

Research shows a visit to a zoo boosts science and environment knowledge

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Research from the University of Warwick shows a trip to the zoo can boost your child's science and conservation education more than books or classroom teaching alone.

In research conducted at ZSL London Zoo, more than 3,000 school children aged between seven and 14 were asked about their knowledge of [animals](#), habitat and [conservation](#) and then tested again after their trip.

The results show that 53% had a positive change in educational or conservation-related knowledge areas, personal concern for [endangered species](#) or new empowerment to participate in [conservation efforts](#). The study proves that their trip around the zoo provided a statistically significant increase in scientific learning about animals and habitats. When zoo visits were supplemented by an educational presentation by zoo staff this increase in learning almost doubled against self-guided visits.

Eric Jensen, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, who produced the report said: "Globally, more than a tenth of the world's population passes through zoos annually so the potential is there to reach a huge audience.

"In recent years zoos have come under criticism for failing to demonstrate educational impact with certain lobbying groups arguing that it's cruel to keep animals captive. But zoos have been changing for years now to offer more educational and conservation information;

'behind the scenes' access for visitors; learning about habitat conservation work – all of which culminate in a better engagement experience for the visitor."

Children came away with a greater understanding of ideas such as conservation, habitat and extinction. Amongst those who had not previously registered a concern about species extinction, 39% switched to registering such a concern directly after a zoo trip.

The children were asked to draw their favourite animals and habitats before and after their trip to the zoo. The drawings were analysed and showed some remarkable improvements. Some 51% of ten-year-olds showed a real change in the drawings and the use of correct scientific terms such as 'canopy' and 'rainforest' and had a higher amount of animals placed in the correct [habitat](#), e.g. a meerkat drawn in the desert.

Eric added: "The research clearly shows the valuable role that zoos can play in children's science learning. So with another Bank Holiday fast approaching, why not swap the theme park for a good [zoo](#)? Your kids and their favourite animals may thank you in years to come!"

Provided by University of Warwick

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