

*“Copyright (2023) by BIAZA Office (London). All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in hard copy, machine – readable or other forms without advance written permission from the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA). Members of the Association may copy this information for their own use as needed.”*



## BIAZA Conservation Education Policy

### Preamble

BIAZA and BIAZA members are committed to conserving the natural world and to inspiring and educating their visitors and communities to do the same. BIAZA and its members endorse education as a key pillar of conservation and champion that it is integral to the mission of good zoos and aquariums. In order to foster genuine preservation of the environment, we need to facilitate a deeper bond between individuals and the natural world by offering educational initiatives that enable people to comprehend their inherent relationship with nature and encourage action through behaviour change.

Each BIAZA member will determine their own conservation education activities and harness their uniqueness to meet the standards set out in this policy. BIAZA recognises that the size of the organisation and its resources will have an influence on the scale of conservation education provision, but it must be clear that it is a key part of the members work.

These standards reflect current best practice in conservation education for zoos and aquariums. Some standards are compulsory; these are indicated by ‘must’. Other standards are viewed as recommended or aspirational; these are indicated by ‘should’ or ‘aspire to’. Where necessary an explanation of the standard is provided in the additional guidance section.

Note that all BIAZA members **must** follow all relevant legislation for their region, as well as all other BIAZA policies and standards. Members are also strongly recommended to refer to Social Change for Conservation – The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Education Strategy, as well as other relevant local, national and global strategies and frameworks (such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework).



## Terminology

BIAZA defines “**conservation**” as an action leading to healthy and resilient wildlife populations and natural ecosystems. These outcomes underpin the sustainability of the global environment and human societies and are achieved through direct interventions to manage populations, habitats and landscapes; promoting behaviour change at all levels of society through engagement and advocacy; and research and knowledge sharing to build conservation capacity.

The term “**education**” is used here to include learning in its broadest sense, not confined to opportunities and experiences for schools or children, but for learners of all ages and needs. BIAZA recognises that there are many styles of learning, from kinaesthetic to auditory and also that learning outcomes are not purely based on knowledge. The most successful learning programmes encompass opportunities for fun, gaining skills and developing positive attitudes and values towards the natural world. It includes all visitors to your site, as well as offsite and online engagement.

BIAZA uses the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Education Strategy (2020) definition of “**conservation education**” to bring both aspects together. It reflects that biodiversity conservation should be at the core of any educational activity delivered by a zoo or aquarium. However, it also acknowledges that conservation education, in its broader sense, can include activities that make contributions to biodiversity conservation—such as education for sustainable development, biological, science or environmental education, ocean literacy, practical skills-based programmes, campaigns, and interpretation.

## BIAZA Conservation Education Standards

This policy applies to all full and provisional members within BIAZA. It uses the terms zoo or aquarium throughout to include all these members regardless of whether they are zoos, aquariums, safari parks, wildlife parks, bird parks or otherwise.

There is further information to help you interpret and implement these standards in the additional guidance section at the end of the policy.

## Building a Culture of Conservation Education

1. The conservation education role of the zoo or aquarium must be reflected in its written mission statement and strategy.
2. The zoo or aquarium must have a written conservation education plan. This working document must:
  - a. Outline the zoo or aquarium’s overarching conservation education themes, strategic objectives and key audiences (as directed by main organisation strategy).
  - b. Set out the zoo or aquarium’s conservation education activities stating how they fit into the themes and objectives, and how they apply to their key audiences, with measurable goals and evaluation plans for each.
  - c. Demonstrate how applicable national, regional & international policies and frameworks are integrated into its conservation education programme.

- d. Evidence that the conservation education plan integrates with key operational areas of work.
3. The zoo or aquarium must have appropriate facilities and resources to deliver its conservation education programmes.
4. Conservation education must be an integral part of site planning and development.

### **Embedding Purposes of Conservation Education into Zoo and Aquariums**

5. Conservation education in zoo or aquariums must aim to raise awareness of the value of biodiversity, connect people to nature and build capacity for individuals to take sustainable actions.
6. Conservation education in zoo or aquariums should aim to promote awe, wonder, enjoyment, creativity, and inspiration about species and the natural world. It should make conservation issues relevant to visitors' own lives and experiences in order to inspire and empower people to take direct and indirect actions for species, ecosystems, and communities.

### **Promoting Conservation Education for All**

7. The zoo or aquarium must provide opportunities for a variety of audiences to learn about conservation in the zoo or aquarium site, and should aspire to also do this online and outside the zoo or aquarium through active outreach programmes.
8. The zoo or aquarium must be able to demonstrate a range of delivery approaches in their conservation education programmes to cater for different audiences and needs.

### **Applying Appropriate Approaches and Methods in Conservation Education**

9. The zoo or aquarium must adopt an evidence-based approach to conservation education, utilising relevant research and evidence in the development and implementation of conservation education programmes.
10. The zoo or aquarium's conservation education messages must be based on scientific facts. Where historical, cultural, religious or alternative ideas are represented, they must be clearly indicated as such.

11. The zoo or aquarium must have a process in place for reviewing and updating information presented about the species exhibited to ensure it is accurate.

### **Integrating Animal Care and Welfare into Conservation Education**

12. Animal welfare must be embedded within any animal-visitor educational experience. Regardless of the deemed value of the experience to conservation education, animal welfare frameworks and assessments should be incorporated into the planning and evaluation of each session/experience.
13. The zoo or aquarium must ensure that they abide by all BIAZA policies regarding any live animals used in education including the BIAZA Animal Welfare Policy and BIAZA Close Contact Policy ensuring that any use in education does not impede on the general welfare of the animal. Zoos or aquariums should also refer to the BIAZA Animal Welfare Toolkit and relevant BIAZA animal handling resources when considering the use of live animals.
14. Each zoo and aquarium must display to visitors via interpretation and/or behaviour how highly they value animal welfare and incorporate these high standards throughout their organisation.

### **Prioritising Conservation and Sustainability in Conservation Education**

15. The zoo or aquarium must educate their audiences about their conservation and sustainability work and demonstrate their organisation's direct and indirect contributions to conservation.

### **Optimising Training and Professional Development in Conservation Education**

16. The zoo or aquarium must allocate sufficient staff time and resources to develop and implement their conservation education plan.
17. The zoo or aquarium must support conservation education staff to be actively involved in local, national, regional and/or international conservation education networks. This can include those outside of the traditional zoo or aquarium conservation education networks.
18. The zoo or aquarium must support conservation education staff with appropriate and effective continuous professional development and training to meet the aims of the zoo or aquarium's conservation education plan.

### **Strengthening the Evidence of the Conservation Education Value of Zoos and Aquariums**

19. In the conservation education plan, there must be specific reference to applying measurable

outcomes to a zoo or aquarium's conservation education programmes to evaluate its programmes at multiple stages using a range of appropriate methods. Zoos or aquariums should define objectives within their plan and identify baselines for audiences.

20. The zoo or aquarium must collect and share a range of meaningful evidence to demonstrate how it is carrying out its conservation education plan and how it is meeting its organisational strategy and measurable goals.
21. The zoo or aquarium should gather case studies and aspire to conduct evidence-based research to demonstrate the effects of their conservation education on the outcomes listed in their plans.
22. The zoo or aquarium should aspire to engage in partnerships with external organisations and academic institutions in their programmes and to conduct social research and evaluation projects.

## Additional Guidance

### Building a Culture of Conservation Education

1. The conservation education role of the zoo or aquarium must be reflected in its written mission statement and strategy.  
*Explanation – There may not be direct reference to conservation education in the mission statement. However, zoos should be able to provide an explanation of how the conservation education role is contained within and implemented through the zoo's mission.*
2. The zoo or aquarium must have a written conservation education plan. This working document must:
  - a. Outline the zoo or aquarium's overarching conservation education themes, strategic objectives and key audiences (as directed by main organisation strategy).
  - b. Set out the zoo or aquarium's conservation education activities stating how they fit into the themes and objectives, and how they apply to their key audiences, with measurable goals and evaluation plans for each.
  - c. Demonstrate how applicable national, regional & international policies and frameworks are integrated into its conservation education programme.
  - d. Evidence that the conservation education plan integrates with key operational areas of work.

*Explanation: A plan could have different formats (e.g. within a strategy, policy, plan document). However, formatted, the plan must clearly demonstrate the zoo's key strategic areas for conservation education, an outline and justification of planned activities and programmes, and an evaluation framework for these programmes. This should be supported financially by the organisation.*

*There are varying internal and external factors, e.g. international agendas, national curricula, local authority policies and government legislation that need to be reflected in the zoo's conservation education plan.*

3. The zoo or aquarium must have appropriate facilities and resources to deliver its conservation education programmes.

*Explanation: Education facilities in zoos can take many different forms, such as indoor or outdoor learning spaces, classrooms, labs, and the technology to support them. These need to be in good working order, comply with relevant health and safety legislation and be fit for purpose.*

*Resources could be books, worksheets, models, craft materials, games, scientific equipment, digital technology, natural materials, bio-artefacts or any other items that help to bring meaning to the educational activity. Resources should comply with health and safety and Balai regulation. Resources must not rely on single use plastics or other materials that are associated with negative impacts on the environment. They should be well made for the budget available, if a limited budget is available natural, renewable resources can be a good option. Where possible, resources should be differentiated for additional needs (e.g. large print).*

4. Conservation education must be an integral part of site planning and development.

*Explanation: Zoo educators are integral to collection planning, habitat design and the interpretation planning processes. Ensuring that a broad perspective is offered which will help to create a better and more impactful visitor experience. For example, when a new habitat is planned, educators should be part of the key stakeholder meetings.*

### **Embedding Purposes of Conservation Education into Zoo and Aquariums**

5. Conservation education in zoo or aquariums must aim to raise awareness of the value of biodiversity, connect people to nature and build capacity for individuals to take sustainable actions.

*Explanation: By having a clear purpose for conservation education, zoos can contribute towards global biodiversity targets such as the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and UN Sustainable Development Goals.*

*To help people identify the importance of biodiversity, connecting them to the natural world is proving to be a potentially essential conservation tool. Connectedness to Nature Theory (CNT) suggests that a relationship with the natural world directly affects people's physical, mental, and overall wellbeing due to benefits gained by increased exposure to nature and positive experiences in the natural world (Tauber, 2012) and because of this, people are more likely to commit to pro-environmental behaviour.*

6. Conservation education in zoo or aquariums should aim to promote awe, wonder, enjoyment, creativity, and inspiration about species and the natural world. It should make conservation issues relevant to visitors' own lives and experiences in order to inspire and empower people to take direct and indirect actions for species, ecosystems, and communities.

*Explanation: Efforts to promote conservation must focus on engendering a respect for biodiversity in order to affect behavioural change. People can take conservation action in many different ways from donating money, volunteering time, to making changes to their everyday lives (e.g. reduce, reuse, recycle), pursuing conservation careers, advocating for the environment and sustainable purchasing. Zoos and their conservation education programmes should provide the inspiration and support people need to start taking some of these actions.*

### **Promoting Conservation Education for All**

7. The zoo or aquarium must provide opportunities for a variety of audiences to learn about conservation in the zoo or aquarium site, and should aspire to also do this online and outside the zoo or aquarium through active outreach programmes.

*Audiences: There should be careful consideration and a clear, equitable approach that outlines ways to remove barriers and engage with target audiences identified as part of the conservation education plan.*

*Explanation: By maximising the opportunities to learn, zoos can inspire and engage a wide range of audiences through conservation education. These opportunities could take place at their zoo sites, through outreach and community engagement or through their website and social media platforms. Outreach can be defined as any activity that engages with the public outside your organisation, and is not limited to traditional conservation education sessions within a school setting. These can include, but are not limited to, activities at/on community events, fetes/fayres, corporate events, careers fairs, holiday clubs, community hubs, industry conferences, local conservation projects, coastal/marine/terrestrial habitat maintenance (e.g. beaching combing/bioblitzing), international/collaborative projects, national/local projects, tv/radio/podcasts, digital outreach: social media, websites, blogs, and publications, as well as education sessions in venues outside the zoo and projects with community groups.*

8. The zoo or aquarium must be able to demonstrate a range of delivery approaches in their conservation education programmes to cater for different audiences and needs.

*Audiences: Groups from a wide range of diverse backgrounds who have access to zoos and aquariums. Each zoo and aquarium should therefore understand the range of audiences and their specific requirements and needs in order to be able to design, deliver and evaluate their conservation education programmes on/off site.*



*Explanation: Methods for the delivery of conservation education can come in many different forms and a variety of these must be implemented to cater for a diverse audience. These can include accessible approaches to signage and inclusive/flexible pedagogy for both formal and informal science learning.*

*Examples of ways to make these accessible can include tactile learning, braille, hearing loops, quiet spaces for neuro diverse, parents and babies, prayer, Special Educational Needs specific events, inclusive language, representative materials with Equality Diversity and Inclusion in mind, accessible programmes which remove barriers (such as social-economic and age).*

### **Applying Appropriate Approaches and Methods in Conservation Education**

9. The zoo or aquarium must adopt an evidence-based approach to conservation education, utilising relevant research and evidence in the development and implementation of conservation education programmes.

*Explanation: Ensuring there are clear intended outcomes for your programmes and activities are key to delivering effective and impactful conservation education. Testing if you have met these outcomes through appropriate evaluation techniques tells us how effective our work is. Evaluation plans to measure the impact of programmes and activities should be an integral part of your initial planning process.*

*Use of tested models and theories (e.g. Theory of Change) to provide a framework for how you will reach your conservation education outcomes.*

*Accessing peer reviewed journals, regular webinars, regional meetings and wider industry events is important to ensure zoos and aquariums remain up to date, relevant and to be able to apply learnings to their programmes.*

10. The zoo or aquarium's conservation education messages must be based on scientific facts. Where historical, cultural, religious or alternative ideas are represented, they must be clearly indicated as such.

*Explanation: It is essential that the messages communicated by BIAZA zoos are factually correct and based on scientific knowledge. This ensures that our visitors receive clear, consistent and evidence-based messages about animals, their habitats and the natural world.*

*Where appropriate those responsible for conservation education must engage with teams responsible for conservation programmes and animal collections to ensure that expert knowledge is incorporated into all aspects of conservation education messaging including signage, workshops and visitor engagement opportunities.*



11. The zoo or aquarium must have a process in place for reviewing and updating information presented about the species exhibited to ensure it is accurate.

*Explanation: On species signage, this should include as a minimum, the species name (both scientific and common), its natural habitat and some of its biological characteristics and details of its conservation status. The IUCN Red List is a good reference for species conservation status.*

### **Integrating Animal Care and Welfare into Conservation Education**

12. Animal welfare should be embedded within any animal-visitor educational experience. Regardless of the deemed value of the experience to conservation education, animal welfare frameworks and assessments should be incorporated into the planning and evaluation of each session/experience.

*Explanation: It is increasingly evident that use of live animals in zoo education programmes – particularly events or sessions where an animal is removed from its enclosure for the duration of the event – can be detrimental to the welfare of the animal. Incorporating welfare assessments into the planning of all visitor-animal interactive sessions will help to reduce or eliminate these negative impacts.*

13. The zoo or aquarium must ensure that they abide by all BIAZA policies regarding any live animals used in education including the BIAZA Animal Welfare Policy and BIAZA Close Contact Policy ensuring that any use in education does not impede on the general welfare of the animal. Zoo or aquariums should also refer to the BIAZA Animal Welfare Toolkit and relevant BIAZA animal handling resources when considering the use of live animals.

*Explanation: BIAZA policies around conservation education and visitor-animal experiences are aimed at keeping welfare as the foundation upon which these sessions are based. The policies describe the elements that must be incorporated into the sessions.*

14. Each zoo and aquarium will display to visitors via interpretation and/or behaviour how highly they value animal welfare and incorporate these high standards throughout their organisation.

*Explanation: Modern zoos excel at implementing high standards of animal welfare. These standards are fundamental to the modern zoo, and BIAZA organisations should proudly broadcast this to their visitors. Our voice should be that our animals have not chosen to be here, so our duty of care to each one is taken very seriously. The education message can be extensive: the animals rely upon us for ALL their needs, so we need to consider habitat (enclosure and environment), diet (nutrition), behaviour (enrichment, seasonal variations, breeding), and that our research and conservation work feeds directly back into welfare.*

### **Prioritising Conservation and Sustainability in Conservation Education**

15. The zoo or aquarium must educate their audiences about their conservation and sustainability work and demonstrate their organisation's direct and indirect contributions to conservation.

*Explanation: A direct contribution to conservation may include a donation of staff, time, expertise, monies and/or materials. It can also include sustainability initiatives on the zoo or aquarium site. Ideally zoos would help visitors understand that their visits help fund conservation work and that the educational activities that they take part in (i.e. reading interpretation, talking/listening to staff) are also a part of the zoo's conservation programme.*

*Links to conservation work and sustainability initiatives should be used as part of school and visitor programmes.*

### **Optimising Training and Professional Development in Conservation Education**

16. The zoo or aquarium must allocate sufficient staff time and resources to develop and implement their conservation education plan.

*Explanation: The number of staff undertaking conservation education should be commensurate with the zoo's size and budget and be adequate to achieve actions set out in the education plan. The zoo should be able to provide evidence of staffing structures with well thought through justifications to their capacity, role descriptions and the skills and experiences of educators.*

17. The zoo or aquarium must support conservation education staff to be actively involved in local, national, regional and/or international conservation education networks. This can include those outside of the traditional zoo or aquarium conservation education networks.

*Explanation: Conservation education networks provide opportunities to share best practice and form both informal and formal partnerships. There are many networks of relevance to conservation education. Members should prioritise participation in those that best link to their education plan and objectives. These include zoo and aquarium specific networks such as those provided through the zoo associations (e.g. BIAZA's regional education networks, the International Zoo Educators Association) but also wider conservation education networks such as Learning Outside the Classroom Natural Environment Sector Partnership, Group Museum Educators, Botanic Gardens Education Network & Association of Science and Discovery Centres)*

18. The zoo or aquarium must support conservation education staff with appropriate and effective continuous professional development and training to meet the aims of the zoo or aquarium's conservation education plan.

*Explanation: This support should involve continued professional development of effective communication skills as well as knowledge and understanding about biodiversity conservation. The opportunities offered should cater for different learning styles and therefore could involve but not be*

*limited to attendance to conferences, meetings, be online or self-guided. The zoo or aquarium should also appraise the effectiveness of opportunities against the desired outcomes of their conservation education plan.*

### **Strengthening the Evidence of the Conservation Education Value of Zoos and Aquariums**

19. In the conservation education plan, there must be specific reference to applying measurable outcomes to a zoo or aquarium's conservation education programmes to evaluate its programmes at multiple stages using a range of appropriate methods. Zoos or aquariums should define objectives within their plan and identify baselines for audiences.

*Explanation: Learning outcomes are defined as the anticipated or achieved results of programmes or the accomplishment of the zoo's objectives. These should be set prior to the initiation of the programme. These can be demonstrated by a wide range of indicators which should reflect the group needs and the organisation strategy They can include indicators such as developments in: Knowledge and understanding; skills; attitudes and values; agency, enjoyment, inspiration and creativity; activity, behaviour, health and wellbeing and nature connectives. Ways to capture the measurements of the indicators should be built into the programming and communications with the relevant audiences. These outcomes should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound) to measure the impact and effectiveness of their plans and programmes.*

*Evidence can include –*

- Organisation conservation education plan*
- Programme evaluation plan*
- Organisational strategy*
- Session plans*
- Examples of data collection methods*
- Example of evaluation data collected in sessions*
- Photos, videos*
- Evidence from audience members*

20. The zoo or aquarium must collect and share a range of meaningful evidence to demonstrate how it is carrying out its conservation education plan is meeting its organisational strategy and meeting its measurable goals.

*Explanation: Meaningful evidence of the plan could take the form of curricula documents, activity, session and lesson plans, photographs, video, workplans, print and digital coverage from own and partner organisations, reports, raw evaluation data etc. As per #19 plans for measuring impact and fulfilling organisational strategy should also be collected. These should be prepared to be shared both internally and externally with colleagues and relevant governing organisations.*

*Evidence can include –*

- Organisation conservation education plan*
- Programme evaluation plan*
- Organisational strategy*

*Session plans*  
*Examples of data collection methods*  
*Example of evaluation data collected in sessions*  
*Photos, videos*  
*Evidence from audience members*  
*Reports*  
*Paper*  
*Presentations*

21. The zoo or aquarium should gather case studies and aspire to conduct evidence-based research to demonstrate the effects of their conservation education on the outcomes listed against their sessions listed in their plans.

*Explanation: The case studies and research should aspire to provide a range of evidence of the short, medium and longer-term contributions of their programmes on conservation education and the impact it can make in terms of the impact of programmes in promoting nature's benefits and audiences' role in its health.*

*Evidence can include –*

- Organisation conservation education plan*
- Programme evaluation plan*
- Organisational strategy*
- Best practice case studies – internal and external*
- Session plans*
- Examples of data collection methods*
- Example of evaluation data collected in sessions*
- Photos, videos*
- Evidence from audience members*
- Reports - internal and external*
- Papers – internal and external*
- Presentations*
- Impact studies – Internal and external*
- Reviews – internal and external*

22. The zoo or aquarium should aspire to engage in partnerships with external organisations and academic institutions in their programmes and to conduct social research and evaluation projects.

*Explanation: Making long-term, meaningful connections with other organisations and academic partners is a great way to support the undertaking of strengthening our programmes and to support social research and evaluation in zoos. Academic institutions can provide specialist knowledge and*

*skill, and students to carry out and analyse the research. This could be the co-creation and evaluation of programmes with other organisations to create longer-term partnerships. Or, a partnership with a university to evaluate collected raw data of our programmes and develop meaningful collation and evaluation methods.*

*Evidence can include –*

*Organisation conservation education plan  
Programme evaluation plan  
Organisational strategy  
Best practice case studies – internal and external  
Session plans  
Examples of data collection methods  
Example of evaluation data collected in sessions  
Photos, videos  
Evidence from audience members  
Reports - internal and external  
Papers – internal and external  
Presentations  
Impact studies – internal and external  
Reviews – internal and external  
Partnership agreements – MOU's  
Collaboration session plans  
Biographies – internal and external  
Student project outlines and related papers*

### **Further Reading/References**

Social Change for Conservation — The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Education Strategy (2020) - <https://www.waza.org/priorities/community-conservation/the-ize-waza-education-strategy/>

<https://evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/> - A great place to find information and resources to support your evaluation

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-the-economics-of-biodiversity-the-dasgupta-review> - Independent review on economics and nature, showing the impact of each on each other

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals> - UN Sustainability Goals

<https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cbd-press-release-final-19dec2022> - The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework