

The captive audience: the educative influence of zoos on their visitors in India

Authors: MALLAPUR, A.; WARAN, N.¹; SINHA, A.²

Source: [International Zoo Yearbook](#), Volume 42, Number 1, April 2008 , pp. 214-224(11)

Publisher: [Blackwell Publishing](#)

Abstract:

A questionnaire survey was conducted to assess the educative influence of zoo visits on their visitors at three Indian zoos. Although 300 questionnaires were completed at each site, 150 questionnaires each for 'zoo visitors' and the 'general public', only 863 (96%) were used in the analysis because the others were incomplete. A significantly higher number of 'zoo visitors' ($n=111/150$, 74%) were found to be aware of the appearance and biology of the Lion-tailed macaque *Macaca silenus* in comparison with the 'general public' ($n=67/150$, 45%) at Thiruvananthapuram Zoo (TZ). When asked about the goals of a zoo, a relatively greater percentage of the 'zoo visitors' at Arignar Anna Zoological Park (20%) and TZ (29%) stated that the goal of the zoo was to protect endangered species, while 69% of the 'zoo visitors' at Shri Chamarajendra Zoological Garden said they did not know. As high as 64% of the 'zoo visitors' across the three zoos said that a zoo could definitely help protect wild animals. Overall, the 'zoo visitors' correctly answered a greater number of questions on the biology, behaviour and habitat of Lion-tailed macaques in comparison with the 'general public'. Our study suggests that zoos are an excellent learning environment to convey the 'conservation and education' messages but currently they are an underutilized resource. Zoos could initiate the process of educating their public by providing them with 'pocket' guides and brochures on wildlife at the entrance and also by conducting 15 minute-long talks at the animal exhibits about crucial conservation and wildlife issues.

Keywords: [animal welfare](#); [conservation education](#); [India](#); [lion-tailed macaque](#); [rainforest conservation](#); [zoo visitor](#)

Document Type: Research article

DOI: 10.1111/j.1748-1090.2007.00030.x

Affiliations: **1:** Animal Behavior and Welfare Group, Division of Veterinary Clinical Studies, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, University of Edinburgh, Easter Bush Veterinary Centre, Easter Bush, Roslin, Midlothian, UK, and **2:** Culture, Cognition and Consciousness Unit, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore, India, Email: avantim@yahoo.com