

Changing Hearts, Minds and Ultimately Behaviours: Report of the IZE Conference 2012

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The 21st Biennial, International Zoo Educators Conference was hosted by Chester Zoo at Chester, UK. The conference with the theme 'Changing hearts, minds and ultimately behaviour' inspired many interesting and stimulating presentations. The five-day programme was attended by about 165 delegates around the world on 28 August – 1 September 2012. The author was one of the ten recipients chosen for the IZE Grants to attend this conference.

Dr. Mark Pilgrim, Director General of Chester Zoo and Gerald Dick, Executive Director of WAZA inaugurated the event. The conference had presentations, workshops, poster symposium, panel discussions and zoo visit. During the conference days 3 keynote address, 29 full papers, 36 case studies, 17 posters, 8 workshops, and a zoo visit were organised.

Keynotes: Prof. Geoffrey Beattie, School of Psychological Sciences at the University of Manchester gave the keynote address 'Analysing hearts and minds: Why we don't do what we say'. He is the author of a recent book 'Get the Edge: How simple changes will transform your life'. Mr. Ken Livingstone, elected Mayor of London in 2000 and 2004 gave a key note address on 'Will we be there in 2012?'. The last keynote address of the conference was by Dr. Liam Smith, Director of *BehaviourWorks*, Australia. He delivered a note on a topic entitled 'What has 10 years of research in Zoo visitor behaviour research taught us?'

Sessions: The presentations during the sessions covered many interesting topics, e.g., effectiveness in message delivery, animal talks, zoo talks, creating connections, science of changing behaviour, towards actions, picking science, community engagement, visitor's conservation attitude, listen and influence, awareness to action, drama in education, climate change challenge, internship programmes, species conservation, field based conservation education, sensitizing local people, education planning and measuring, research and education, building environmental stewardship, living in harmony, education or money!,

education in zoos, measuring attitudinal and behavioural change and phobia courses.

Case studies: There were about 36 case studies and all received much attention. Some of the topics covered in case studies were: zoo walkways, dragon puzzle game, designing and using zoo curricula, studies on visitor experiences, public talks, fish scale project, acting locally, building behaviour change, handprint zoo, teen volunteer programmes, hand-feeding, global evaluation of biodiversity, corporate and conservation, subliminal education, behaviour: Animal to human, community education, changing public attitudes, youth declaration project, reaching visitors, sustainable agriculture, pedagogical-didactic strategies, climate change, visitor perceptions, species crisis, from local to global, getting conservationists, community and conservation, children and conservation, bat education, training of environmental leaders, complex way to complex change, connect wildlife using iPads, conservation biology education and introducing social and emotional aspects.

Posters: Some of the interesting topics covered during poster sessions are: increasing youth and community participation, tiger education tools, activities on year of the bat, Mowgli project, impact of presenters talk, learning from your audience, factors



B.A. Daniel delivering a talk during the conference. Photo by Hiro.

affecting learners participation, developing young people for life, youth declaration project, species awareness campaigns, education through connection, tackling behaviour change, crafty conservation, species profile and introducing social and emotional aspects of learning into education.

Workshops: A total of eight workshops were conducted. The topics include, measuring zoos impact on behaviour change, evaluation and feedback techniques for EE environment education, help visitors to get involved in Climate change, Education programme design and evaluation, innovation in zoo and aquarium

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Asian participants during IZE 2012 Conference at Chester Zoo. Photo by IZE



Biennial IZE conference delegates. Photo by IZE

education and conservation, evaluating environmental programmes and exhibits, zoo walkways and know your target audience.

Zoo visit: The most anticipated component of the conference is the visit to Chester Zoo. One afternoon was devoted for zoo visit and Chester Zoo education team members had planned a variety of education programmes for the delegates.

On the third day the author coauthored by Sally Walker gave a presentation on a topic entitled 'Stop 'Bears on the Road': Changing public attitudes for survival of Sloth Bear'. Indian Sloth Bears have suffered terrible torment as

"dancing bears" owned by the *Kalandar* community which depended on this cruel entertainment for their livelihood. For centuries, many bear cubs were captured from the forest at the same time their parents were summarily killed to facilitate the capture, which has led to an enormous decline over time. SOS Wildlife pioneered a successful means of working with the *Kalandars*, other NGO's and the Indian Forest Department, which reduced the captures and killings exponentially. Nevertheless, people living in areas where this has taken place still need to learn what a cruel practice it is so they can refrain from participating and report instances they see. Zoo Outreach Organisation with the support

of *Alertis* Fund for Bear and Nature conservation, developed a Sloth bear teaching programme to train educators in areas where the remaining dancing bear racket exists. ZOO developed a teaching manual to train educators in 'active learning' and other techniques to make their teaching more effective. Some of these educator training programmes, organized at select zoos and bear rescue centers in central and South India was discussed, along with the impact towards sloth bear conservation.

On the last day a business meeting was conducted. Kathy Lehnhardt, IZE President gave a detailed report. India was selected as the venue for the 22nd Biennial conference and the IZE South Asian representative Meena Nareshwar gave a presentation highlighting cultural aspects of Gujarat. Rachel Lowry, the President elect welcomed all delegates for the India conference in 2014.

Thanks to the IZE board members and all the sponsors of the conference for the award of the IZE Grants 2012 for me to attend the conference.



Adam Fryda, Education Officer, Chester zoo during classroom session on adaptation and classification

