

## Current and Emerging Issues and Trends

### Visitor and Revenue Targets

Despite the global financial crisis, Perth Zoo successfully met its annual visitor and revenue targets and achieved its highest ever level of attendance since the Zoo's opening in 1898. Revenue generation was also its strongest and the Zoo's fundraising program, Wildlife Conservation Action, exceeded targets to raise more than \$277,000 for the conservation of threatened species in the wild.

Feedback from Tourism WA indicates that due to public uncertainty over financial security, more West Australians have chosen to spend their holidays at home rather than travel interstate or overseas. This has resulted in strong attendance for local visitors to the Zoo coinciding with Tourism WA's launch of the 'Holiday at Home' campaign. Research into the Zoo Friends membership program, which grew in revenue by 19% in 2008-09, showed that membership is seen as very good value for money, has high retention, and the Zoo itself is seen as a safe, educational and enjoyable place to visit with a variety of things to see and do. Coupled with long periods of fine and mild weather in 2008-09, these factors have contributed to Perth Zoo's high visitation results.

In the coming year, Perth Zoo will continue to closely monitor the changing economic situation and its impact on the Zoo's revenue, visitation and activities.

### Wildlife Management, Medicine and Research

During 2008-09, Perth Zoo's Outcome Structure was reviewed resulting in its three services being replaced with two new services. One of the new services, 'Wildlife Management, Medicine and Research', was created to enable more effective reporting on species management, animal welfare, husbandry, captive breeding, conservation medicine, wildlife conservation, breeding for reintroduction and research.

This new service will enable Perth Zoo to report on its contribution to science and build its scientific profile. In 2008-09, 1.4 research communications were produced per full-time staff employee (a total of 18.06 FTEs), resulting in the production of 25 research communications. The key performance indicator does not report the actual published or presented papers but uses a three-year moving average to calculate the research communications produced per full time equivalent. The actual number produced was 36. This indicator will also be affected by the Zoo's success in attracting research funds to assist with production of publications and papers. Twenty-three research projects were also conducted.

Perth Zoo's Research Business Plan guides the Zoo's research activities, which are organised into six inter-relating research programs:

Nutrition, Reproductive Biology, Health and Disease, Captive Management, Wildlife Management and Conservation and Education and Communication. Combined with the Reproductive Biology Unit, Veterinary Hospital, staff mentoring of scientific studies and research-oriented positions and dependent on available funding, Perth Zoo plans to continue to build its contribution to natural science and conservation research in future years.

The knowledge gained from research into animal behaviour, husbandry and breeding helps to inform decisions made about welfare and husbandry at the Zoo and enables Perth Zoo to build partnerships and make a positive contribution to conservation. The Zoo's Native Species Breeding Program, which has had success in breeding Western Swamp Tortoises, Numbats, Dibbler, Chuditch and Shark Bay Mice for release into protected areas in the wild, will expand during 2009-10. Three new insurance and captive breeding programs are being established for the small marsupial, the Woylie, working in partnership with the Department of Environment and Conservation, and for two Christmas Island skink species working with the Australian Government.

To further build capacity, the Zoo is working on the concept of developing a Conservation Medicine and Threatened Species Research

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Centre to be built on-site. Incorporating the Native Species Breeding Program, the Veterinary Hospital, research laboratories and the Reproductive Biology Unit, the Centre would affirm Perth Zoo's position as a scientific institution working for conservation.

### Education, Community Engagement and Conservation Action

In line with Perth Zoo's purpose of engaging the community in global conservation action, the Zoo is diversifying its education programs to increase visitor involvement in taking action towards achieving measurable conservation outcomes.

In 2009 and 2010, Perth Zoo is participating as a partner in two community action campaigns initiated by Zoos Victoria. 'They're Calling On You' is a mobile phone recycling campaign aimed at raising funds for primate conservation while 'Don't Palm Us Off' is a campaign to mandate labelling of palm oil on all food and cosmetic products. Both campaigns provide zoo visitors with the opportunity to get involved in identified conservation outcomes.

In building our capacity to effectively manage and deliver such campaigns the Zoo has reviewed the role of its Education Officers to include development of programs that cater for the broader community. While continuing to offer formal education experiences to school students,

the Zoo's Education team will also facilitate more targeted conservation activities for the wider community. There will also be a focus on programs that foster sustainable life practices for schools, consistent with the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative and in line with the ongoing agreement with the Western Australian Department of Education and Training.

Perth Zoo has joined several other Australian zoos to be a partner in a post-doctoral research project being led by Monash University. The aim of the project is to foster pro-environmental behaviour of zoo visitors through strategic communication. The research involves working with Zoo staff to develop a series of specific actions for visitors and assess and monitor their effectiveness over time. Through the research, it is anticipated that zoos will be better placed to understand visitors' motivations and target their calls to conservation action more effectively.

In 2008-09, Perth Zoo's market research indicated that 72% of visitors who felt that the Zoo provided them with a better understanding of the issues facing animals in the wild reported that the signage and interpretation on-site contributed to this increased understanding. In addition, 38% of visitors found the Zoo's signage and interpretation a key source of information for learning about Perth Zoo's conservation initiatives. This indicates good achievement

for the Zoo in meeting visitor expectation and need for key information. However, there is currently no evidence to indicate how visitors use this information and whether it affects behavioural change, particularly change in their daily lives for the betterment of conservation and the environment. The research project being undertaken in partnership with Monash University will assist in determining which messages are contributing to visitor behavioural change.

## Looking Ahead – Major Initiatives in 2009-10

- Continue to support conservation projects at Bukit Tigapuluh National Park and the surrounding areas in Sumatra, Indonesia as part of the Zoo's partnership with the Indonesian Government and other partners to provide assistance for the conservation and protection of wildlife. This will include the Perth Zoo funded Orangutan Open Sanctuary which opened in February 2009.
- Continue to fundraise for Perth Zoo's Wildlife Conservation Action program to support the conservation of threatened species in the wild.
- Continue to improve and further develop project management processes for capital works projects outlined in Perth Zoo's Master Plan.
- Complete construction of a new environmentally-friendly toilet and parenting facility in the south-west corner of the Zoo, the upgrade to the Saltwater Crocodile exhibit and the Asian Small-clawed Otter exhibit.
- Continue the planning and development of improved visitor viewing facilities for the Sumatran Orangutan exhibit redevelopment, a new cockatoo aviary and upgrade the baboon exhibit.
- Set in place plans for an integrated water management project incorporating groundwater, scheme water and water recycling options.
- Finalise and report on the findings of the Zoo's Frog Breeding Research Program for priority Western Australian threatened species.
- In partnership with the Department of Environment and Conservation, establish a Woylie insurance and captive breeding program to support the recovery of this species in the wild and investigate the species' decline in conjunction with conservation medicine partners at Murdoch University and the species recovery team.
- At the request of the Australian Government, assist with the recovery of two species of endemic lizard from Christmas Island and establish captive insurance populations at Perth Zoo.
- Continue participation in species recovery programs and conservation projects with native species including amphibians, Dibbler, Numbat and Western Swamp Tortoise.
- Continue focus and analysis of the Zoo's business activities including admissions and visitor demographics to ensure strong attendance figures are maintained.
- Continue to closely monitor impacts of the global financial instability on visitor numbers and the Zoo's revenue generation capacity.
- Implement a new customer management system to support effective business decision-making.
- Continue the collaboration with other zoo partners on community-based conservation education programs including a national research project with Monash University into fostering pro-environmental behaviours of Zoo visitors.
- Continue to develop active relationships with partners and conservation agencies to maximise the dissemination of conservation messages into the community.