# 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→ 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

| | Extent of up-close encounter | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dependent variable | 1 = not at all | 2–6 = somewhat | 7 = very much | ANOVA test results |
| Positive affect | 4.21 | 5.44 | 6.09 | $F(2, 261) = 33.59, p < .001$ |
| Meaning-making | 4.26 | 5.07 | 5.84 | $F(2, 296) = 11.20, p < .001$ |

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.

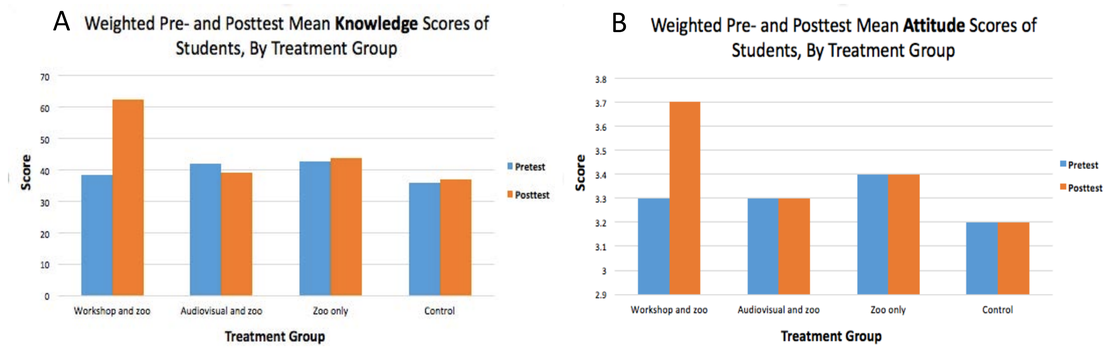


**Figure 1.** Graphs A and B were created from the results of a study conducted by White, T.G. and S.K. Jacobson on the effectiveness of conservation education programs at a South American Zoo. Overall there is an increasing trend from pretest to posttest knowledge and attitude for each of the treatment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

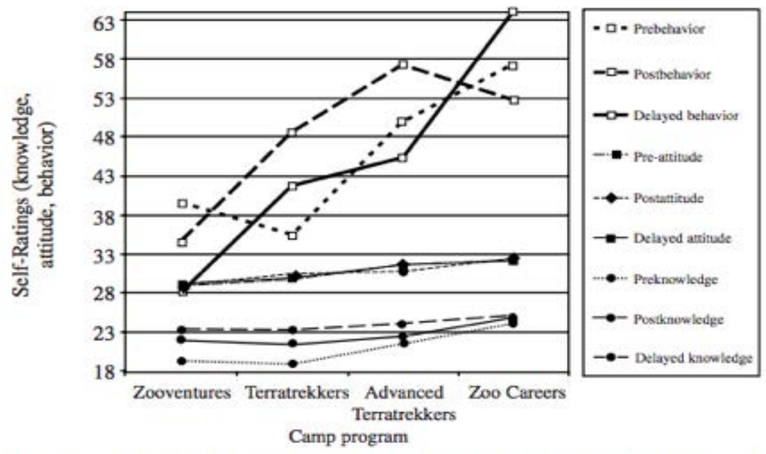


**Figure 2.** The mean self-ratings for knowledge, attitude, and behavior for all camp programs within a study conducted by Kruse, C.K. and J.A. Card. The camp programs Zooventures, Terratrekkers, Advanced Terratrekkers, and Zoo Careers have increasing animal interaction components, respectively.

## 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:


- Kruse, C.K. and J.A. Card. 2004. Effects of a Conservation Education Camp Program on Campers' Self-Reported Knowledge, Attitude, and Behavior. The Journal of Environmental Education. Volume 35(4): 33-45.
- Luebke, J.F. et al. 2016. Zoo Visitors' Affective Responses to Observing Behaviors. Visitor Studies. Volume 19(1): 60-76.
- White, T.G. and S.K. Jacobson. 1994. Evaluating Conservation Education Programs at a South American Zoo. The Journal of Environmental Education. Volume 25(4): 18-22.