Beyond Dollars & Animal Facts:
Methods for Studying a Range of Mission-Based Visitor Outcomes from Ambassador Animal Experiences

Shelley “Shuli” Rank
Wildlife Conservation Society
Bronx Zoo
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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Our Focus

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘Wild Encounters’</th>
<th>Family Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some tactile</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-selecting</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid Program</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounter Time</td>
<td>40-70%</td>
<td>20-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runs during . . .</td>
<td>Regular hours</td>
<td>Off hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>Typically known</td>
<td>Surprise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Observed Animal Ambassadors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Wild Encounters’</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Family Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Alligator</td>
<td>Armadillo</td>
<td>Ball Python</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emu</td>
<td>Fennec Fox</td>
<td>Whistling Duck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penguin</td>
<td>Two-toed Sloth</td>
<td>Dab Lizard</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Box Turtle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Screech Owl</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White-Throated Monitor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Findings
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?
[Child] loooves 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.
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?
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!
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.
What Does this Mean for WCS?
What Does this Mean for You?

- Revisit goals
- Develop questions
- Determine methods
- Collect data
- Analyze & interpret
- Modify
Acknowledgements

WCS Ambassador Animals
WCS Wild Encounters Team
WCS Bronx Zoo Education Team

experiment.com
AZA Challenge Grant
Sponsored by Zoo Biology and AZA
and all our generous supporters
We Stand for Wildlife™