

EAZA Conservation Education Standards



Approved by EAZA Council
23 September 2016

Introduction

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) is the largest professional zoo and aquarium association in the world, with 383 members in 44 countries (September 2015) throughout Europe and the Middle East, including members in 26 of the 28 EU Member States. The EAZA community is diverse, dynamic and committed to bringing the wonder of nature to the visiting public, a public that spans young and old, all social and ethnic groups, religions, education levels and incomes. EAZA zoos and aquariums are socially inclusive and over the course of the United Nations Decade of Biodiversity (2011-2020) they will host an approximate 1.5 billion visits. Formed in 1992, EAZA's mission is to facilitate cooperation within the European zoo and aquarium community towards the goals of education, research and conservation.

Purpose

This document has been developed by the EAZA Education Committee to help guide, inform and provide a coordinated approach to the practice of conservation education in zoos and aquariums. This document is an update from the EAZA Education Standards document 2008. It is intended for use by anyone who supports conservation education in a zoo or aquarium setting and is a living document that will evolve to meet the changing needs of conservation education. This document will be reviewed by the EAZA Education Committee every four years in line with the EAZA strategic plan.

The importance of conservation education in zoos and aquariums

If conservation is to succeed, people need to be inspired to care about and understand animals and the threats they face in the wild. To do that EAZA believes, everyone should have the opportunity to experience and learn about wildlife first hand. EAZA members have an important role to play protecting nature and wildlife both at our zoos and in the wild, and communicating this role through conservation education is essential in EAZA zoos. Conservation education is not just confined to people who visit EAZA zoos and aquariums. It can take place out in the local community, in partnership with other organisations, within in situ projects and collaboratively on a global scale. EAZA member institutions support the WZACS: World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategies (WAZA, 2005 and 2015). A key focus of the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (WZACS, 2005) is education and training. It recommends that regional associations *“should provide a coordinated approach to education, both formal and informal, and provide leadership in the formulation of principles, strategies, and minimum education standards.”* WZACS 2015 also promotes that conservation education is an essential conservation task of zoos. However, with the passing of a decade, the conservation challenges have intensified. In response to this, WZACS 2015 highlights the additional importance of *“effective engagement in order to influence behaviour change for conservation”*.

Terminology

Within this standards document, the term “education” is used to mean education and learning in the broadest sense, not confined to schools or education focused on children, but to encompass learning

opportunities, experiences and activities for all ages and needs. The term ‘conservation education’ has been used to reflect that biodiversity conservation must be at the core of a programme of educational activities within an EAZA zoo or aquarium. However, EAZA acknowledges that conservation education in its broader sense can include those programmes of activities that make an indirect contribution to biodiversity conservation – such as education for sustainable development, biological, science or environmental education and practical skills based programmes.

EAZA’s membership is made up of lots of different physical sites of living collections. These include zoos, aquariums, safari parks, bird parks and wildlife centres. Within this standards document, the term “zoo” is used henceforth to mean any EAZA member institution.

Conservation Education Mission

EAZA’s mission statement on conservation education is as follows:

To mitigate the extinction of biodiversity through quality conservation education that raises awareness, connects people to nature and encourages sustainable behaviours in the millions of people that engage with EAZA zoos and aquariums annually.

Conservation Education Standards

There is no single way to fulfil either EAZA’s or an individual zoo’s conservation education mission. Conservation education includes a broad range of purposes, methods of delivery, unique resources and messages. EAZA also acknowledges the diversity of zoos within its membership, and recognises that the scale of conservation education in each EAZA zoo should be proportional to the size of its operations and in line with individual country’s cultural expectations around conservation education in zoos. A summary of the Standards is listed below, followed by each of the Standards with further explanation to help guide Members.

1. The conservation education role of the zoo must be reflected in its written mission statement.
2. The zoo must have a written conservation education plan. This plan must outline the zoo’s conservation education activities, how they apply to different types of audiences and the strategic thinking behind the plan’s design.
3. The zoo’s conservation education plan must make specific reference to how the zoo has integrated their mission and vision, as well as applicable national, regional and international policies into its conservation education programmes.
4. The zoo must have at least one member of staff with the necessary experience and qualifications that are responsible for leading and implementing the zoo’s conservation education plan.
5. The zoo must provide opportunities to learn about conservation within and outside the zoo site and online.
6. Conservation education in zoos should aim to raise awareness of biodiversity loss, connect people to nature and encourage sustainable behaviours
7. Conservation education in zoos should aspire to make conservation issues relevant to visitors’ own lives and experiences in order to inspire people to take action locally that can make a difference globally.
8. The zoo must have appropriate facilities to deliver its conservation educational programmes.
9. Conservation education must be an integral part of exhibit design.

10. In the conservation education plan, there must be specific reference to applying measurable learning outcomes to all aspects of a zoo's conservation education programmes.
11. The zoo should be able to demonstrate a range of delivery approaches in their conservation education programmes to cater for different zoo audiences and needs.
12. The zoo's conservation education messages must be based on scientific facts. Where cultural, religious or alternative ideas are represented they must be clearly indicated as such.
13. The zoo must present accurate and relevant information about the species exhibited.
14. The zoo should educate their audiences about their own conservation work by demonstrating how their zoo makes direct and indirect contributions to conservation.
15. Zoos should support staff involved in conservation education in zoos to be actively involved in local, national, regional and international conservation education networks and meetings.
16. Zoos should support staff involved in conservation education in zoos with the appropriate continuous professional development and training to be able to meet the aims of the zoo's conservation education plan.
17. The zoo must have a range of evidence to demonstrate how it is carrying out its conservation education plan.
18. The zoo must evaluate its conservation education programmes using appropriate methods.
19. The zoo should aspire to conduct a range of evidence based research to demonstrate the effects of conservation education in zoos has on people's knowledge, attitude and behaviour towards the natural world.
20. The zoo should aspire to engage in partnerships with external organisations and academic institutions to conduct social research and evaluation projects.

Organisation

1. The conservation education role of the zoo must be reflected in its written mission statement.

Explanation – EAZA understands that the words and phrases used to reflect the conservation education role in the mission statement will vary between zoos. However, zoos should be able to provide an explanation of how the conservation education role is contained within and implemented through the zoo's mission.

2. The zoo must have a written conservation education plan. This plan must outline the zoo's conservation education activities, how they apply to different types of audiences and the strategic thinking behind the plan's design.

Explanation: EAZA understands that the conservation education plan will have different formats (e.g. within a strategy, policy, plan document) depending on the individual zoo. We have used the word 'plan' meaning any strategic document that contains plans for the zoo's conservation education activities. However formatted; the plan must clearly demonstrate the zoo's key strategic areas for conservation education, an outline and justification of planned activities and programmes, and an evaluation framework for these programmes.

3. The zoo's conservation education plan must make specific reference to how the zoo has integrated their mission and vision, as well as applicable national, regional and international policies into its conservation education programmes.

Explanation: Depending on the context of the zoo, there is varying internal and external factors (e.g. national curricula, local authority policies and government legislation) that need to be reflected in the

zoo's conservation education plan. These are important factors that will shape how the plan is put together and carried out.

4. The zoo must have at least one member of staff with the necessary experience and qualifications that are responsible for leading and implementing the zoo's conservation education plan.

Explanation: The number of staff undertaking conservation education should be commensurate with the zoo's size and budget. EAZA acknowledges qualifications and experience appropriate to undertake conservation education in zoos will vary between countries and between individual zoos. However, the zoo should be able to provide evidence and justify the range of qualifications and experiences of their conservation education staff.

5. The zoo must provide opportunities to learn about conservation within and outside the zoo site and online.

Explanation: By maximising the opportunities to learn, zoos can inspire and engage a wide range of audiences through conservation education. These opportunities could take place at their zoo sites, through outreach and community engagement or through their website and social media platforms

6. Conservation education in zoos should aim to raise awareness of biodiversity loss, connect people to nature and encourage sustainable behaviours

Explanation: By having a clear purpose for conservation education, zoos can contribute to achieving global biodiversity goals such as the Aichi targets. Aichi Target 1 states that: 'By 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably'. This is a serious and ambitious target but EAZA believes that zoos can play a key role in helping the EU and national governments reach this goal. Aichi Target 1 represents both an opportunity and an important responsibility for each and every EAZA zoo.

7. Conservation education in zoos should aspire to make conservation issues relevant to visitors' own lives and experiences in order to inspire people to take action locally that can make a difference globally.

Explanation: People can take conservation action in many different ways, from donating money, volunteering time to making changes to their everyday lives (e.g. reduce, reuse, and recycle). Zoos and their conservation education programmes can provide the inspiration and support people need to start taking some of these actions.

Facilities and Infrastructure

8. The zoo must have appropriate facilities to deliver its conservation educational programmes.

Explanation: Facilities in zoos that can be used for conservation education can take many different forms. Examples include outdoor learning spaces, classrooms, labs, teaching spaces and technological support. These facilities will vary depending on the individual zoo. These need to be in good working order, comply with relevant health and safety legislation and be fit for purpose for the conservation education programmes they host.

9. Conservation education must be an integral part of exhibit design.

Explanation: It is good practice for zoo educators to be involved in collection planning, exhibit design and interpretation planning process. This allows the conservation education staff to provide their educational expertise in the creation of various aspects of the visitor experience within the zoo and its exhibits.

Programming and Content

10. In the conservation education plan, there must be specific reference to applying measurable learning outcomes to all aspects of a zoo's conservation education programmes.

Explanation: Learning outcomes are defined as anticipated or achieved results of programmes or the accomplishment of zoos objectives This can be demonstrated by a wide range of indicators (such as changes in knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and values, enjoyment, inspiration and creativity; activity, behaviour and progression). These outcomes should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound).

11. The zoo should be able to demonstrate a range of delivery approaches in their conservation education programmes to cater for different zoo audiences and needs.

Explanation:

Methods for the delivery of conservation education can come in many different forms. For example: species identification labels, interpretation panels, animal exhibits, formal sessions for school groups, permanent or temporary exhibitions, audio/visual presentations, interactive displays, information technology, zoo guidebooks and publications and zoo staff (e.g. educators, animal staff, volunteers).

Audiences: EAZA zoos have a wide range of different groups of people that make up our audience. Groups from a wide range of social, cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds visit zoos. Each zoo should therefore have a thorough understanding of the range of visitor audiences and the needs of different groups in order to be able to design, deliver and evaluate their conservation education programmes.

Resources: Each EAZA zoo has their own unique set of resources that can be used to maximise the positive effect of their conservation education programmes. For example, the very 'living' nature of a zoo's animal collections is its most engaging attribute. They provide memorable experiences, stimulate awe and wonder at the size, scale and sensory experience of being near live animals. Objects from the natural world such as feathers, bones, and animal skins enrich the content and activities of conservation education in zoos. The people working for your zoo are one of its strongest assets and provide the personal stories that bring your conservation work to life.

12. The zoo's conservation education messages must be based on scientific facts. Where cultural, religious or alternative ideas are represented they must be clearly indicated as such.

Explanation: It is essential that the messages communicated by EAZA zoos are factually correct and based on scientific knowledge. This makes sure that our visitors receive clear, consistent and evidence based messages about animals, their habitats and the natural world.

13. The zoo must present accurate and relevant information about the species exhibited.

Explanation: On species signage, this should include as a minimum, the species name (both scientific and common), its natural habitat and some of its biological characteristics and details of its conservation status. It is best practice to use the IUCN red list status and your country's national species status databases (e.g. Swedish Species Information Centre) as a universal conservation status. If the species is involved in an EEP or ESB then the sign should include this information and the appropriate logo.

14. The zoo should educate their audiences about their own conservation work by demonstrating how their zoo makes direct and indirect contributions to conservation.

Explanation: Using the definition for EAZA conservation contribution - an EAZA contribution to conservation may be a donation of time, expertise, monies, materials and/or in-kind support from an

EAZA member institution that is aiming to secure long-term populations of species in natural ecosystems and habitats.

Professional Development

15. Zoos should support staff involved in conservation education in zoos to be actively involved in local, national, regional and international conservation education networks and meetings.
16. Zoos should support staff involved in conservation education in zoos with the appropriate continuous professional development and training to be able to meet the aims of the zoo's conservation education plan.

Explanation: Zoo education is one of the most important professions in EAZA zoos. Conservation education staff should be supported in developing and maintaining the necessary skills to create, deliver and evaluate high quality conservation education programmes. This support should involve continued professional development of effective communication skills and knowledge and understanding of the various disciplines connected to biodiversity conservation. Professional development may involve participating in a course, training sessions or workshops, such as the EAZA Academy. It could involve attending local, national or regional conferences such as EZE (European Zoo Educators) Conference. Zoos should also support self-guided learning by providing time and access to appropriate materials (e.g. books, peer-reviewed journals, internet access).

Evaluation

17. The zoo must have a range of evidence to demonstrate how it is carrying out its conservation education plan.

Explanation: Collating meaningful evidence (e.g. curricula documents, lesson plans, examples and photographs of activities, database of resources) of how a zoo carries out its education plan is important to show both internal colleagues and external bodies (such as the EAZA accreditation screening committee) how the conservation education team develop, delivers and evaluates its programmes.

18. The zoo must evaluate its conservation education programmes using appropriate methods.

Explanation: There are many ways to use evaluation in zoos to measure the effectiveness of the conservation education outcomes detailed in the zoo's conservation education plan. There are many appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods that can be used depending on what the zoo is trying to evaluate.

19. The zoo should aspire to conduct a range of evidence based research to demonstrate the effects of conservation education in zoos has on people's knowledge, attitude and behaviour towards the natural world.

Explanation: It is important for zoos to aspire to provide a wide range of evidence of the short, medium and longer term contributions conservation education in zoos can make changes in people's knowledge and understanding, skills, attitudes and values, enjoyment, inspiration and creativity; activity, behaviour and progression towards the natural world.

20. The zoo should aspire to engage in partnerships with external organisations and academic institutions to conduct social research and evaluation projects.

Explanation: Making long term connections with other organisations and academic partners is a great way to support the undertaking of social research and evaluation in zoos. Academic institutions can provide specialist knowledge, skills and research students who could support and undertake some of the evaluation and research projects the zoos require.