



**Wildlife
Conservation
Society**

Beyond Dollars & Animal Facts:

Methods for Studying a Range of Mission-Based Visitor Outcomes from Ambassador Animal Experiences

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Why Do Ambassador Animal Experiences?

- Educating the public
- Encouraging curiosity
- Fostering connections with animals
- Inspiring conservation actions
- Increasing transparency around animal care
- Generating revenue

What Questions Can We Ask?

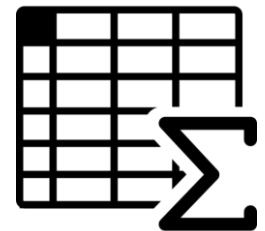
- Educating the public → what do they learn?
- Encouraging curiosity → what do they ask about?
- Fostering connections with animals → deeper connections or appreciation?
- Inspiring conservation actions → what intentions or actions do people take?
- Increasing transparency around animal care → what do they learn?
- Generating revenue → how much earned revenue?

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- **Increasing transparency around animal care → what do they learn?**
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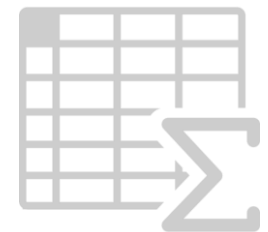
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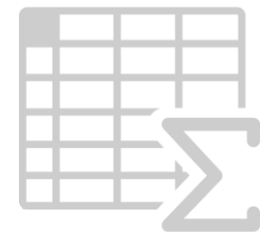
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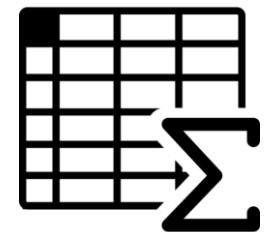
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- **Inspiring conservation actions**
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Our Focus

- Educating the public
- Encouraging curiosity
- Fostering connections with animals
- Inspiring conservation actions
- Increasing transparency around animal care
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Our Questions

Do our animal encounter programs . . .

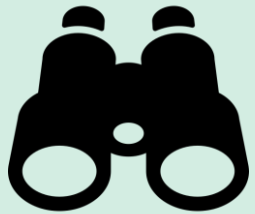
- Encourage curiosity?
- Foster connections with wildlife?
- Inspire conservation action?

Our Research Methods

Do our animal encounter programs . . .

- Encourage curiosity?
- Foster connections with wildlife?
- Inspire conservation action?

Observations ($N = 20$)



Single-Family Interviews ($N = 16$)



Our Program Characteristics

	'Wild Encounters'	Family Programs
Some tactile	✓	✓
Classroom	✓	✓
Self-selecting	✓	✓
Paid Program	✓	✓
Encounter Time	40-70%	20-40%
Runs during . . .	Regular hours	Off hours
Animal	Typically known	Surprise

Observed Animal Ambassadors

'Wild Encounters'	Both	Family Programs
American Alligator	Armadillo	Ball Python
Emu	Fennec Fox	Whistling Duck
Penguin	Two-toed Sloth	Dab Lizard
		Eastern Box Turtle
		Eastern Screech Owl
		White-Throated Monitor



Preliminary Findings

Educating the Public

I learned that the armadillo lives in the Brazil grasslands.

I didn't know [the armadillo] was an insectivore and eats bugs, it's cool that they walk on their toes.



Transparency Around Animal Care

Does he like how you're holding him?

What does he eat?

Where was he born?



Animal Lovers

[Child] looves penguins. Since he was little. He has penguins everywhere . . . And every project he does at school, is on penguins.

Well, I've got a thing about sloths . . . So the first time [I saw a sloth] I sat for three hours outside the sloth enclosure waiting for it to move.



Julie Larsen Maher © WCS

Our Research Questions

Do our animal encounter programs . . .

- Encourage curiosity?
- Foster connections with wildlife?
- Inspire conservation action?

Encouraging Curiosity

How heavy is he?

Where is he on the intelligence scale?

Why is he a little bit pointy?

How many kilometers or inches is he?



Julie Larsen Maher © WCS

Fostering Connections with Animals

I made a friend.

They walk like I do!

[Meeting the penguins] wasn't just good; it was amazing! Penguins are . . . like a whole other level of just being a bird!



Julie Larsen Maher © WCS

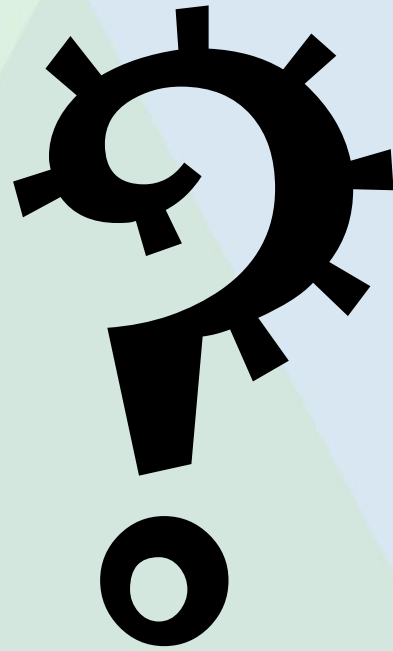
Inspiring Conservation Action

I make regular donations to one of the cheetah foundations . . . You [to spouse] want to compost . . . And you [to child] know the difference between the garbage and recycling.

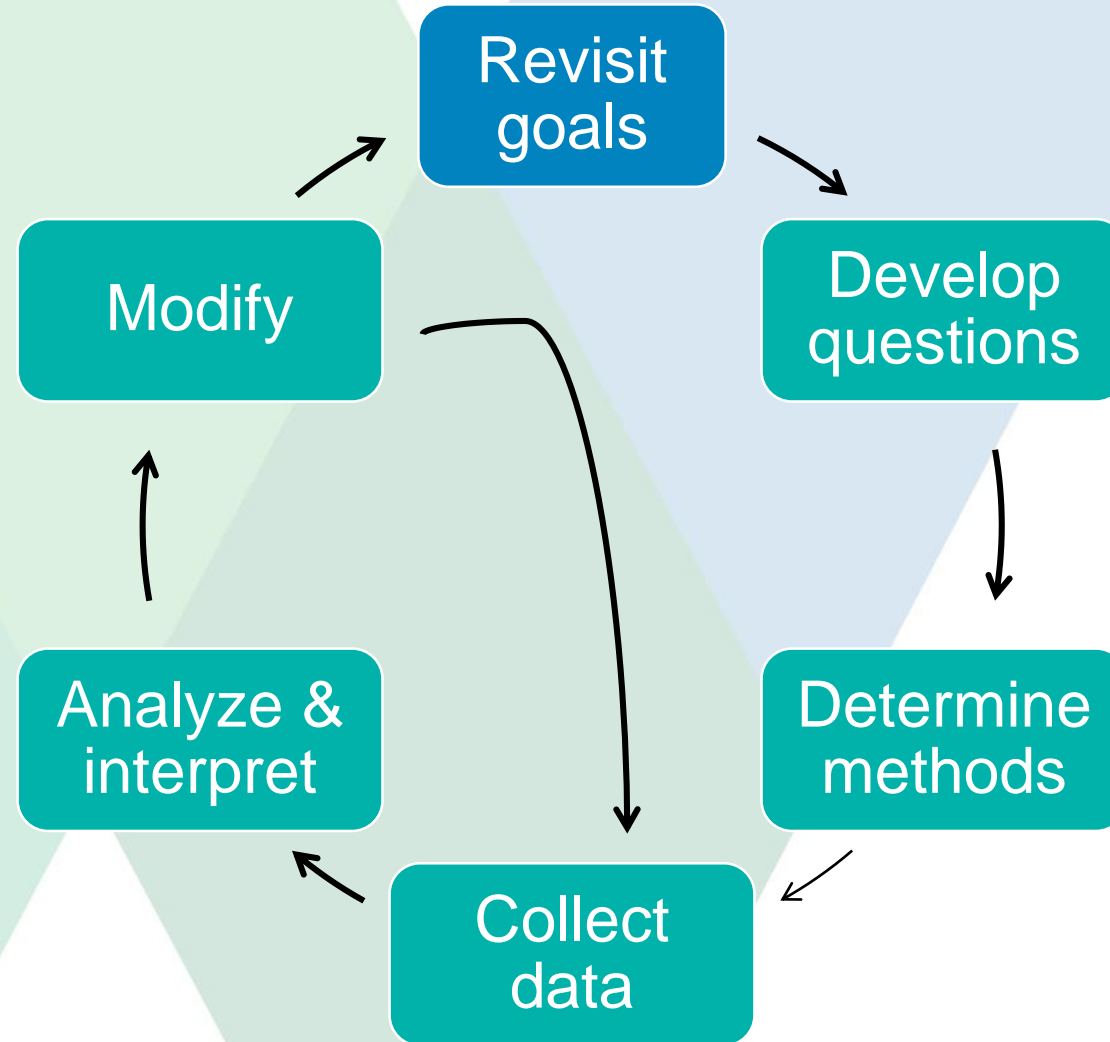


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What Does this Mean for WCS?



What Does this Mean for You?



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WCS Ambassador Animals
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WCS Bronx Zoo Education Team

experiment.com

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We Stand for Wildlife™

