



International Association of  
Avian Trainers and Educators

## **POSITION STATEMENT**

## **EDUCATIONAL MESSAGING**

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[www.IAATE.org](http://www.IAATE.org)

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## BACKGROUND

IAATE members working in educational programming are in a critically important position for affecting people's behavior to advance environmental stewardship and the preservation of wildlife and wild places. The unique resources in IAATE members' staff, exhibits and living collections combined with the opportunity to interact with a large number of people each year can foster caring attitudes and conservation action.

IAATE members deliver educational messages through a variety of means including:

- **On-site Programming** such as presentations/shows, academic programs, public programs, interpretation, workshops and media appearances.
- **Off-site Programming** such as presentations/shows, academic programs, community programs, events, workshops and media appearances.
- **Exhibits and graphics** both on- and off-site.

## POSITION

While recognizing that each institution has a unique mission appropriate to their facility, IAATE recommends that educational programming utilizing live birds shares the following goal:

*To increase awareness of the natural world, foster caring attitudes and promote behaviors that support a healthy, sustainable environment.*

IAATE recommends that educational messaging:

- Meets or exceeds professional education and interpretation standards.
- Promotes accurate and current scientific information/research.
- Attempts to address a variety of learning modalities including visual, auditory, motor and tactile.
- Engages, uplifts, entertains and inspires.
- Addresses the learner's point of view and is audience appropriate.
- Is multi-culturally sensitive and respectful.

IAATE recommends evaluation of educational programming to assess its success in achieving the above.

## SUPPORT FOR POSITION

Three types of desired program outcomes support this position. Combinations of these objectives should form the basis of educational programming and serve as the foundation for messaging, exhibits, programs and services.

1. **Acquisition of knowledge and awareness** about the natural world (cognitive learning).

Examples of effective teaching strategies that can be employed to meet this goal include inquiry-based learning, experiential learning, interpretive programming, and addressing learning modalities.

2. **Development of caring attitudes** toward the natural world (affective learning).

An attitude is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistent, enduring manner (both positively and negatively) with respect to a given person, object, or issue. Attitudes are a significant influence on people's behaviors. Attitude development and expression is a dynamic and complex process involving many factors that influence one another.

3. **Promotion of behavior changes** in the personal lives of visitors and program participants that assist in sustaining our natural world.

A behavior is any observable and measurable act or response by an individual. Change is measured by the adoption of new behaviors or increasing existing behaviors. Change in behavior can be long/short-term.

Generally, long-term behavior changes are the primary outcomes desired in conservation education programming. Encounters with birds and other wildlife in the zoo/nature center/program setting are one way to help people develop or increase caring attitudes towards animals and the environment that are critical in fostering a lasting conservation ethic.

To promote the development of a conservation ethic, it is important to provide opportunities for visitors and program participants to take simple actions to become involved with conservation efforts and learn about ways they can increase their contribution to conservation initiatives both locally and globally.

Education is most effective when a learner is actively involved in the experience. Whenever possible, a visit to an avian facility or program should be an interactive, educational, and recreational experience. This combination provides the most effective environment to increase awareness about and promote action on behalf of the natural environment.



## MESSAGE EVALUATION

IAATE members should consider it a priority to provide solid evidence supporting the contention that incorporating live birds as animal ambassadors in programming accomplishes our educational goals. By measuring program outcomes, members can ensure that their programs are truly effective vehicles for teaching and inspiring conservation action. Increasing collective evaluation efforts will benefit both the avian profession and individual institutions.

## REFERENCES:

Portions of this document were adapted from the *Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Education Management Plan*, v01-07.