

# Zoos and aquariums contribute to achieving Aichi Target 1

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Aichi Biodiversity Target 1 of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 states that “by 2020, at the latest, people are aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.” As a contribution to achieve this target, and to effectively complement existing educational materials, the World

Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) will develop tools for raising awareness about biodiversity in zoo and aquarium visitors. These new tools will focus on global issues and personal engagement.

This will be accompanied by an evaluation of the knowledge about and perception of biodiversity in zoo and aquarium visitors, also to assess the effectiveness of the tools developed for awareness-raising. Such a large-scale evaluation of zoos and aquariums as education centres is mostly lacking and also needed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for evaluating Aichi Target 1.

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the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity. The main idea is to create a strategy and framework based on research and member input throughout the world.

This awareness project aims at strengthening the capacity of WAZA member zoos and aquariums to communicate about their conservation role and efforts: (1) to raise public awareness and inspire people to protect the natural world by taking action that helps conserve biodiversity globally; (2) to help zoos and aquariums to accomplish this through education programmes – entertaining and emotional experiences in zoos and aquariums – that inspire people to care about nature by seeing live animals; (3) to provide support for in-zoo and in-aquarium fundraising for conservation; and (4) to provide support for enhancing understanding and concrete environmental action, from personal lifestyle changes to national environmental politics.

WAZA conducted a survey in December 2011 with a selection of its member institutions and representatives of the International Zoo Educators' Association. The objective of the survey was to determine whether and to what extent institutions were using biodiversity-related educational materials. The majority of survey participants felt that there were gaps in zoo and aquarium biodiversity education that were pressing and urgent to fill. Tools for raising awareness about biodiversity most wished for were short videos and computer-based wildlife programs. Another suggestion was the idea to develop a centralised collection of existing educational materials. An online system of some sort, for example, could help zoo and aquarium educators share a wide range of resources.

Another survey recently conducted by WAZA, in collaboration with national and regional zoo and aquarium associations, showed that annually more than 700 million people visit zoos and aquariums worldwide, and are thus potentially exposed to environmental education. This figure is unparalleled by any other group of conservation-oriented institutions. Most of these people live in urban areas and have little or no contact with nature; providing a connection to nature plays an important part in creating an appreciation for biodiversity. Therefore, the world zoo and aquarium community has the potential to contribute significantly to achieving Aichi Biodiversity Target 1. ❖



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*The World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) is the unifying organisation for the world zoo and aquarium community. The more than 300 members comprise leading zoos, aquariums, associations, affiliate organisations and corporate partners from around the world. With over 700 million visitors annually, together they are 'United for Conservation'. WAZA aims to guide, encourage and support the zoos, aquariums and like-minded organisations of the world in animal care and welfare, environmental education and global conservation. It is an official partner of the CBD during the UN Decade on Biodiversity 2011–2020.*



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**Tree planting at the Johannesburg Zoo; Biodiversity Week focusing on schools.**