

Wildlife Tourism Webinars

DAY 1: Wildlife Interpretation, Tourism & Conservation,
Human-wildlife Interaction

June 2020

Organised and conducted by

Wildlife Tourism Australia inc.



*Promoting the sustainable development of a diverse
wildlife tourism industry that supports conservation*

<http://www.wildlifetourism.org.au>

Three Wildlife Tourism Webinars

Monday 22nd June
Tuesday 23 June
Thursday 25 June



Free, but you need to register

www.wildlifetourism.org.au

*Wildlife Tourism Australia: promoting the sustainable development
of a diverse wildlife industry that supports conservation.*

Wildlife Tourism Webinars



June 2020

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Promoting the sustainable development of a diverse wildlife tourism industry that supports conservation

Introduction

This was to have been the year of our first conference for the 20's, starting the decade on an optimistic note with the theme of enhancing the benefits of wildlife tourism for wildlife and people. Then the coronavirus struck, but instead of cancelling altogether we decided to go with a series of webinars this year and planning our conference at Griffith University (Brisbane) for June 2021.

We sent a survey to all those we thought may be interested, arrived at the most suitable time-slots for everyone (a little tricky as they were spread across the world), and noted which of the potential topics our responders expressed interest in

Topics thus covered in the webinars were:

- Wildlife interpretation
- Tourism and conservation
- Sustainable wildlife tourism in Asia
- Effects of coronavirus
- Should Wildlife Tourism Australia become Wildlife Tourism Australasia?
- Bird-feeding
- Marketing wildlife tourism

Chairs:

- Dr Ronda Green (chair, WTA)
- Dr Aise Kim (secretary WTA, and organiser of the Zoom meetings through Uni of South Australia),
- Ms Maree Kerr (vice-chair, WTA)
- Dr Leah Burns (committee member of WTA and co-organiser of conference to be held Griffith University June 2021)

*It has taken an extraordinarily long time to put this report together from a combination of audio recording, Zoom chat and the ppt's we still had available. **If you notice any important errors please let us know***

THEME: Wildlife interpretation

Quality education that leads to enhanced understanding and appreciation of wildlife, their ecology, behaviour and conservation needs, is an essential component of good wildlife tourism.

Instead of trying to develop a “One Size Fits All” program, interpretation needs to be flexible to cater for different age levels, languages, levels of expertise and interest etc. As Gilbert K. Chesterton once said “There is a great deal of difference between an eager man who wants to read a book and the tired man who wants a book to read.” There is also a difference between eager travelers who seek to learn as much as possible and tired or frazzled people just seeking an escape but perhaps still receptive to a learning experience or two if it is entertaining. The tour operator needs to be sensitive to different needs.

WTA has conducted two workshops on interpretation

- *Workshop: Enjoyable, Memorable and Meaningful: Using Wildlife Tourism to Do it All (<https://www.wildlifetourism.org.au/blog/events/wildlife-interpretation-workshop-queensland-september-2016/report-on-interpretation-workshop-at-binna-burra-september-2016/>)*
- *Wildlife Interpretation: into the Future (<https://www.wildlifetourism.org.au/wildlife-interpretation-into-the-future/>)*

Also see links to other discussions on <https://www.wildlifetourism.org.au/discussions/tour-guiding-and-wildlife-interpretation>

Although it was quite a small component of this year's webinars it will be a major component of next year's (2021) conference, including a field trip showcasing some good-practice examples.

Wildlife interpretation experiences

Noel Scott, PhD., M. Bus.(Mar.),MBA., BSc. (Hons.), Professor of Tourism Management, Sustainability Research Centre, University of the Sunshine Coast, Series Editor: Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice.

Noel has led many sustainable tourism courses through Griffith Institute For Tourism, and in parts of Asia.

Wildlife experiences are often seen as requiring interpretation: an educational component of a tour, presenting accurate information in a way that enhances an understanding and appreciation of the animals and their ecosystems. This is a cognitive approach to designing wildlife experiences – emphasising learning and information. An additional means of creating value for visitors having a wildlife experience is to provide engaging and emotional experiences. Such an approach reinforces learning and provides more memorable outcomes for visitors.

My emphasis is not on what we give to the tourist but what the tourist actually receives. If giving facts and figures but not provoking the emotions we are not giving what they want or creating lasting memories.

Why do people want a wildlife experience?

- 1.For your excitement when you see a new species of bird.
- 2.For the enjoyment of seeing the delight in a young child's eyes when they 'meet' a kangaroo for the first time.
- 3.Because of the peace and calmness that comes from being in nature.

Underlined words above are emotions

“Dream Holiday” “A slice of the perfect life” “Fantasy” “Memorable experiences”



Can we design wildlife experiences better? We have a number of techniques we can glean from psychological research. Different wildlife tourists have different reasons for being there.

Need to consider

1. Pre-visit – prospection and imagery processing
2. Experience – goals, emotion, novelty and surprise, attention, co-creation, stories
3. Post-visit – retrospection and reminders.

Can you:

1. Create a story for your customer before they arrive? Especially stories the visitor can see themselves in
2. Understand the visitor goal?
3. Engage your visitor rather than telling them about a species? Rahula Perera of Aarunya Vacations in Sri Lanka for instance has spoken of how he engages visitors.
4. Post-visit – how do you remind them of their emotional experience?

Using narratives to engage potential travelers in wildlife tourism

Sarah Pye, University of the Sunshine Coast

Sarah Pye's doctorate focused on using narratives to engage non-specialist audiences in species conservation. Her creative artefact, *Saving Sun Bears*, tells the story of Malaysian founder and director of the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre, Dr Wong Siew Te, and the Malayan sun bears he has vowed to protect. In this short presentation,

Sarah explored the importance of narratives to engage wildlife tourists in conservation. She has recently published the book "[Saving Sun Bears: One Man's Quest to Save a Species](#)". See also a recent article on Dr Wong Siew Te and the sun bears by Sarah Pye on the WTA blog <https://www.wildlifetourism.org.au/saving-sun-bears/>

Sun bears, the smallest of the world's eight bear species. They face extinction – because of poachers for Chinese medicine, habitat loss and climate change impacts.



Debbie and Dr Wong

Dr Wong Siew Te spent 6 years in the Bornean forests studying sun bears before creating the only sun bear conservation centre in the world and one of the biggest draw-cards for Sabah tourism: the Borneo Sun Bear Conservation Centre which welcomed 78,000 visitors last year. The Centre houses 44 bears including orphaned cubs. It gives them opportunity to learn "bear skills" to get them ready for release into the wild.

We've all experienced disappointing wildlife interpretation – wrong information, pictures with baby animals, too many words, and missed opportunity for really connecting.



★★★★★

"Wong is an incredibly committed and charismatic man, and I highly recommend this inspirational story about his life and important work."

- Dame Judi Dench

Available on amazon

spye@usc.edu.au WWW.SAVINGSUNBEARS.COM

Narratives are a good way to connect with audiences. Colourful signs at BSBCC tell stories about sun bears in three languages. They were designed by USC students. However, the message is often lost once the visitor leaves the Centre.

My recently published book “Saving Sun Bears” savingsunbears.com is a narrative about Dr Wong Siew Te, which aims to enlighten non-specialist readers in conservation. Such narratives are accessible to people who buy the book even after they leave. They are also accessible to armchair travelers who never visit the Centre, and offer an algorithm for young conservationists considering a career in wildlife conservation.

Discussion

Ingrid Albion Fantastic, Sarah

Ingrid Suter Congratulations on your publication!

Barry Davies I'd like to endorse your view of Dr Wong Siew Te, who I've met a couple of times – a very inspiring person

Ronda Green How safe are the areas the sun bears are released into?

Sarah There is still danger of being killed by other bears or poachers, but they are fairly remote and safest areas possible. [Sarah did mention a couple of places, but in the interests of anti-poaching we're not publishing those]

Madura Can you write a book for the Asian countries to learn how this was done successfully?

Sarah

Thomas Jones Thanks for a nice talk Sarah, just wondering if you have come across the Bear Rescue Centre in Vietnam? <https://freethebears.org/pages/vietnam-sanctuaries>. They have a number of moon & sun bears...Cat Tien National Park

Sarah Yes. A bit different – not st in natural settings, as in other bear centres in Asia.

Noreen. Any comments on the newest interpretive signs at the Centre?

Sarah As part of USC students projects? They've created 52 new signs, using tenets of what they've learned about interpretive tourism, and have a number of guides interpreting behaviour on the spot for visitors.

Theme: Tourism & conservation

Wildlife tourism can confer both positive effects (donations, habitat restoration, conservation breeding, education etc.) and negative effects. (direct injury or death of wildlife, disturbance of feeding, breeding or resting activities, habitat disturbance etc.).

WTA's aim is always to minimize the negative effects and enhance the positive. Problems and their solutions can be complex, and there is much to discuss.

Next year's conference (June 2021) will have a particular focus on how we can put some of the ideas into practice to truly increase the benefits of wildlife tourism for wildlife (conservation, welfare, and increased public appreciation and understanding, conservation-oriented research) and people (satisfying experiences for visitors, economic and other benefits for operators and local communities, enhanced opportunities for researchers).

Also see:

[Tourism and Protected Areas \(IUCN\)](#)

[Tourism, research and conservation \(WTA\)](#)

Incentivizing Conservation Outcomes Through Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism

Marissa Altmann, Assistant to the Executive Director Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network, a nonprofit organisation and certification body. Marissa works to develop integrated strategies for the sustainable use of biodiversity, including Certified Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism and species-specific tourism programs such as Certified Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism and Certified Gorilla Friendly™ Tourism and Park Edge Products, a partnership with the International Gorilla Conservation Programme. She serves on the IUCN Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group and Biodiversity Working Group, and her writing on tourism and conservation has been published in multiple reports and book chapters. In this presentation, Marissa provides a summary of her Master's research findings on the effects of wildlife-based tourism on conservation, as well as an overview of the Wildlife Friendly™ approach and its contributions to species and biodiversity conservation.

Certified Wildlife Friendly™ is a certification for a number of products (fibres, elephant-friendly tea, etc., including tourism).

Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism is defined as “Tourism that maximizes opportunities for travelers, communities, and businesses to not only engage as partners but to advance the on-the-ground conservation of Key Species while minimizing negative impacts on wildlife.”

“Envision a world where wildlife & businesses not only coexist but thrive ... where every certified product bridges the domestic & the wild, empowering consumers, communities & companies to be catalysts for change & conservation heroes”

People * Planet * Profit

Wildlife conservation, economic well-being, & accountability.

History

- Founded in 2007.
- Enterprise-based model for conservation to pay for itself.
- Umbrella to connect projects with expertise to shorten their learning arc.
- Innovative ways to support local communities to protect wildlife.
- Science-driven standards developed with expert input – ISO 14024.
- Visible benefits tied to in-situ wildlife conservation

Range of Certified Products & Services

- Specialty Food
- Coffee & Tea
- Personal Care Products
- Essential Oils
- Sustainable Fashion
- Textiles, Fiber & Paper
- Biofuel & Carbon Credits
- Tourism



The Need:

Based on analysis of 208 case studies:

- The majority of reported effects of tourism on wildlife are negative
- Impacts vary by species and activity
- Tourism has the potential to contribute to wildlife conservation
- Visitor guidelines, monitoring, small groups, limits on viewing, visitor education, tour operator training, and other actions can mitigate negative impacts

The Solution:

Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism:

“travel that maximizes opportunities for travelers, communities, and businesses to not only engage tourists as partners in conservation, but to advance the on-the-ground conservation of Key Species while minimizing negative impacts of tourists and tourism infrastructure on wildlife.”

[Developed with the input of the IUCN Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group Biodiversity Working Group]

My research paper is available on ResearchGate, and some of the delegates here today are cited in it.

Many guidelines from the literature were incorporated into the guidelines for certification

Diversification is a key aspect.

Wildlife Works in Kenya for instance includes tourism plus eco-clothing, handicraft and other products
The Wildlife Friendly mangrove paddle tour was written up as a chapter in the UNWTO report on sustainable wildlife tourism in Asia and the Pacific.

Wildlife Friendly™ Tourism & Products

Ndovu House and Kivuli Camp
Tsavo Conservancy, Kenya
TsavoConservancy.com
WildlifeWorks.com



also certified for eco-clothing factory, handicrafts, carbon credits & more. An initiative of Wildlife Works & the Kasigau Corridor REDD+ Project



IBIS Rice
Cambodia
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World-class, organic jasmine rice that protects 500,000 hectares of forest and wetlands from poaching & logging

- Conserves 50+ endangered species
- 1,000 farmers in 12 remote villages
- Exported globally
- 2019 Sustainable Food Awards Winner



www.wildlifefriendly.org

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Gorilla Friendly™ Tourism & Products



ASK NOT WHAT GORILLAS CAN DO FOR YOU, BUT WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR GORILLAS.



Private, voluntary certification based on IUCN Best Practices for Great Ape Tourism.



Designed to provide economic benefits & conservation incentive across tourism-related supply chains.



e.g. parks, tour guides, lodging, travel agencies, handicrafts, agricultural products.



Wellard Makambo,
IGCP Programme Manager, in attendance

Sea Turtle Friendly™ Tourism



Apulit Island



Minioc Island



Lagen Island



Pangulasian Island

Discussion

Ronda Green How do people find your research paper?

Marissa <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311355842> Wildlife-based ecotourism as sustainable conservation strategy: ecological and management indicators of conservation impact

Sarah Pye How does an organization apply for status of wildlife friendly?

Marissa <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311355842> Wildlife-based ecotourism as sustainable conservation strategy ecological and management indicators of conservation impact

Ingrid Suter What is your organisation's position on elephant tourism in Asia?

Marissa We're aware of the issues, but we don't do certification of captive animal operations, unless

Voluntourism: defining the good from the bad

[This presentation was cancelled due to the unavailability of the presenter from ANIMONDIAL. We hope it may be presented in the conference in 2021]

There is an increase in demand for volunteer placements involving animals with a noticeable growth in projects and organizations offering such experiences. Unfortunately, on occasion such volunteer activities can have negative impacts on the animals and local communities if not managed appropriately. Voluntourism, should be responsible and strike a balance between the needs of visitors, suppliers, local communities, animals and their welfare and the natural environment (ABTA Guidelines). During this insight, we will consider the different experiences involving animals, and offer some guidance on how to distinguish the good from the bad

The ability of businesses to declare a climate emergency

Innes Larkin, Mt Barney Lodge, Queensland, Australia

[This was to have been a major topic in this year's confront, and will be next year (plus inputs on our website between now and then). A video prepared by Innes and Tracey Larkin for our workshop last year can be viewed on <https://youtu.be/SeTOM2B1I9g> . They have been urging local businesses and Council to declare a climate emergency]

I'm here to present a challenge to Wildlife Tourism members and others to look closely at their approach to Climate Change and see if they can be the drivers of Climate Emergency Declarations, and the associated actions that align with this, across the world.

Many wonderful habitats are under threat. The single greatest threat to the area I live in, the Scenic Rim, is climate change. It is not just the temperature rise, but the other conditions this creates. Last year the heritage ecolodge Binna Burra and parts of Lamington National Park burnt, and also 80% of Mt Barney National Park. I've been walking since then to the cloud forests of Mt Barney, which haven't burnt for thousands of years, and there are impacts even in those cloud forests: just not something we wanted to see at all.

We have some dinosaurs in our federal government. We've concentrated our activities on local government and businesses. This is happening around the world with local and state government declaring climate emergencies. If it can be combined with action plans and actual action, we can potentially have a massive impact.

Six million people live under regions that have declared a climate emergency, and it beggars belief that this has not yet translated into effective action against climate change.

How do we make the changes happen? We've started a local group: Business for Climate Action. Conservative governments seem to regard businesses to be the drivers of almost everything, so we are saying "here are businesses that want action for climate change." 30 local businesses have declared climate emergency statements. Armed with that, we approached the local Council and challenged them to declare a climate emergency, but it was close to a local election date, and they were understandably hesitant to commit to anything, but with the help of a local newspaper we did get them to commit to an intent. The election is over and we still have the same mayor, so I will be approaching them again. We need to get them to commit to improve recycling and other projects. It's good for governments and businesses to show they are part of the solution. Wildlife tourism operations are obviously amongst those that will be affected by climate change and thus well-placed to take up this challenge.

Discussion

Ingrid Albion Great work Innes, we are all an important drop in the ocean in getting collective change

Sarah Pye Great work, Innes.

Niraj Tamrakar Thank you Innes

Innes Thanks all, here is a website for you all to copy and spread the word <http://business4climateaction.com.au/>

Use of protected areas and the implications for conservation and a responsible attitude to wildlife tourism.

David Newsome, Murdoch University, WA

Sample of relevant publications:

- *Wildlife Tourism (book)*
- *Natural Area Tourism (book)*
- *Newsome, D. and Hughes, M. (2018) The contemporary conservation reserve visitor phenomenon! Biodiversity and Conservation 27: 521-529.*
- *Newsome, D. (in press) The collapse of tourism and its impact on wildlife tourism destinations. Journal of Tourism Futures*

The main points I would like to make:

- The use of protected areas for recreational purposes and highlighted that, in many cases, conservation is being compromised because we are losing sight of the conservation function of protected areas.
- Poor tourism management is a feature of many Protected Areas, especially in some countries overseas.
- COVID-19, while problematical for many wildlife tourism destinations, provides us with an opportunity to do better in the future.

Visitation to Protected Areas is problematical. A couple of years ago I published an article on “The modern conservation visitor phenomenon.” I have been concerned that there has been too much commercialisation of Protected Areas, and that they have been increasingly used as settings for events such as music performances or car rallies, and portraying them as areas for escape and personal challenge rather than the contemplation and appreciation of nature. Combined with this is the technology for recording personal challenges such as speeding down hills. What is this doing for the future of these reserves? Are we shifting away from conservation, and turning the Protected Areas into playgrounds?

What role can Wildlife Tourism Australia play in raising political and community awareness regarding the future of recreation and tourism in protected areas?

A lot of wildlife tourism is poorly managed. For instance we analysed TripAdvisor reports from western visitors to Sri Lanka. They reported poor tourism management, lack of interpretation, which we know is vital to good ecotourism, chasing of wildlife in vehicles, risky behaviour with elephants attacking vehicles etc., and environmental degradation. Free independent visitors also head into national parks and behave in ways inconsistent with what I would regard as appropriate activities for national parks. Add to this that most Protected Areas of the world suffer from lack of funding for good management.

Many Protected Areas in Asian countries suffer from overcrowding and pollution. During Covid-19 lockdown, these problems disappeared. Now tourism is returning, the question is “do we have to return to the situation of badly-managed wildlife tourism?” We now sit at a point where we have choices to make. I have made a stand with writing papers, but Wildlife Tourism Australia could really make a stance to this as well. We can make use of some of the elements of Covid-19 regulations. For instance we don’t rally need to touch wildlife. We also don’t need big numbers. We do have scenarios and can talk about this later. What scenarios do we want and how do we make them happen?

Discussion

Debby Cox The challenge is how do we help these parks and countries balance their needs and expectations of economic benefits for local economy and conservation. I have seen with the gorilla parks in Rwanda are expected to carry the load for the whole country with regards to economic benefits to the country...it is unfair, but it is a reality, so now all gorillas are habituated and viewed every day in order for the country to gain the revenue from visitors to the park.

David Newsome We need to expand nature tourism across a wider scope – not just gorillas or chimps as “the one thing”, but conserving rainforests in the wider context, with insects, plants, geology etc. It’s a great opportunity for wildlife tourism people to broaden the topics. Covid-19 has shown some positive effects of relieving the pressure on certain areas, and some have responded by saying we should be shutting down tourism, but I don’t really think we can do that, and instead should be broadening wildlife tourism, involving more areas and more local communities, and managing it properly. This is a big question.

Ingrid Suter thought-provoking. Should protected areas be reserved for their intrinsic values only? What is the only way people use these spaces is by providing a “use” to get people interested in nature?

Leah Burns Thank you David. Would be great to discuss those scenarios later.

Graham Harkom Thanks David. It’s a topic that I feel strongly about.

Ingrid Albion I agree we don't need to return [to pre-Covid situations]- it's been a bit of a relief for conservation in some places, we have lost sight of intrinsic values lets take this opportunity we have been presented with. Thanks david

Kellie Leonard I was in Sri Lanka in early March and found the National Park Safaris really well managed, not like just described. But maybe tourism numbers were down.

David Newsome It depends where you go in Sri Lanka. If you go to Yala NP, a couple of years ago anyway, it was an absolute mess and one of the worst examples of wildlife tourism in the subcontinent. If you visited some other places, such as some bird-watching sites, it is very much better. At the moment things do seem to be much better over all, but this could be due to Covid-19 restrictions, and the test will be to see what happens when restrictions are lifted.

Thomas E Jones Thanks David. Apparently Fujisan is CLOSED to climbers for the 2020 summer season! <http://www.fujisan-climb.jp/en/season/index.html> No knowing if it will revert to 'business as usual' after that.

From Steve Grainger Hi David, I worked at Cradle Mountain and the wombats and pademelons are a major attraction. People want to touch them and get selfies. It appears that all the accommodation and Tourism providers encourage this. I don't think they mean any harm, but are simply not informed of the problems. Most businesses, especially these days ,won't invest in training, but perhaps we need a way of integrating a wildlife code of conduct within all tourism businesses. Perhaps this could be provided through Regional and Local Tourism Organisations.

Daniel Turner Steve I agree - dealing with the "but I saw it done at x or y" is a really difficult mindset to shift with visitors without seeming to be saying the other places/people are bad/wrong.

David Newsome Hi Steve, Thanks for the information. Yes agree a big step forward is for everyone to be on the same page. Interpretive guide training is vital

Ingrid Albion Totally Steve, "keep wildlife wild" is an important message, we had the same problem on Maria Island, we need to differentiate between wildlife park interactions and what happens in the wild.

Noreen Breakey Hi David - is the post-covid scenario published / available yet?

David Newsome. Yes

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342195548> The collapse of tourism and its impact on wildlife tourism destinations

Wendy Eiby How do we balance the need for tourists to keep little towns economically alive with the risk of over-tourism in natural areas?

[s2152549](#) Do you think digital and electronic technologies can help keep humans and wildlife separate in such interactions? For instance, being able to interact through online cameras, etc, or even remote 'feeding'. Could this be a future for human/wildlife interaction?

[Daniel@animondial.com](#) [s2152549](#) - that would be great, but unlikely. People want to see and engage with animals whilst on holiday. This kind of activity is increasing. So bringing in standards will aim to manage things better.

[arif nugroho](#) To Ibu Lita: Do you or your organization have any experience of carrying capacity study, especially for Orangutan?

[Daniel@animondial.com](#) @Sarah - I see similar issues across the world. The questions is how to reverse the storm

[Leah Burns](#) Cuddling koalas is a huge economic earner. Daisy Hill Koala Centre, where we will visit during the conference next year, is government run and does not allow physical contact with the koalas. When we were redesigning the Centre in 2018 and getting public opinion beforehand, overwhelmingly people wanted to be able to handle the live koalas.

[Holly Hummel](#) Are there concerns about zoonotic disease transmission between macaques and people? I am always a bit surprised to see macaque people interactions!

[Maree Treadwell](#) Perhaps COVID_19 may mean people will be concerned about giving viruses to animals so find new ways to interact with animals.

[Ingrid Suter](#) Places where you can touch koalas have very strict SOPs. The koalas are bred for docility and only the 'good' ones are used. Surely we can't homogenize the world to the point where you can't so much as touch a koala?

[Muhammad Ikbal Putera Komodo National Park](#) Replying to Lita. Thanks for the insight. The TCC study in the Komodo National Park was conducted along with relevant stakeholders. They are pretty much agree with the numbers, but the result is not align with the current tourist's visits. So, we have to adjust and make a slight modification to the number from the study. The study is pretty much rigid and not flexible, that's I am wondering how other stakeholder manage the concern :)

[Daniel@animondial.com](#) @Leah, doesn't surprise me at all. But the customer is not always right! Is there much science on the adverse outcomes to koala?

[Maree Treadwell](#) At EcoForum last year, Sera and I compared a selfie experience with a guided experience taking tourists to visit a koala group where koalas trust the guides and often will walk past the tourists- which is the best experience?

[Sarah Agterhuis](#) There are lots of ways to track stress responses in Koalas - I'm not sure about any studies in QLD particularly to do with human animal interactions though.

[Daniel@animondial.com](#) @Maree, I briefly focus on that issue tomorrow :)

[Graham Harkom](#) Yes, that's what I believe happens

[Johnk](#) Maybe we should hasten the development of realistic robot Koalas - everyone can get the selfie they want but the real Koalas remain distant from us humans?

[Daniel@animondial.com](#) I would be very interested to receive any evidenced-based info on koala interactions and implications. email to Daniel@animondial.com

[Sarah Agterhuis](#) @John K - have you seen the animatronic dolphin they're using for education/experiences? Good night from Panama. Looking forward to hearing more tomorrow.

[Daniel@animondial.com](#) I would be keen to implement a blanket standardisation through tourism standardisation

Sarah Agterhuis @John K - <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/416343/robotic-dolphin-causing-stir-in-aquariums-while-solving-ethical-dilemma> ?

fbclid=IwAR2Z3ztaZMv1uYxkuAqcwW8wy47_e3xJqrHS0H5hbYXUAHTD6HRQRylqjDE

Johnk great inputs - alas I have to leave now but will be back tomorrow. johnK

Ingrid Albion I would love links to some papers or research that evaluates how interpretation changes peoples behaviour (good point Ronda) There are a lot of regulations for koala handling but there is no science to back it. It should be better studied as to the impact.

Ronda Green There was some research with koalas at Dreamworld but I haven't been able to find any details, despite emails to Dreamworld

Maree Treadwell I believe some koalas used for patting by parks actually want the human contact.

Daniel Turner Agreed Sera

Ben Pearson Hi @maree, do you have any evidence for that? We hear it is quite stressful for them

Sera Steves A back pat while being photographed next to it has been just as satisfying in my experience working in zoos.

Graham Harkom I worked for a company where one of our destinations included such koala photo opportunities. I would have some guests who were very keen for the opportunity, but also some who were very disappointed that we would take them to such a destination. I agree that demographic plays a huge part in the debate too.

Anna Carr Kia ora from Aotearoa everyone ..thank you Aise/Ronda and speakers ... for allowing me to join - such significant issues discussed - hope to be with WTA conference in 2021 - Im interested in if anyone is researching bioethics and values for wildlife that incorporate local culture/IK/local knowledge to reduce impacts on wildlife? Sadly I'm out at Albatross Colony for next webinars.. Id love to assist with a branch of Wildlife Tourism Australia in NZ or an international members groups..Kiwi, seal and penguin selfies are the huge issue here...disturbance management needed but DoC under-resourced..all the best. warm regards ANNA Carr University of Otago

Aise Kim Thank you Anna Carr. Good to connect with you again. I remember your presentation on ecotourism in another conference. Hope you are well

Leah Burns Thanks Anna. Great to hear you hear. We will definitely be in touch about a NZ branch of WTA. We have been speaking with colleagues there about this already. Hope to see you at the 2021 conference.

Sarah Agterhuis It needs to just be a blanket across a species - there also needs to be allowances for individuals animals within the species.to *not just be

Leah Burns precautionary principle!

Muhammad Iqbal Putera Komodo National Park I am not quite satisfied with Lita's answer, but I am going to jump in to bat tourism. I am wondering what are the positive effects that the bats are giving to the community? How would Sera and Maree communicate those to the public?

Maree Treadwell I think I am talking only about hand-reared koalas. Before I moved to Qld I was totally against holding koalas but when I see the joy of a person when holding one I became more ambivalent. There are definitely standards - how long a koala can be used, if it doesn't want to "star" it doesn't have to etc. But the science behind the standards isn't behind these standards yet. I believe that some people are actually researching stress on koalas being handled.

Daniel Turner Education, education, education :)

Sarah Agterhuis At what point does hand rearing Koalas become akin to Tiger King style breeding for profit though? I doubt all of the koalas used for handling encounters are rescues or were unable to be released.

Sera Steves I agree Sarah. Some of the joeys choose to be held but the majority are conditioned to it. They are very well cared for however. There aren't really breeding programs for release.

Maree Treadwell Bat Tourism in the Cairns camp (the one to be dispersed next week) is very popular with visitors. It is an amazing spectacle to see the emergence. And their daytime activity is really interesting to watch. We hold Bat Chats regularly and this adds value to the experience. We and the signs give the information on how important bats are- they are a taxa we cannot live without because of their eco-services- insect predation (insectivorous bats) and pollination and seed dispersal.

Ingrid Suter I adore the bats at Cairns!

Graham Harkom I like that - Bat Chats!

Sera Steves @graham Yes there are some offered already! @Maree is far more versed on the details of those opportunities.

Maree Treadwell We have been asking tourists about their experience - some come all the way to Cairns in part just for the bats. We have a challenge for bat tourism is they chose to stay away after the dispersal.

Ronda Green When people ask me what to see in Cairns I've always told them its best two features are the shorebirds and other birds along the Esplanade and the bat colony at the library.

Sarah Agterhuis the Cairns bats are one of my best memories from my trip there

Sera Steves @Sarah, they are a truly under appreciated asset!

Sera Steves Well firstly bats are vital pollinators and seed dispersers as well as being a major contributor to pest insect control.

SOKNA I would like to know more about Bat tourism

Graham Harkom @Sera, are you aware of anyone incorporating the Yarra Bend colony into a tour out of Melbourne?

Sera Steves Yes they have trained volunteer guides at Yarra Bend for self guided visitors. And I know that there are tour companies which do take guests to bat camps and that is sure to include Yarra Bend.

Sera Steves Local businesses can benefit from urban bat populations by offering flyout specials to watch the flyout with a drink or other treat.

Sera Steves There are specific companies that cater to viewing Austin's bats from the water.

Sera Steves I agree feeding of wildlife changes the natural behaviour of the animal regardless if it's a positive or negative impacts

Ronda Green A marine example of problems caused by feeding <https://www.facebook.com/perhentian-marineresearchstation/videos/vb.246042179201742/335764310229528/?type=2&theater>

Steve Grainger The feeding of dead/frozen/chilled fish to wild Dolphins may, one day, introduce disease.

Are those risks calculated? Robin Rowland Steve- very little research into feeding and disease- currently only one to two studies have shown that provisioning could lead to increases in human caused injuries- very little research unfortunately

Ronda Green frozen fish thawed in air lose water but contain too much salt. Young dolphins dehydrate. If used they need to be thawed in water

Robin Rowland Feeding dolphins in Savannah Georgia, from shrimp boats used to be a major problem, when I worked there studying the issue it had almost been solved with major fines- but obviously gov needs to be on board

Debby Cox I have worked in zoo setting, habituated apes in the wild and in sanctuaries...I think allowing visitors to participate in feeding is not a good idea...being present when a staff member does it is ok..but obviously only captive animals...I do not agree with feeding wild animals..it is really a bad precedent to set...you have not idea what people will do afterwards. cannot every see how feeding wildlife in the wild is ok!

Maree Treadwell Agree Debbie Cox.

Sera Steves Agreed @debby cox

Maree Treadwell So the bird feeding forum will be interesting on Thursday.

Ronda Green yes

Daniel Turner If it is guaranteed that the activity it is not affecting the individual animal

Graham Harkom I've been thinking of doing the same Maree, incorporating it into a day of Melbourne's urban wildlife.

Steve Grainger There is no long term plan from State or Federal Government. Unfortunately, the problems can only be addressed from the bottom up. A slow process, that may in time yield change for the better

Daniel Turner Steve, is that down to priority or lack of science?

Steve Grainger Priority Daniel. Biggest impact in shortest time to provide jobs etc etc

Daniel Turner Steve - how engaging / interest from the tourism sector, perhaps an opportunity for standards?

Maree Treadwell Perhaps Steve Grainger this is something Wildlife Tourism Australia could be involved with

Maree Treadwell Cool. Graham. Get in touch with me privately please-

Ingrid Suter I used to swim with the penguins at Bolders as a child!

Debby Cox I think you have /create incredible encounters with wildlife, without touching....if the animal, decides to make contact, I think this is very different from visitors being allowed to touch an animal who cannot move away...

Maree Treadwell Aise may be able to help with cultural perspectives.

Graham Harkom Maree, is it possible to message you?

Maree FaceBook is fine. or email me at vice-chair@wildlifetourismaustralia.org.au

Anna Carr Thank you for the cultural aspect - we are currently exploring bioethics and intangible values for wildlife from a matauranga Maori perspective - collaborating with bioethicists, nga mihi, ANNA

Muhammad Ikbal Putera Komodo National Park Thanks Sera and Maree, I know so well the positivity the bats bring in Indonesia. I asked the question because wanted to know more about them in other countries and how you communicate the positive information to the public. Thanks!

Visitor management strategy for sustainable manta ray tourism in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) of Raja Ampat – West Papua (Indonesia)

Maulita Sari Hani, [Conservation International Indonesia](#) Raja Ampat is located in the Birds Head Seascape of Papua Island – Indonesia and designated as the manta ray sanctuary. It is a home for both species of manta ray, *M.birostris*, and *M.alfredi*, endangered fish that are fully protected by Indonesian law and listed as vulnerable on The IUCN Red List. The manta ray plays an important role as a flagship species and tourism attraction in Raja Ampat, which is active in conservation, and since early 2000's has protected sharks and rays.

There are thousands of tourist visits to Raja Ampat each year with more than 50% of them would like to experience swimming with this charismatic fish.

In order to protect the fish, conservation measures developed to mitigate negative impacts from wildlife tourism including the deployment of 75 satellite tags on the manta rays with 25 receivers, plus mark-recapture and over a thousand photographs for photo ID monitoring, to study carrying capacity and determine some tourism hotspots for manta ray tourism within Raja Ampat. Based on our scientific studies, a number of conservation initiatives are proposed to the stakeholders, including daily patrol, provision of ranger posts, production of interpretation materials, reservation system, user fee system, local rangers, and spread of tourists to different sites instead of all crowding in one spot. The manta ray tourists are limited to a maximum of 20 people of divers and snorkelers within an hour, operating every hour during the day six days per week from September to April. Tourists need to book one day before, which gives an opportunity to inform them of correct procedures which they must follow when entering Raja Ampat: including paying for ecosystem services, explanation of conservation problems of manta rays, how ecosystem service payments are used, what to do when encountering manta ray, reporting to the ranger post before and after the encounter with manta rays, and involvement as citizen scientists. At the end of each dive, any infringements of procedure are reported, plus numbers of manta rays seen, and if tourists have taken photos these can be added to the database for photo IDs.

Because of Covid-19, now only 10 people are allowed on each dive.

Raja Ampat is leading for its sustainable manta ray tourism in Indonesia by utilizing science and community-based approaches to protect the fish while maintaining manta ray tourism. Experiences.

Discussion

[Ronda Green](#) I'm surprised so few Australians seem to know about this wonderful area so close to our own shores.

[Marissa \(Altmann\) Balfour](#) Fantastic initiative, Lita — very strong project. We certify these types of enterprises in places where enterprises are partnered with conservation entities and the government as well. Excellent code of conduct and very much in line with our own requirements.

[Ingrid Albion](#) Great initiative I think its awesome what you are trying to achieve

[Sarah Pye](#) There is always a dilemma whether we should attach an economic value to the environment to illustrate its importance, or rely on intrinsic value. Such a hard choice since many will not understand value without it being economic. LOVE those hats, MauLita!

[Ronda Green](#) We probably need both. Some will never understand the intrinsic, regrettably

[Kellie Leonard](#) We dived had Manta Sandy last year, but had no interaction with the rangers, even those we paid for the permit

Elisa Diedrich How did you come up with the maximum group size capacity?

MauLita In the early 2000's we conducted carrying capacity studies and Limits of Acceptable Change, leading to the decision to limit group size to 20.

Elisa Diedrich awesome thanks

Muhammad Ikbal Putera Komodo National Park Replying to Lita. Thanks for the insight. The TCC study in the Komodo National Park was conducted along with relevant stakeholders. They are pretty much agree with the numbers, but the result is not align with the current tourist's visits. So, we have to adjust and make a slight modification to the number from the study. The study is pretty much rigid and not flexible, that's I am wondering how other stakeholder manage the concern :)

MauLita Salam Pak M.Ikbal, involving stakeholders in conducting the study of carrying capacity is a key, specially the tourism businesses. Then the result of the study needs to be consulted to the public (and stakeholders) in order to gain "agreement" and find strategies on how we want to implement the carrying capacity. This approach will enable the tourism businesses to deliver their concerns and find ways to run their operations, because we know restrictions will impact their businesses.

Muhammad Ikbal Putera Komodo National Park Lita. How would you solve the Tourism Carrying Capacity limit numbers that are frequently changing following the trend of the tourist there? I am also wondering, what the stakeholders in Raja Ampat say about the system?

Marissa (Altmann) Balfour To Debby and others interested / concerned re: gorillas - Please check out our Certified Gorilla Friendly™ initiative which has robust guidelines based on IUCN recommended best practices. Diversification is a key aspect of this, as David stated. <https://gorillafriendly.org/>

Kellie Leonard It was Yala, Bundala & Udaware

Marissa (Altmann) Balfour Unfortunately I need to log off as it's 12:30am here in Key West, Florida!

Thank you all and feel free to reach out, and very glad to represent the IUCN Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group Biodiversity Working Group here as well! marissa@wildlifefriendly.org

MauLita Hi Marissa, all the stakeholders are working together, there are still many challenges though every now and then. It is very interesting about the certification aspect, I will look into it.

Kellie Leonard WE weren't allowed to stop if 2 jeeps had already stopped

From Marissa (Altmann) Balfour to Everyone: (2:30 pm)

Excellent, Lita! There are always challenges :)

Muhammad Ikbal Putera Komodo National Park How would you solve the Tourism Carrying Capacity limit numbers that frequently changing following the trend of the tourist there? I am also wondering, what the stakeholders in Raja Ampat say about the system?

Theme: Human/wildlife interaction

There are some highly disturbing examples of wildlife interactions (e.g. animals taken from the wild for to charge tourists for photos with them, breeding of lion cubs for tourists to pet but then sold for canned hunting) but there also interactive experiences under much better welfare conditions that raise money for conservation, give much pleasure to visitors and provide opportunity for education with an attentive audience and promotion of a positive attitude towards the animals. Where do we draw the line?

What is meant by “interaction” and when is it appropriate?

Daniel Turner BSc (Hons) CBiol MRSB, Director, ANIMONDIAL

ANIMONDIAL is the leading global tourism consultancy specialising in responsible animal tourism. Established by ex-colleagues Daniel Turner and Helen Usher, ANIMONDIAL works with travel businesses, non-profit organisations, and academics to make a positive difference to animals, species conservation, local communities, travellers, and global destinations. Combining two decades of expertise in applied animal welfare science, sustainable tourism development, and corporate engagement, ANIMONDIAL provides a fresh approach to managing associated risk (to people and animals) and addressing persistent challenges.

Daniel Turner is an environmental biologist who has been working for the advancement of applied animal welfare for over 20 years. He established a more pragmatic approach to working with the travel industry, creating capacity-building programs and guidance, which has included ABTA's Animal Welfare Guidelines (2013). In 2018, Daniel co-founded ANIMONDIAL, a specialist consultancy that provides impartial advice and practical guidance to travel businesses. E:daniel@animondial.com

‘Animal interaction’ is a commonly used phrase by tour operators when describing holiday experiences with animals, sometimes with very broad spectrum of meaning. It is used in the context of direct animal contact, such swimming with dolphins, but it is also used when describing wildlife viewing experiences, where contact is less likely.

Tourists tend to seize every opportunity to interact with animals; the more exotic, the greater the interest. Yet, at the same time, 90% of travelers want their travel company to protect animals.

At ANIMONDIAL we are very keen to set standards both for the welfare of the animals, in the wild and in captivity, and for the health and safety of the people involved. It's very difficult though to impose general standards when “animal interaction” has such a wide definition.

Why is this important? The travel industry is very much based on reputation. Where risk mitigation is involved, standardisation is vital to the tourism industry. I've been working for many years to develop standards that can identify and then minimise or eliminate risks to both animals and people. One initiative was through ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents) to provide guidelines of global relevance (I wrote the copy for the initial 2013 edition and others). It was revised last year., and they have upgraded the whole interaction component. All activities involving holding animals or positioning them for photos is considered unacceptable, including feeding and contacting elephants without a barrier.

Our scientific knowledge of the animals used in tourism has significantly improved featured and although animal welfare is a complex area given the different requirements for different species, we are now starting to understand how captivity and human/animal interactions affect their physical and mental wellbeing. The popularity of animal attractions and interaction is increasing with tourists. Where performances or interactions with wild animals are permitted (including photo opportunities), it should never cause the animal any fear, distress or injury. The animal should always have the choice to terminate the activity if desired (i.e. no holding of animals for photos, as they cannot move away). This may be caused by a short-term problem, such as heightened stress caused by human contact, or a long-term problem, whereby the stress imposed on an animals' physical or mental state is to such a degree that there are adverse consequences.

In conclusion, it is important to define what interaction means, and emphasise what is considered appropriate and inappropriate. This will help the travel industry decide what is appropriate and what is not, and for the public and the animals to be protected wherever possible.



Travel Industry guidance:

“All activities where animals are held by tourists, or are positioned for photo opportunities with them, and where the animal cannot terminate the interaction or move are regarded as unacceptable”

- Tourist contact or feeding elephants without a barrier
- Tourist contact, feeding of and “walking with” wild cats
- Tourist contact or feeding of crocodiles or alligators, great apes, bears, sloths...
- Ostrich riding, trophy or canned hunting
- Human-initiated contact with and feeding of animals in the wild

[ABTA Animal Welfare Guidelines]

What interaction is considered appropriate?

- Animal has choice in participation
- Human contact is minimised / eliminated
- Any contact is animal-induced
- Feeding by the public is minimised / eliminated
- Viewing distance maintained
- Public H&S precautions with all categorised hazardous animals
- No chasing, provoking, abusing...
- No offspring separation, hand-rearing, sedation, mutilation, etc to ease public ‘interactions’

If referring to ‘interaction’ remember to define it.



ANIMONDIAL Seeking a world where tourism is kind to animals

DISCUSSION

Sarah Agterhuis I think people understanding animal welfare is also a huge part of changing perceptions around the interactions people expect and "want" from our wildlife. I think people want to know more and understand but I think we as tourism operators have sometimes avoided this as it can be a tough conversation.

Sarah Pye Daniel, do you think COVID is an opportunity to stop animal handling practice based on virus safety?

Ingrid Suter Should people not be allowed to hold a koala at Lone Pine Sanctuary?!

Sarah Agterhuis Ingrid - interestingly, there are states in Australia that don't permit that.

Graham Harkom I find it unusual that we have differing standards regarding 'koala cuddling' depending on the state. Here in Victoria I have had people who have had a go up in Queensland and wonder why they can't down here. It should be a blanket 'no'.

Ronda Green Some states have compromised by allowing photos behind a koala sitting on a branch, and I guess the koala has the opportunity to move away if it wishes.

David Clark Difficult question Ingrid - many city folk have no interaction with wildlife (except the possum in the roof) and the commercial parks are often a way as an initial introduction to "wildlife"

Ingrid Suter That's very interesting!

Graham Harkom @Daniel, I think that the selfie/Instagram generation has only increased the appetite for being photographed with a Koala or such.

Daniel Turner @Graham Harkom, very interesting point. I have often wonder why it is not a blanket ban on koala cuddling? Surely it isn't much of an economic driver?

Sarah Agterhuis I will admit - I work at Zoos Victoria and we get asked why people can't touch the koalas all the time, but visitors both international and local are genuinely surprised that we have a section of law around Koalas and how it works here and in other states. It's a really interesting discussion to have (people are often disappointed but they gain a different insight when we can talk about it)

Sarah Agterhuis The revenue generated in Queensland from Koala photos and cuddling is huge and now that people see it as a "must do" in Australia it just drives more need. The EBA Koalas have in the state is extensive but just means more Koalas in captivity for the images.

Ronda Green I'm told a Currumbin Sanctuary it's an important way of raising funds for the wildlife hospital, which takes in a lot of animals free of charge, brought to them by the public, that no koala is used if not in the right mood or for more than an hour a day.

Ingrid Suter We need an awareness of and respect different cultures, some of which have more utilitarian attitudes to animals. Is holding a koala for an hour for maybe three times a week a terrible thing? I don't think so where benefits outweigh the impacts. There are many examples around the world. This is a very biocentric audience today. Most of the world do not share our conservation perspective, and we need to concentrate on how to get them to have a smaller environmental footprint. A blanket ban on anyone anywhere in the world touching an animal does not seem realistic.

Daniel Turner My take on this is different, and the onus for me is on the animal. If a negative impact, however small, on the animal is demonstrated it should be questioned.

Ingrid Suter I agree no cruelty should be allowed, but what about where there is no negative impact?

Daniel Turner If evidence shows no negative impact then that standard can be applied, but once you show the open door others, will use it in different ways, and there is very little research out there, and what little there is tends to focus on the very charismatic animals. If you can't prove no negative effect it shouldn't be allowed.

[comment from RG: it is very difficult to prove a negative, so that could lead to a blanket ban on all interactions. We should keep testing of course, and perhaps if enough negative results are reported, showing no stress, we could cautiously allow. Sometimes animals show that they actually enjoy some interactions]

David Newsome. One of the bogies of wildlife tourism. There's not much control on amount of fish given to dolphins in Queensland, more restricted at Monkey Mia, not allowed at all at Bunbury, although managers do so surreptitiously. This confuses tourists visiting more than one of these sites. We've done some research at Bunbury asking if they knew feeding could have negative effects and whether they could be satisfied just watching management feed them, and they mostly said yes. Supervision and signage explaining everything can be effective. But in another situation like a coachload turning up from China, having seen dolphins fed at another place, don't readily understand why they can't do so here. As an association we should really be thinking about what is the way forward.

A?? If harm mitigation is to be done we need to be sure it's done well, with strict regulation. There's always been a connection between humans and dolphins. The Quandamooka people used to work with them on Stradbroke Island. I understand the feeding at Tangalooma is strictly regulated with only 5 – 10% of daily diet

David Newsome. It's still a lot more than at Shark Bay, and Shark Bay is more than Bunbury. The inconsistencies are a problem. There's no easy answer. I totally agree we need good evidence to ensure we're going in the right direction, and good information

B?? [Anna Carr??] Are there studies on effects on wild populations? Are you seeing behavioural changes?

David Newsome. One reason the Bunbury situation exists because fishermen threw fish out to dolphins and it became a tourist attraction. Now fishermen continue to feed them out at sea and research has shown this this to be problematical, with higher juvenile mortality.

[Comment RG: why does feeding out at sea increase juvenile mortality?]

B?? We see this with other animals such as turtles and rays in Barbados and Caiman Islands etc., and ABTA has become convinced it should usually be no feeding for tourism or private individuals

David Newsome. And with dolphins it's even more problematical because of the variation. At Monkey Mia there was a suggestion of building a platform for watching the dolphin feeding but people said no we want it to be natural, just being on the beach. I think it best if we follow that idea, don't do any feeding, give people a natural experience, the psychological reward of being confident that the animal is being completely natural, doing its own thing.

B?? I'm completely with you there. It's all about better education. Most people who want to interact with animals on the holidays love animals. If people knew their activity was having negative impact most would agree not to do it. Research on impacts is really important, so do keep going!

David Newsome. Increase in research, yes. The government is anxious to get tourism going again. It may be a great opportunity to do it differently post-covid.

B?? I agree, but I fear economic consideration will over-ride everything.

Ingrid Albion I think we're in a really good position as an organisation to have a voice on this issue. I think everyone's on the same page here. We're all concerned about wildlife conservation, and getting people's behavior to change. In the case of penguins in Tasmania, in places where it's easy to reach the penguins there's likely to be an impact, so through national parks we set up situations where guides take groups down. Because more people come to the site there may be a little more impact at that point but they also get educated as to how to behave with penguins. We have an overall message of keep wildlife wild, but as Ingrid Suter was saying we also need to inspire people to love our wildlife and sometimes getting up close and personal assists this, but we have to make people understand that it's context based. In a wildlife park it is habituated and if not stressed it's ok, and people could get photos even without feeding or touching, but they must understand it's not ok in other situations

David Newsome. I think there is room for captive engagement as long as it is explained properly to the public. It's interesting with the penguins. You may know of the Boulders Beach in South Africa. People used to just run freely amongst them and this was a breeding area, and monitoring indicated the population was declining. As soon as they built walkways and viewing platforms and had guides on-site it started to recover, and what actually happened was that people could get better access and see the penguins better. So it is possible to compromise in his way, and to have captive encounters where it is made clear that this animal is an ambassador that you can get close to and stroke but you don't do it to ones in the wild.

Ronda Green. And we need to say it in every language most visitors are likely to be speaking

David Newsome. Yes that's right.

Ingrid Suter? We also need to recognise there are cultural contexts. We've been looking in terms of a very white western point of view. When we go to other countries it's very tone-deaf to tell people that what they've been doing for hundreds or thousands of years is now considered wrong. We need to listen and communicate and collaborate

Ronda Green. Before I went to China I was old all the people here care about wildlife is eating it or using it for medicine. In Kunming, thousand of seagull had migrated from Russia, and there were many families buying bread to feed them, and delighting in the interaction. Okay, so bread wasn't the best to feed them, and I'd like to see them educated about that, but it was great to watch all these people not just seeing animals as something to be used but really enjoying interacting with them., and that's something I wouldn't want to stop.

David Newsome. I agree it's better than boiling them up to eat

C?? That also takes us back to what Noel was saying about the importance of emotions, and a sense of wonder. Maybe what they were doing was not 100% correct but it could be an important stepping stone in the right direction.

Ronda Green You can also get a feeling of interaction without physical contact. Although in Kruger NP I mostly drove myself, I did go on some tours, and on one we were accompanied by a rather obnoxious tourist complaining about loads of things wrong about his accommodation or the tour, but when a leopard walked close to the vehicle before crossing the road (the driver had stopped) it looked up, and apparently looked straight at this guy. When it left, he appeared awe-struck, and said "She looked at me! She looked straight at me! I think I'm in love!"

Daniel Turner When I was guiding in the Amazon, people were coming from all over the world with a list of animals they wanted to see, and my job was to immerse people in the wilderness and give them a story about the forest and the fact that the animals were just a component of a bigger fabric, and I feel the people went away with a better understanding of the need for preservation of the rainforest, so I agree that immersion within the wild is important not just for our own wellness but the wellness of the planet and understanding the need to protect it. But I don't think I can ever support the term "Ambassador for the species", which many zoos use as an excuse for what they do. Even if it has been done for many many years, you can't justify continuing an activity if any harm can be shown.

Ronda Green I agree something that is definitely harming the animals shouldn't be allowed anywhere. But in some situations there may be a slow progression from doing the wrong thing to doing a better thing, and gradually moving on to the best thing. A section I'd like to include in next year's conference is what is the best way we can provide a really good life for captive animals.

Leah Burns Daniel, 'sacrificial animal' often offered in the literature as an alternative term to 'ambassador for the species'

Robin Rowland Currently sacrificial animals is a widely used phenomena, currently whole sections of Tamborine National Park are used as sacrificial, and I currently work with a captive glow worm colony used primarily as a sacrificial site to prevent widespread devastation of wild colonies. I can see the point, but it is a hard line to take to eliminate sacrificial sites when they are so widely used. Where is the line? Do we draw it at invertebrates? Ecosystems?

Ingrid Albion There are so many issues in this topic but we should have a position in Australia on it and I agree Ingrid we should definitely not be dictating to other cultures

Robin Rowland It's controversial and obviously a bit sad, but personally, I would rather someone accidentally squish a captive glow worm that can be replaced through breeding rather than a wild one that's vulnerable to extinction. Currently there are few government restrictions on wild glow worm sites or oversight and education at sites, so sacrificial sites provide the only control measure for the south east Queensland species

Daniel Turner Science has no boundaries - cultural interpretation shouldn't come into it - this may only mean different speeds to sorting out the problems

David Newsome The core concern is respect for wildlife and conservation of nature. There is a need for a cultural standard.

Ingrid Suter In many cultures wildlife utilization is very normal. I don't think it's up to the West to 'change' this. Just manage, collaborate and assist.

Ronda Green I think there are some aspects that definitely transcend culture – cruel training, mutilation of animals to control them for photos, keeping animals in tiny cages, etc. - but there may be some cultural aspects we could be a bit lenient with, not expecting to go straight to the best possible outcome, but encouraging (and rewarding) moves to progressively better ones.

Ingrid Suter yes - science is very important too! Science should not be ignored (I have a science background!) Thank you!

Thomas E Jones My question is how to spread the messages we discussed today to the masses whose idea of Wildlife Tourism in TIGER KING on Netflix?!?

Maree Treadwell And Ingrid, I agree that we need to assist changes in perspectives if we wish to be able to continue conversations.

Debby Cox I think we need someone doing a research study on humans and what they get from feeding wildlife, what is the positive feedback they are getting, because this seems to be the key as to why so many want to feed an animal. I experienced this at the zoo and it was obviously a cultural habit as well, but if we are to help change behaviour, we need to understand the positive loop first and find a way to substitute this behaviour and still allow the visitors to have a very positive encounter.

Ronda Green. Debby, I remember when you used to work with the chimpanzees at Taronga, and the sessions where the keepers would talk to the public and throw long bamboo stalks to the chimps, who would strip the leaves and break the stalks to right length to “fish” for mustard in artificial termite mounds, so people were learning about chimp behaviour in the wild, as well as also learning the names of some of the chimps and their personality differences, so having a good experience without actually coming into physical contact with the animals,

Debby Cox I've been to many places where animals are fed by the public and almost always people don't understand animal behaviour and cause conflict between the animals with dominant animals bullying others (a problem in captive settings as well as in the wild), and often with inappropriate foods in the wild. You can not control what they do after leaving, and they may get the impression it's ok to feed animals in the wild because they've done it with you.

Daniel Turner Completely agree Debby. Captive or wild, don't do it unless animal welfare and public safety is guaranteed

David Newsome Debby I have something on this with dolphins. Please email me.

Ronda Green. Another problem now with coronavirus. Videos from Thailand show monkeys accustomed to being fed by tourists now desperate for food, getting violent towards each other, and invading towns.

Debby Cox ? The feeding, which has continued for years, has probably caused an imbalance, and may have upset other ecological processes

Ronda Green. Yes, for one thing, monkeys that would have been dispersing seeds of the forest trees and shrubs are likely to be eating less fruits and also depositing seeds on the hard ground around the feeding areas, where they won't be growing

Thomas Jones There is some good longterm data available. It's very difficult to reach a large percentage of the population on the right way to do things

Bat Tourism: Interactions in a Covid-19 World

Maree Kerr and Sera Steves, Wildlife Tourism Australia

Maree Kerr and Sera Steves have been developing a Bat Tourism app, to be launched at next year's conference. They warn people against touching bats, but do promote observations of them in the wild and in good captive settings such as the Tolga Bat Hospital, and dispel some of the paranoia that has gripped some who live near bat colonies.

We know bat tourism can improve attitudes towards bats. It had its birth in Austin, Texas, where 2.2 million Mexican freetail bats moved into the city in the 1980s. There was a lot of fear about rabies and other diseases. Then Dr Merlin Tuttle, the father of bat tourism, began to educate people about bats (<https://www.merlintuttle.org>), and arousing interest in the spectacle of millions of bats merging at dusk, now a multi-million dollar industry, attracting millions of visitors to Austin each year and not one person has ever become ill from a bat.

Can bat tourism deal with new fears about bats and Covid-19, as so much news leads to bats as carrier, although there is no evidence that it can be directly transferred from bats to humans. There is much discussion on how humans are experiencing more viruses as we are encroaching more and more into wildlife areas, and that we should leave nature alone, but bats share our cities, forests and farms. The tourism industry and researchers must work together to get the actual facts out. We can live with bats with social distancing – if you don't touch bats there's no risks from any of the viruses they might carry.

The Bat Tourism App, although at present we have restrictions of travel, can still teach you about your local bats. Bats are so widespread in Australia that backyard batting is easy to do. You can follow a bat trail in your home neighbourhood or when you travel, with advice from experts about bats and conveying correct information about risks, to allay fears and promote appreciation of bats.

The App will be launched at WTA's conference in 2021

DISCUSSION

Robin Rowland I heard your talk at last year's conference and have since become involved in bat rehabilitation. In SEQ we've been talking about the dispersal of bats in FNQ

Sera Steves It will be a loss from a tourism perspective, but they will still fly over the city. It seems best for the bats to move, but we'd prefer the choice by the bats instead of dispersal.

Maree Treadwell Thanks Muhammad. Love to hear more about bat experiences in Indonesia.

JohnK Re Bats: How do you manage the media in this regard. As in 'Bats carry the Covid virus = story'. 'Bats do not carry the Covid virus = no story'.

Daniel@animondial.com Interested to hear the answer to the question posed by JohnK if possible Maree Treadwell Re question from JohnK- we need to rewrite the story. Bats do carry some viruses- most don't get to people, but many of the viruses they carry do not make them sick. If we understood how that is done, it could be beneficial for how humans can manage viruses.

Ronda Green I tell visitors and residents unless you handle a bat and get scratched or bitten, kill and eat a bat, or get sneezed on by a very sick horse (Hendra) you won't get a virus from them s2152549 to add to my question, indeed Sera just mentioned VR in her talk just now.

Interactions with Macaques at Japan's first monkey park

Thomas Jones, Ritsumeikan Asia-Pacific University, Japan

I'm reviewing interactions at one of of Japan's first monkey parks, thought to host one of the planet's largest troops of uncaged Macaques. Despite the name Takasakiyama Natural Zoo (TNZ), macaques can be viewed by visitors under free-range conditions. Provisioning began in 1947 aiming to i) mitigate crop raiding; ii) conduct primatology research; and iii) encourage tourism. Impacts of provisioning on macaques include a higher birth rate, shorter inter-birth intervals and lower infant mortality.

There are lots of interactions watching macaques play on the playground, watching feeding by guides, and the macaques wandering amongst people, even between their legs, which is said to bring good luck.

Beyond physiological impacts, the population was affected by overfeeding that contributed to the troop's rapid growth and subsequent fission.

TNZ's estimated monkey population in 1950 was 166, peaked in 1995 (n= 2128) before declining by 2018 (n= 1173), partly due to a ban on tourists' purchasing snacks and hand-feeding the monkeys since 1993.

We have wondered about the declining number of visitors, from about 2 million to less than a tenth of that, due to various socio-economic visitors.

Discussion

Ronda Green I was very surprised on my visit to Japan last year to realise just how much of Japan is forested, something we don't hear much about here

Thomas Jones Yes, about 2/3 forested.

Ronda Green It also ranges from subarctic to subtropical, and consisting of so many islands has a lo of marine life also. I understand you and Rie are considering starting a Japanese wildlife tourism association.

Thomas Jones Yes, definitely. Loads of good research happening here, trying to overcome some of the language balances to link in with research elsewhere.

Debby Cox has the government shut the parks to protect the monkeys from contracting Covid 19 from visitors?

Thomas Jones Thanks for the question Debby. The park did shut down for a while but is now re-opened, albeit with some restrictions.

Debby Cox Are scientists monitoring transmission with them?

Thomas Jones I don't know if there is monitoring, but they do get very close.

Ingrid Suter Has the monkey downloaded the COVID-SAFE app?



END OF DAY 1 – see separate pdf's for Days 2 and 3