NIGHT TOUR: BRINGING THE ZOO’S ROLE TO LIGHT

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Abstract

Zoos have become important centers for wildlife conservation, supported by scientific, conservation, educational and socio-cultural pillars. However, the zoos role still seems unclear to a large part of the population. Given this, it is fundamental that these institutions create effective strategies to present their work to society and legitimize their existence. In this context, the São Paulo Zoo has used several communication and educational strategies, directed to the population in general and for different types of public audience. An activity that has been held since 2003 and that has proven quite effective in order to show the zoos goals and discuss biodiversity conservation is the Night Tour. This activity takes place every two weeks at São Paulo Zoo and consists of a guided tour by environmental educators with the participation of professionals from several areas of the Zoo. The focus of the Night Tour is to introduce the nocturnal animals, which usually stimulate the interest of those who visit a zoo during the day, but are rarely seen in activity during this period. The Night Tour also makes it possible to approach the functioning of the Zoo and its role. The effectiveness of this activity was demonstrated in the results of a survey conducted from 2013 to 2014 and again in 2019, in which questionnaires were sent before and after the visit to the Night Tour’s participants. The results showed that the majority of the participants (70%) changed their opinion positively regarding the role of zoos after the visit and knowing the care of the São Paulo Zoo’s team for the animals was the main motivator of this change. This research demonstrated that the Night Tour is an educational tool with great potential to present the role of zoos to visitors.