

Applying the Junior Ranger Model: Conservation Education in Zoos

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FRAMING

Guiding Question — State and National Parks systems utilize Junior Ranger programs to educate young visitors and their families about conservation and stewardship during their visit. Many zoos are trying to expand their existing conservation education initiatives and improve visitor understanding of conservation action.

Based on the success of Junior Ranger programs at accomplishing conservation education for children and families, could this program model translate to conservation education at zoos? (Tormey, 2019)

The Junior Ranger Model — The main component of Junior Ranger programs is a booklet of fun and educational activities. Children aged 5-13 are the primary audience, although folks of any age are allowed and encouraged to participate. Upon completion, participants swear an oath to protect the park, instilling a sense of value, stewardship, and responsibility. Though the program can be done without staff interaction, earning a patch and certificate directly from a ranger highlights the importance of their work.

Education Goals — The activity book was designed based on a current conservation initiative at Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) focusing on Pollinators and Carnivores.

Goal 1

People recognize and respect wildlife in their shared spaces.

Goal 2

People recognize and consider the needs of wildlife.

Goal 3

People avoid behaviors that can lead to negative interactions with wildlife.

Goal 4

People engage in behaviors that can help wildlife.

DELIVERABLES

This project resulted in two deliverables provided to Woodland Park Zoo. First, a 14 page **activity book** for ages 8-12 years old, was developed highlighting the zoo's pollinators and carnivores and sharing at-home conservation tips. Second, this project provided a complete **evaluation report** on the effectiveness of this group activity on visitor perceptions of pollinators and carnivores.

PURPOSE & IMPACT

The purpose of this project was to design and evaluate a Junior Zookeeper program at Woodland Park Zoo. The intended impact of this project was to engage children in conservation education through family-led, asynchronous activities designed in the Junior Ranger model.

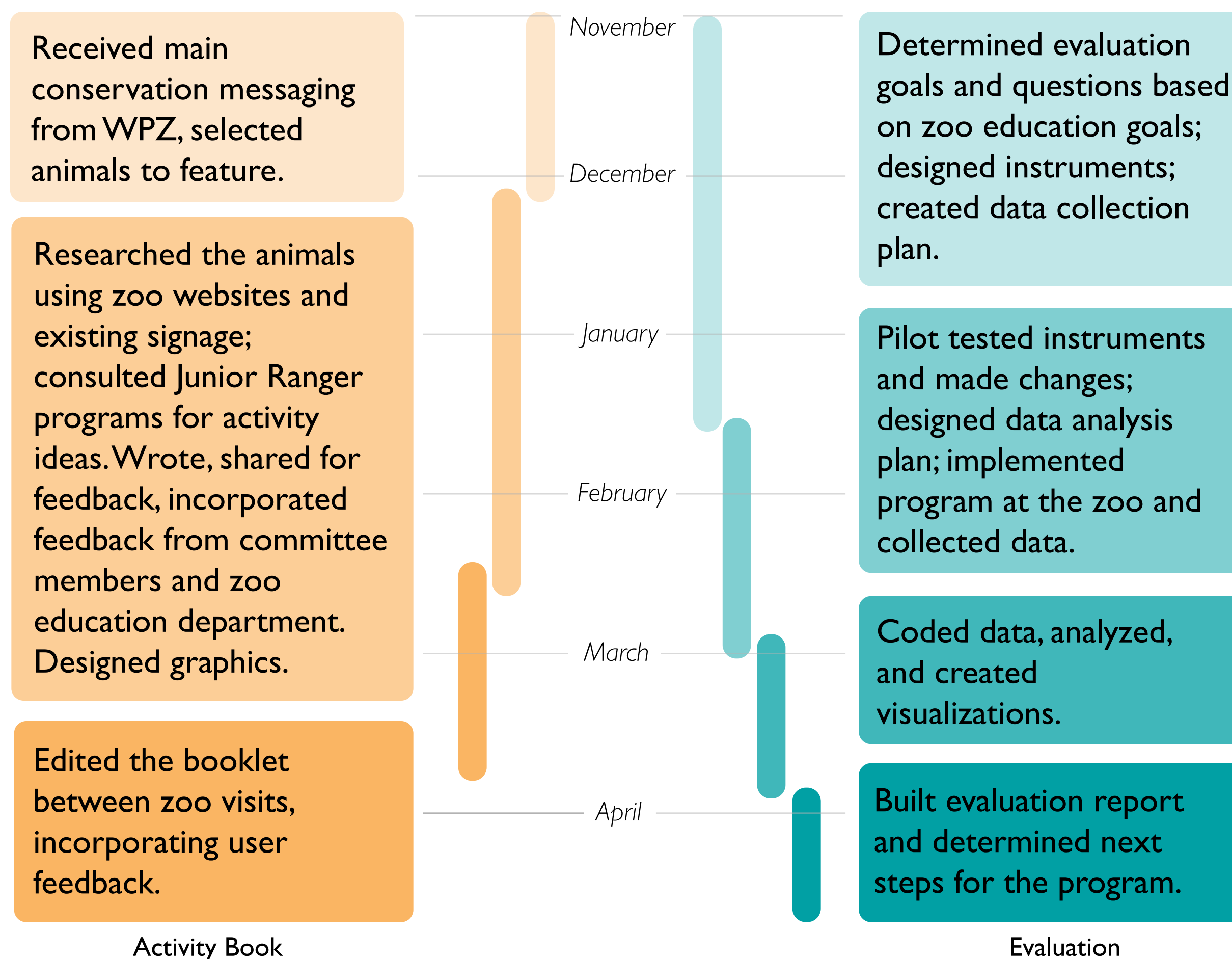
The following evaluation questions were designed to determine the effectiveness of the activity book on fulfilling the zoo's education goals and assess the program's impact.

Q1: Is this activity well suited for the intended audience?

Q2: Do participants make connections between the activities in the book and conservation issues?

Q3: Do groups want independent or asynchronous activities currently not provided by the zoo during their visit?

PROCESS

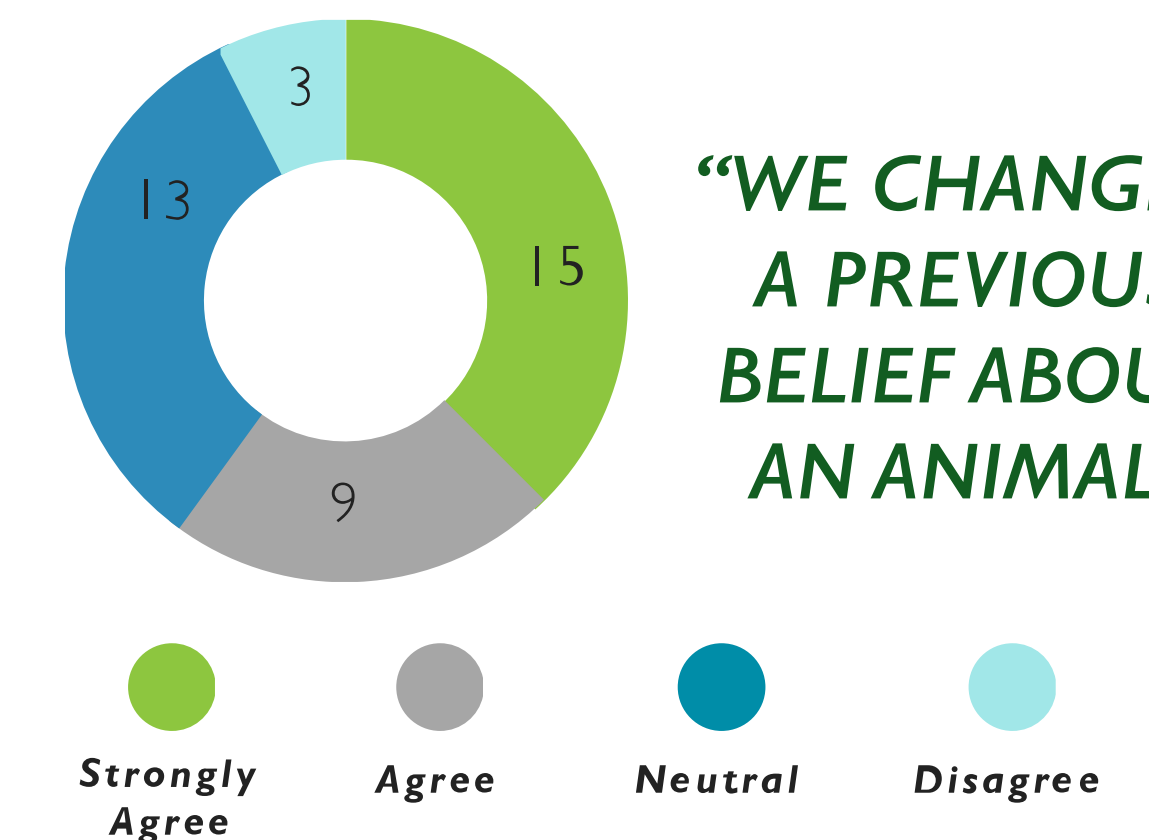


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RESULTS

The book was **well designed for the target 8-12 year old age range**, but more 4-7 year olds were interested in participating. There was an overall sense of satisfaction with participants, showing both enjoyment and a sense of gaining more from their visit. **78% of participants expressed desire to have future similar activities.** The data also revealed that **75% of participants could identify specific conservation actions to take after their visit**, concluding that the use of the activity book did successfully engage participants with conservation education. This also reinforces that **the Junior Ranger model can successfully be applied in zoos** and serve as an effective conservation programming style.



NEXT STEPS

The zoo will have access to the activity book, evaluation report, and guidelines on how to administer the program. The evaluation report recommends multiple ways for the zoo to expand access to the book.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Logistics**— Designate a specific pickup and drop off location and ensure employees and volunteers are aware of the process of the program.
- Book Changes**— Design a simplified version of the book for 4-7 year olds. Text can be simplified and focused on activities and actions. Certain areas of the zoo close in the winter, an “on” and “off” season version of the book could be created to include the summer-only zoo features.
- Accessibility**— Keep the book free and accessible. An online version can be made to eliminate printing.
- Languages**— Translate the book into the most spoken languages in Seattle and translate the names of the animals to Lushootseed to acknowledge the local native names.

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