science?
- Easier to "market" a baby animal than an adult.
- Our institutions should do what's best for all animals involved.