

## Fourth Asian Zoo Educators AZEC Conference, Fukuoka, Japan Rengasamy Marimuthu

The Asian Zoo Educators Conference AZEC was born out of the successful conferences of the International Zoo Educators Association IZE. The Asian Zoo Educators gather every two years at a different zoo to share and discuss the recent zoo education developments in Asian Region.

The first conference was held at Singapore in 2007, followed by Hong Kong and Taipei. The fourth AZEC conference was held at Marine World Umino Nakamichi in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan on December 9 – 13, 2013. The theme was "Educational Cooperation between Museums for Humanities and Sciences - A message of generating new life through new linkages". Earlier AZEC conferences focused on zoo and aquarium communities but recent 4th conference was held in cooperation with museums. Asian Museums are dedicated to the humanities (art galleries, history museums, folklore museums, archaeological museums, etc.) from all over Asia. More than 200 participants attended the conference, primarily from Japan and other Asian Countries.



**Keynote address by Dr. Yuji Kurihara, Director of Administration, Tokyo National Museum**

Also the 54th Conference of the Japanese Zoo and Aquarium Educator Association JZAE was conducted. It is a little known fact that the JZAE was the first zoo educator association in the world.

This writer attended as a sponsored delegate and presented a paper on "Zoo Outreach Organization (ZOO) promotes

Conservation Education in South Asia" with a focus on International Vulture Awareness Day promoted in South Asia. Education kits provided by ZOO were given all participants.

Registration and Icebreaker was held 9 December evening followed on 10 December with the opening, featuring Dr. Toshihiko Aramaki, Director General of Kyushu Historical Museum. He inaugurated the opening ceremony and he commented on the Japanese word "kizuna" which means bonds of people connecting, helping and supporting each other. Dr. Koji Takada, Director General of Marine World, Umono-nakamichi and host of the conference also spoke.

In total there were 2 keynote addresses, 25 oral presentations, 32 poster presentations and 4 workshops were held. The oral presentations were mostly about cooperative programmes between museums, zoos and aquariums. Dr. Yuji Kurihara, Director of Administration, Tokyo National



**Dolphin show at Marine World Umino-nakamichi**

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**Dr. Koji Takada briefing about Marine World**

background of arts, science, early childhood education, and informal learning to provide daily programmes to children and families. Participants liked the keynote speeches and learned about the Japanese legislation covering museums and the status of zoos making them a social education centre and Family play zoo. These facilities engage children in wildlife conservation through various fun filled active learning activities.

There were 6 sessions of participant presentations covering themes of museum cooperation, telling a message, cooperation for protecting wildlife, education programmes for protecting wildlife and educational cooperation.

Museum gave a keynote speech on "Zoo and Aquarium as the Museum ... their educational significance". He talked about the history of Japanese legislation on museum and zoos and aquariums which are positioned as social education facilities under legislation and educational significance of these institutions.

Mr. Dave Becker of Brookfield Zoo, USA delivered a keynote address entitled "Children, Families, and Nature in the 21 century: A multidisciplinary Approach. In his speech, he said that as children increasingly are raised in urbanizing environments, the zoo, aquarium and museum community



**Workshop session**

has an increasingly important role in the nature experiences of childhood. The Chicago Zoological Society opened the Hamill Family Play Zoo that includes a variety of indoor and outdoor settings in which young children can garden, play in the forests, build forts, make mud pies, look for insects, meet animal up-close, pretend to be animal and help care for animals in ways that are meaningful and relevant. Also they assembled a multidisciplinary team of educators with the

Twenty-five oral presentations were held on 10 & 11 December.

Below are presentations the author liked and learned about collaboration, networking, story telling, using modern technologies, and special programmes for children affected by earthquakes and other traumas, involving students in wildlife conservation and visually impaired children.



**ZOO education kits displayed**

**Collaborative Educational Programs between the Fukuoka Art Museums and the Fukuoka City Zoological Gardens by: Sayaka Jimbo, Fukuoka Art Museum.**

As a collaborative project two programmes were developed. 1. Zoo at the Museum: A gallery-based exhibition at the Fukoka Art Museum, collection includes a stuffed elephant and horned owl from the zoo collection. 2. Animal Art Tour: held at the zoo in summer and in museum in autumn. Both zoo and museum staff sharing unique perspectives on various animals with the audiences.

**Encouraging and Expanding Knowledge of Humanities and Science Museums through Communication between the Public and Curators.**

Mika Matsuo, National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo  
An online database system, which is launched in 2013 -The museum, zoo or aquarium curators, input the data of their education programs in to their respective database. The data is shared between the respective curators and the visitors of the institutions.

**Collaborative Learning Through Technology (Phone App)**

May Lok, Wildlife Reserves, Singapore  
WRS Singapore used technology to engage students in conservation education. An iPhone application "Education@Zoo" was developed in collaboration with Fajar Secondary School and Nanyang Polytechnic and funded by Ministry of Education.

**How to maximize resources-a case study on deploying educators at appropriate locations with the "Active Messaging Unit" concept.**

Kit Man Tsang Francis, Ocean Park Corporation.  
Personal narration and presentation were found to be the most effective ways in message delivery. Ocean Park used the concept of assessing the Active Message Unit (AMU) and deploys narrators at appropriate locations to match visitor flows. The AMU helped them to quantify narration efforts, review existing strategies and make plans for staff deployment, training and recruitment.

**Partnerships for a Healthy Future for Wildlife and Humans.**

Bo Xiang, Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, China.  
This presentation is about poaching of wildlife for trade. The Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding Centre is designing an educational exhibit and training programme for zoo educators to help stop wildlife trade. Also considering a conservation

education-training program for pre service teaching students at Sichuan Normal University in order to train them to be professional conservation educators.

**Eliminating bear bile farming and the role of animal welfare education in Chinese Society.** Yanyu Li, Animals Asia Foundation, China  
This presentation is about Asiatic black bear bile farming in China. Moral decline has become a big concern in Chinese society much of which started from ignorance regarding other lives, such as torturing small animals. So we are developing a humane education program contributing to building a better society and better future.

**From adventures to educators-collaborating with local organizations to equip Generation Y Students to become educators through experiences and training.**

Hui Yan Chan, Winnie, Ocean Park, Hong Kong.  
The Ocean Park sponsored new generation Y students from local secondary school to participate in adventure tours to the arctic and rainforests of Borneo and trained them as volunteers to share their experiences and promote conservation messages of the new exhibit "Polar Adventure and Rainforests".

**Five steps to Establishing an Engaging Student Wildlife Conservation Program-Learn, Rear and Release animals.** Carl Leong, Ocean Park, Hong Kong.

This is about the "The Juvenile Horseshoe Crab Rearing Program" which has involved over a thousand of university students bred them in lab, rearing and releasing a local endangered horseshoe crab species. The program has demonstrated how educators and conservationists help interpret scientific knowledge and work together to create a favourable and unique experience for students and engage them wildlife conservation work.

**How can media called "KAMISHIBAI" be utilized in zoo education?**

Hideto Okuyama, Asahiyama Zoological Park  
Kamishibai is picture story show and unique cultural environment in Japan, in which a performer tells a story to an audience with sequence of paintings in wooden frame. It was first appeared in 1930. We used this activity in our in two programmes. A simple programme with picture story telling and a workshop, which included activity of animal observation. We used our zoo penguins in this programme. It was

found that participants tend to observe the penguins in more detail and for a longer period of time.

**The "Cyborg" workshop-Attempt to get a sense of achievement**

Hiromi Ochiai, National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, Miraikan.  
National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, Miraikan enlightening students of 12 years up in science education. We initiated a project KODOMO HIKARI project with the aim of motivate, explore and communicate. In 2011, we conducted Cyborg workshop for the Tohoku Children affected by earthquake. The aim of the cyborg is using your electricity signal generated by your muscle operate the robot with a team and bring back smiles to children's faces through this project.

**Touch Museum: Education programs for visually impaired children in Thailand by the Bangkok National Museum.**

Disapong Netlomwong, The National Gallery, Thailand  
Touch Museum: This is about education programme for blinds. Teaching by touching with the association of Thailand Association of the Blind and National Museum of volunteers. It aims to provide opportunities for visually impaired children to learn the arts and culture of Thailand through touch. The first programme was touching the "Buddha images". The project has proven success.

On 12 December the delegates visited Marine World, Umino-nakamichi, Umino-nakamichi Seaside Park and Animal Forest and Shikanoshima Island Historical Society to learn about marine life, captive animals and culture of the Island respectively. On 13 December, we visited the Itozu No Mori Zoological Park which exhibits rare species such as Red Panda, Amur tiger, Great Indian Hornbill etc., and Kitakyushu Museum of Natural History & Human History, the Natural History Zone with 4,500 items, such as fossils and other specimens, and a History Zone with 1,500 items, such as earth ware and ancient texts. Both of them are very wonderful facilities. In the evening the closing session and ceremony and farewell dinner was held. The Seoul Zoo, South Korea will be the next host of AZEC conference.

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