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Penguin Promises

The Penguin Promises behaviour change campaign was designed to encourage visitors to uShaka Sea World, Durban, South Africa, to take positive post-visit action to help environmental conservation. Using a range of the principles for effective environmental education, Penguin Promises is an innovative campaign focussed on the African penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*). The African penguin is the icon for the campaign because the species is endangered (numbers in the wild have declined by up to 90% over the last 100 years); penguins have excellent appeal and have been popularised through movies such as Madagascar, Happy Feet and more serious documentaries such as March of the Penguins; and uShaka Sea World, and many other facilities, have colonies of breeding African penguins on exhibit to visitors. The campaign asks visitors to the facility to make a "Promise to the Penguins". With the tag line "We don't want your money honey, we want your love", this campaign encourages visitors to choose to make one change in their daily lives to become more environmentally responsible. Visitors are then asked to hand write their behaviour change promise on a printed postcard and post it in a specially designed post box. Their promise is their commitment to the environment.



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Promise to the Penguins.

Although difficult, measuring the long-term impact of a behaviour change campaign is critical. Few studies have been able to assess "real life" changes in behaviour over a year post visit. The first phase of the campaign has been completed and results of the long-term (>12 months) impact of the Penguin Promises behaviour change campaign have been published. The results show that the campaign is contributing to changes in personal visitor behaviour. Over 55% of the visitors who responded to a post-visit e-mail survey could describe the changes that they have made at home. More importantly, the research is revealing the reasons for visitors' actions and barriers to action. Factors leading to the success of this campaign are, therefore, being studied in order to contribute to the growing body of work providing guidance to the designers of zoos and aquariums on how they can help facilitate more environmentally responsible behaviour in their visitors after a visit.

To date the collection and analysis of promises has only been undertaken at uShaka Sea World, although many other facilities have used it for marketing and awareness campaigns. It is now envisaged that the collection, analysis and follow-up with visitors be rolled out to a wider range of facilities in South Africa, and even internationally. A system to record the promises and to facilitate improved follow-up has been designed, and will be implemented in the near future. These aspects will ensure the ongoing evaluation of the project. Appropriate evaluation of the project will remain a critical aspect and it is envisaged that another publication will be produced, once a wider range of facilities have joined the project. Ultimately, Penguin Promises can provide valuable evidence of the impact of zoos and aquariums on the behaviour of visitors. In addition to the evidence, the results can help us to improve our impact, and the role of zoos and aquariums in conservation. ■

