



Apr 9th, 2:35 PM - 3:35 PM

## Evaluating the Effectiveness of Conservation Education Incorporated in an Animal Exhibit at the Indianapolis Zoo

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Snyder, Vanessa and Harper, Faculty Advisor, Given, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of Conservation Education Incorporated in an Animal Exhibit at the Indianapolis Zoo" (2011). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 21.  
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Poster Presentation P46

**EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSERVATION EDUCATION  
INCORPORATED IN AN ANIMAL EXHIBIT AT THE INDIANAPOLIS ZOO**

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Few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of educational methods at non-traditional, public learning institutions such as zoos. From May-August 2010, observational and survey data were collected about the effectiveness of conveying conservation information at the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) exhibit at the Indianapolis Zoo. On average, 48.1% of responses to each cheetah survey question were incorrect. In the surveys, a significantly greater proportion of children < 18 years-old (82/138; 59%) answered at least one of three questions correctly from signs compared to adults (268/612; 44%;  $\chi^2 = 11.052$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). The zoo had previously mailed or e-mailed members the same information about cheetahs which was contained in the signs, yet there was no significant difference in the proportion of adult zoo members who answered at least one of three questions correctly (176/347; 51%) compared to adult non-members (208/403; 52%;  $\chi^2 = 0.059$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p=0.807$ ). Observation of patrons uninvolved with the cheetah survey indicated only 4% (2/52) of visitor groups viewed cheetah exhibit signs. Results suggest exhibit signs could be effective educational tools, especially for children, if zoos are able to determine which methods (e.g. utilizing technology as a lure) successfully entice patrons into reading the signs. Future research should determine which combination of educational tools/programs most effectively embeds the desired information into patrons' long-term memory.