



choices help insure the future of America's fisheries and the people who depend on them. The Zoo also informs guests about how purchasing shade-grown coffee conserves habitat for migratory birds. They can drink shade-grown coffee at the Subway franchise at the Zoo. Through the Primate Expedition Cruise and an educational display, Zoo guests have understood the importance of education in Madagascar in saving the island nation's lemurs and other endangered wildlife to the point of helping to pay for education programs for the youth of Madagascar through on-site donations. And the Zoo's National Wildlife Federation Backyard Wildlife Habitat shows guests through example and literature how they can make their own yards more attractive to butterflies, songbirds, and other wildlife.

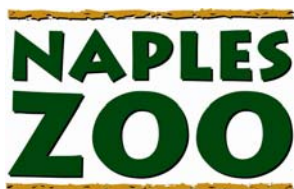
Prior to completion of this study, zoos and aquariums have primarily relied upon the insight offered by examples like these and by more limited studies focused on single institutions, attendance figures, and anecdotal evidence as measures of what impact they have on visitors' attitudes, feelings and knowledge.

"The Visitor Impact Study shows that zoos and aquariums are enhancing public understanding of wildlife and the conservation of the places animals live. It validates the idea that we are having a strong impact on our visitors," said Cynthia Vernon, of AZA's Board of Directors and a co-principal investigator of the study. "These results will help institutions develop even more effective exhibitions and educational programs that help connect people with nature and encourage attitude and behavioral changes that help conservation."

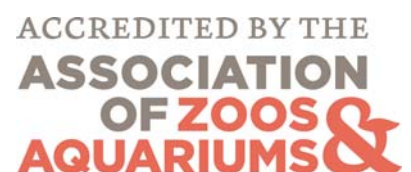
Funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and developed through partnerships among the AZA, Institute of Learning Innovation, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the study will be used by Naples Zoo and the other accredited zoos and aquariums to better understand and predict their contribution to public understanding of animals and conservation. Collectively, the impact to be gained from this study is substantial as AZA's 210 accredited zoos and aquariums reach 143 million visitors a year.

The study began with a comprehensive review of existing literature about the impact of zoo and aquarium visits. The literature supported the conclusion that zoos and aquariums make a difference, but most earlier research had been limited in scope in ways that did not allow the results to be applied generally across all leading zoos and aquariums.

To address this gap, AZA held a series of public forums with zoo and aquarium professionals. Drawing on feedback from these meetings, Institute for Learning Innovation researchers developed a groundbreaking series of studies to investigate specific factors that directly relate to visitor learning and behavior, and to analyze how this information can be used to further enhance visitors' attitudes toward wildlife and nature.



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Twelve AZA institutions and 1,400 visitors participated in the studies over a three-year period. The AZA institutions that participated in the studies varied in size and geographic location to ensure a representative sample. Various quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the study, including written surveys, tracking studies and Personal Meaning Mapping, which was used to identify individual changes in visitors' thinking by allowing them to respond to a series of questions prior to and after their visit. A subset of the participants was called seven to 11 months after their visit to determine the impact of the visit over time.

"For the first time we have reliable data validating the positive impact zoos and aquariums have in changing visitors' feelings and attitudes about conservation," said AZA President and CEO Jim Maddy. "This study clearly shows that visitors believe that accredited zoos and aquariums are deeply committed to animal care and education, and that we play an important role in species conservation. These findings enhance our goal to build America's largest wildlife conservation movement."

**ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING INNOVATION** The Institute for Learning Innovation, a not-for-profit learning research and development organization, is committed to better understanding the nature of free-choice learning and its role in a Learning Society. Its mission is to study, support and advocate for free-choice learning – learning that fulfills the life-long human quest for knowledge, understanding and personal fulfillment. The Institute was established in 1986 in Annapolis, Md.

**ABOUT AZA** Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, the AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats.

**ABOUT NAPLES ZOO** Naples Zoo is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization located at 1590 Goodlette-Frank Road across from the Coastland Center mall in the heart of Naples. The nationally accredited Zoo supports conservation and research around the world. The Zoo welcomes guests daily from 9:30 to 5:30 with the last ticket sold at 4:30. To learn more, click [www.napleszoo.com](http://www.napleszoo.com) or call (239) 262-5409.

**EDITOR NOTE: More results of the study will be presented at the AZA annual conference in Tampa, Fla., on Sept. 26, 2006 from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.**

### Print Quality Images

Image of endangered lemur and tour boat on the Primate Expedition Cruise available via e-mail by request to [tim@napleszoo.com](mailto:tim@napleszoo.com)

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