

Europe Naturally



A public awareness campaign initiated at Artis Royal Zoo



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Natura 2000

Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of EU nature & biodiversity policy. It is an EU-wide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 Habitats Directive. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves where all human activities are excluded; the network includes nature reserves though most of the land is likely to continue to be privately owned and the emphasis will be on ensuring that future management is sustainable, both ecologically and economically.



Pilot project

From the onset, Natura 2000 proved a complex message to communicate. Therefore, the Dutch government searched for new ways of informing the public effectively regarding this conservation initiative. As a result, the 'Europe Naturally' campaign was conceived in 2007 as a two-year pilot: a joint project of Artis Royal Zoo Amsterdam and the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. The aim of the project was to increase the awareness of zoo visitors concerning European wildlife and the Natura 2000 initiative.

Diverse audiences, different media

Several different audiences were targeted at the zoo i.e. interpretation was developed for adults and children, visiting as individuals, as a family group or as part of a school outing.

Informative and educational media developed include:

- An information pavilion next to the Dutch Meadow Aviary
- A designated route through the zoo with information panels and interactives
- Special programmes for primary and secondary schools
- A free poster donated to all visiting school groups
- A Natura 2000 animal trail
- An information folder
- A website



Evaluation

A leading Dutch marketing research agency was called on board to evaluate the project over the two-year period by carrying out a baseline measurement, and conducting monthly questionnaires and several focus group discussions.

Zoo visitors' opinions and post-visit knowledge of Natura 2000 were recorded in an effort to evaluate the campaign's effectiveness. A fundamental question that interested both parties was whether zoos were suitable places to communicate complex issues regarding nature conservation.

Key research questions:

1. Do visitors regard the zoo as an appropriate place to learn about nature conservation projects?

2. Were the different methods used to communicate and interpret the initiative attractive enough?

Did visitors appreciate the different offerings? If yes, to what extent?

3. What did zoo visitors learn about European nature conservation legislation and the Natura 2000 initiative? What messages did they take home?



Additionally, student researchers evaluated the effectiveness of specific media developed for the campaign.

Mission accomplished?

Our conclusions are that visitors to Artis Royal Zoo Amsterdam value the project and nature conservation initiative. Moreover, zoos seem suitable places to raise awareness on European nature conservation legislation and the complex conservation initiative Natura 2000.

During the project period, an increasing number of zoo visitors became familiar with the nature conservation initiative. Before the project started only 12% of visitors knew of Natura 2000. With the implementation of the 'Europe Naturally' campaign, the number of zoo visitors familiar with both initiatives increased significantly to 54%. The vast majority of zoo visitors - almost 90% - consider the pilot project valuable and important.



The future

Artis Royal Zoo Amsterdam will continue to forward the Nature 2000 initiative. The campaign will be discussed with Rotterdam Zoo, Emmen Zoo and Burgers' Zoo, who signed a covenant – together with Artis Royal Zoo Amsterdam - in support of the project. Ultimately, the goal is to get other Dutch zoos involved and further develop the project into a European-wide zoo-based awareness campaign in an effort to reach an even greater audience with this all-important conservation initiative.



More information

Please visit www.natuurineuropa.nl or mail info@natuurineuropa.nl for more information.