

# Social media and empathy learning group

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

posts, empathy, animals, people, snakes, zoo, comments, audience, social media, crane, question, thought, keepers, department, giraffes, tiger, talk, long, events, reply

## SPEAKERS

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo), Brooke Tucker (ZooMontana), Marta Burnet

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00:02

Hi, Kristen, how are y'all? Good. I love all of the stuff in your background.



00:14

Oh, thank you. I have Yeah, a gallery wall going on behind me.



00:17

Very cute. Thank you I figured we can just wait a couple minutes give some folks a chance to trickle in if they had a meeting for this go ahead and get started within two or so minutes recording and website if there's anybody for some extra folks she can't. Presenters, and so okay.



01:05

He was going first. Awesome.



**E** Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 01:08

I should have given you screenshare promote shoots up did I just freezing share permission Hannah did to share



01:14

up sounds good. Let me pull it you all see a slide of my Hey, so for those weren't able to joy all so much for joining year full time And it's been doing it for a while now But maybe yeah we

so much for joining your fan club, and it's been doing it for a while now. But maybe year, we do have a PSA join today. So I kind of took the round with talking with her who aren't familiar with the international current kind of home base where we do a lot of our fees. But then we also do global cuts and then expanding more or being able to make that connection through their audiences is and meet all 15 grain species and want to continue to learn more and abroad. And then we also do so our social media that we target, I'm kind of merge a lot of just based on how the platform works. And what we wanted to mention this kind of before we got into the media management platform that allows us analytics, and like top posts, that's what really what I drew on for talk a little bit more about it later. But I just wanted to mention the hosts I'm going to show today we're within kind of the top top posts for each plot. So some goals for our social media even. So some of our goals or our thing that I love about social media is that it can do a really amazing job at and then we also do a lot of we also use social media to build if we have donations and members support the world celebration and incorporating empathy, why we're all on the ACE empathy Network website kind of overlapping themes. And whenever we talk about our resident flock we always tried at the San Antonio Zoo and how long they've been with their name, things like that with our wild flock to so have that draw with Raisa fall. So people kind of follow the trail until they are released into the wild and was caught. This year's chicks had a bit in June bug and then we're really getting in trouble action items so people can still contribute enrichment items and they could see their pumpkins being and so they can buy different like little items on RAM as a direct action besides donating most responded to Twitter probably just posted it not too long ago but we were called Carver's to come and help us carve puppet heads and tribute their skills to help crane conservation we do a single crane that migrates by itself every year to Iran saws that emotion with people and they're always looking and then we have like birthday celebrations for our at our facilities and it's still and then we're always in demand on our social media so our caption Liam bite perspective and people love kind of how they're interacting with their environment so when we do with a caption this posts and people really liked that a lot of phonology and behavioral aspects like I mentioned we kind of leanings are raised in the salt experience to with going the seasons ever were a crane on a check on a back our cranes dancing Colonel the wing flapping in the feather toss so some successes I took this in the way of where they're interacting with posts what they're only post things like this was one of our topic crane and my backyard inspired them are just really wacky posts people like to combo who is from Zambia to make those connections with cranes that they see but with seeing our cranes, female Sandhill Crane I old cranes kind of more close to stations about respecting wildlife and then make sure our messaging is getting across because continuing to keep that in mind with with having the biggest one ever crane is dancing or familiarity with the species and a theme through you can see a lot of chin so if they're able to contribute something people like to see as I mentioned so biting that perspective and bites that are how they're doing at this point. Taking a deeper dive I just went across different platforms putting on them in the future. Bring what Stories people connect with. But I think this is a great and really continue to expand on it. We do reoccurring posts like that. So that's really um, we do both boost some of our extra if a post is doing really well will boost them on Instagram or Facebook. To get more people to see it, we try to kind of look at we're adding a little bit older. So keep that in mind, people can continue to learn. Yeah, this is Hugh and utilize resources, videos on Instagram, which is



05:26

great. And I thought no worries, fine, perfect. And I apologize in advance for profit



**B****Brooke Tucker (ZooMontana) 05:33**

and ways that you can better kind of prepare yourself when going through tourist attractions or something like that, and being better able to avoid those traps and support places like the ACA accredited facilities. And then the last being that alternative text for accessibility reasons. And that also, again, helps identify individual. But of course, every post doesn't look like this. They're not all beaming with conservation action statistics. Some of them look as simple as this. Just a cute little post of one of the animals that lives here with a simple little caption, these ones tend to do the best, you know, everybody's gonna want to see something online that is more digestible. And we understand that so we try to break it up. And we try to not make everything so lengthy and long and hard to read. Of course, we are here for cute animal pictures. That's why most people subscribe or follow us. So we want to break up for people. But of course, this still has Dewey's name, we're relating to an action that we do growing up learning on our learning our dinner table manners, and then that alternative text for accessibility, and crediting whoever took a photo. So here's an example of a another conservation action post that I had posted. And of course, this one is a little bit different talking about snakes, but it has pretty much all of the same components that the Endangered Species day with Jasmine Sophie does. So we're using the names and the pronouns of all of the snakes here, we have Taco Leroy, Johnny Jenkins, over and Harry, we have identifying the relationship to another human or animal. So talking about how most of the snakes that live here at Zoo Montana were previous pets, and talking about that relationship and whether it was beneficial for them or not. And then conservation or caring action. For snakes, this, this is a huge one, a lot of people think that snakes don't have as many feelings or they're not as high maintenance of other animals. And we want to kind of drive home the point that even though they're not kind of a sought after species or species that many people have as pets, they still have needs, if not just as many needs as a bigger animal has. And then that conservation statistic is heading in there too. But even though the posts between the snake and the Tigers has pretty much all of the same as the information coming out of it, we do see a lot of this. So the top one is how the snake close to did. And the bottom is how do Jasmine and Sophie posted. Obviously there is a huge difference in how much these posts are being engaged with. And this is something we see whenever we post something like a reptile or an invertebrate versus a big, charismatic a mammal. So this is something that we are constantly struggling with. And trying to increase engagement for those less charismatic animals such as reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates. We tried to equally represent all of the species on our social media. But we are also obviously trying to increase those platforms, when we have a platform increase, of course that that is drawing more attention to our facility. And then that can be pushed into conservation action, or action, caring action towards the animals that live here. So it's very easy to increase all of these platforms if we were to constantly post something like a tiger or a bear or a panda all the time. But of course that would be a huge injustice to all of the fantastic animals that live here. So that is a huge struggle that we're working with. Because you know, all of the animals that live here, including gizmo right there be canceled Pilsudski could do and deserve that screen time.

**09:30**

That is all I have.

**M****Marta Burnet 09:34**

Great Well thank you so much Brooke Yeah Poor Emily fell off the call and now it's not

Great. Well, thank you so much, Brooke. Yeah. Poor Emily fell off the car and now it's not letting her back end. So we'll just keep moving along. She's trying to get back in on a different computer. So, Ryan, I think you're next



09:52

Yes, I am. guided to teeny group because it's my first time presenting at one of these. And I missed the PowerPoint memo. So I didn't make memo. But I have a very long Google Doc with a didn't make a PowerPoint. But I have a very long Google Doc with a lot of notes. And my position is a little different. So I work at receive Zoo, and I'm the empathy programs evaluator slash also kinda coordinator. So I do not have a direct role in social media advertising, anything like that I do sometimes contribute to our social media by writing posts for our marketing and media manager. But Kristin, she is a one woman team in charge of all social media, all marketing, all public relations. So she has a lot on her plate. So I help her every now and then. But I figured, since our other two lovely presenters, we're probably going to and did focus more on like the social media posting aspect of things. I would talk more about the work that we have done in other public communications on line in carnival, kind of a social media format. So of course, we have our regular Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts. We've been really tried to focus more on highlighting how we care for the animals, as opposed to just having posts that are like, this is not good anymore, Tiger and then sharing facts about Mr. Tiger. We do. And we I just met with our social media manager, Kristin a couple of weeks ago, which is why Asia recommended that I speak to you guys. Just to give her a little rundown of how empathy works, which you guys are obviously very familiar with that. But something that I have found really noteworthy that we have done here is the progression of empathy as it is used in press releases. Specifically in announcing animal deaths, like we have talked about at various events, animal births, and animal deaths and transfers are really powerful events that we can really use to our advantage. And I use some examples in the training PowerPoint that I delivered to all of our new staff members. And if you look at a death announcement for an alligator in 1960, I found it the title is vandals killed zoo Gator. And it just talks about the weight says it was a 75 six and a half foot long Gator 135 pounds. And it's lungs had filled with water. And then it said the beast one of two at the zoo was valued at \$75. And then we fast forward to the death of announcement of Nora who passed away in August 2020. Right before I got here, so I was never fortunate enough to meet her. But we told the whole story of discovering and aggressive mouth cancer and the steps that we took in her history of how she came to the receive zoo and kind of kind of more like a human obituary as opposed to just announcing that an animal died. And moving from that to them looking at the announcement we had for Anya last summer. And then this year, as some of you may be aware of our announcement regarding diamond got a lot of traction online, both with regular people and also among the zoo community. Because we've really dove deep into his personality and the relationships he has with his keepers, as well as the relationship he had with guests. I'll be honest, as I was preparing for all this, I was getting a little like choked up, because it's just so well written, I do not have a part in that. So I'm not tooting my own horn. And we, we just you see a lot of progression and improvement over time. Even in 2019 2020 to 2021 to 2022. There has been a lot of growth in terms of using empathy, focus language, but also just the focus of animal care. That I think in itself is empathy driven. I something I would love to see more of in our social media is and we are working on posting more about animal care. But it's just having more animal focus posts. Because when I was on our social media this morning on our Facebook page, if you scroll through our photos, it's mostly pictures of humans enjoying themselves at our events, to advertise events, which are important. But I think that that could potentially send not the correct message to people who might already be predisposed to view zoos in a negative light. And when it comes to challenges

that I think is the biggest challenge we face is that we can count I have screenshots of all these amazing comments and that is really how we measure our success in using empathy is the comments like are there two presenters mentioned and we have an awesome PowerPoint all about? Diamond skincare journey and people saying I'm in skincare so right skincare cancer survivor to you can do this. And thanks for all you do for Diamond and all such amazing trust on both sides of that fence. But then in a post that I wrote about NACA last earlier this year, we had a four series post for post series about a more Tiger Makos weight loss and how we figured out that she has exocrine, pancreatic insufficiency. And we shared these incredible videos of her working with her keepers to sit for voluntary injections in exchange for delicious, yummy meatballs. And it's a huge success story of how we were able to figure out what is wrong with this elderly Tiger and care for her without having to sedate her and run the risk of her dying under sedation. And there are there were still I actually had to email Kristen, on because we had some very concerning comments underneath it beyond just you get the typical, she doesn't belong there. She wants to be in the wild, she got animal was sad, because they would rather be running free. We got some odd comments about the keeper in the staff and you don't love your animals. And that was our I think the those people are our biggest challenge, which is an obvious statement to make. But I think with a lot of the work, at least that we do here is we're kind of reinforcing more or less within our own echo chamber. The people that we're communicating with are people who have chosen to come to the zoo, or who follow the zoos Facebook page, because they care a lot about it. But my question is, how do we reach those audiences? Who are anti Zoo? And is empathy, the tool to use for that? Because I think, for instance, one of the comments was poor Tiger, she's too thin. And it's like, well, if you read the rest of the posts, in the last video, you would have known that we knew she was thin. And that's why we did this. But I don't under I don't know, I don't know if there's an answer for it. Maybe empathy isn't the tool to get these people on board. Because when you look at their issues, the issues that they have, like we always say people who are anti zoo are on the same side as us, they just don't have as much knowledge as us. But the issues that they have are so fundamental and foundational that these people are often not open to new learning. And I think that that's kind of our biggest struggle, it's great to reinforce them or reinforce the knowledge and understanding of people who are already on our side. But reaching those people who are anti zoo is, I think, a really big challenge that I'm not obviously the first one to ever bring it up, nor will I be the last. But that is something that I think empathy is very intricately intertwined with. And there's a lot of, you know, there's the idea that nature is better, and that being in the wild is safer and better. And that that is the happiest place. And I think a large part of the empathy work that we do is explaining that the animals we take care of are lucky and they are oftentimes luckier than their wild counterparts. Because big cats still get cancer, giraffes still get arthritis, we just happen to have a tiger who we can treat, you know, we treated her cancer and we have a giraffe who we can treat his arthritis. And I think that that lack of understanding might be a barrier that we have to overcome before we can even start thinking about empathy and all of the other things we want to accomplish. I think if people can't get over the fact that animals don't just belong in wild habitats, that that's not always the best scenario or that being in a sanctuary is not always the best option. I don't know how much progress we'll be able to make with our empathy messaging. Like I said, I don't have a PowerPoint. So I don't really have any I have so many so many notes. I will say I'm very proud of the work that our zoo has done. I'm very proud to work under Asia summers leadership, because this is something she really believes in. And, you know, we have a lot of instances I have a whole other section on how our use of empathy has impacted independent news sources. Because you can see that when we use more empathy in our own postings, that language is reflected when, you know, receipt journal Milwaukee Journal times, Racine Journal Sentinel posts about events or posts about animal births or animal deaths. So we really set the example for people who are outside of the zoo field which I think is really powerful

 E Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 19:30

Awesome, thank you for sharing Ryan. I am glad I was able to resolve my tech issues and come back for the tail end of that I'm sorry that I missed like the entire middle of your presentations by joining on my Mac was unsuccessful joined on my phone for a little bit. Now we're back on my work computer. It's been a journey. Um, but I would like to kind of offer the space now if anybody in the audience has questions for Brooke or Hannah or Brian. I Um, before we kind of move into a more

 20:02

facilitated discussion so,

 M Marta Burnet 20:14

I have a question. Thank you all for sharing. I think that was great to see different. Hear about different ways that you're all working on these things. Ryan, I thought that was really interesting about having that old press release. And I do wonder, like I, it makes me want to go back and see what what our press releases were like, you know, 2040 years ago, because yeah, to talk about some value. So I think that that was really interesting.

 20:52

You mentioned that,

 M Marta Burnet 20:55

then negative that you're experiencing, and I'm sure that happens, Hannah and Brooke. What are your responses to that? Do you try to respond? Or do you just ignore it? Like,

 21:12

what is the

 M Marta Burnet 21:14

what is your response to those kind of situations?

 21:17

I can reply first, just because I just had that email today. In this situation, we just chose to hide

the comments since it was on a video that was posted, you know, 37 weeks ago at this point, so commenting on it, which is kind of bring unnecessary attention. But my understanding is we don't delete any comments. We either hide them if they're inappropriate, or reply to them if they deem replying. So for instance, when we posted a video of Max 36 year old orangutan Max brushing his own teeth, behind the scenes in his indoor den, it was amazing. And he lives in a home that has solid wire mesh that looks like caging. And we got a lot of comments about him being in a cage, totally ignoring the fact that he has chosen to brush his own teeth with his keeper. And just focusing on the fact that we had him. So in that instance, Asia did go in and reply to some comments. But pan are broken off, you guys have different approaches. Yeah,

B

Brooke Tucker (ZooMontana) 22:22

I think for the most part, when we get a negative comment that's directed towards the animal, I leave it and I reply, if I think it's necessary, if I think that there is an avenue for me to take, that can be a more empathetic response, I usually reply. If it's a very nasty comment, my director typically replies to it, he will kind of take the reins on that. But if it's anything that's like discriminatory towards people that immediately gets deleted, we have a no tolerance policy on that. But towards animals I do, I do try to inform our audience a little bit better. So I do tend to engage with them.



23:05

Yeah, really quickly, I



23:06

was gonna say we do pretty much the same thing. I think it depends on like, how aggressive the comment is, like, Ryan, like you mentioned, like some people just aren't worth engaging with, if they're way too heated about it, you can usually tell by the language they're using. So for that, like we don't engage, if it's something people are just asking a genuine question like, Why? Why did they look like that? Or why is that happening? Then Sarah will usually Yeah, give a link of like, here's more information about like, the the behavior that the crane is experiencing? Or just like kind of Yeah, just kind of squashing it and giving it a plain simple answer. But we don't try to get too in the weeds with it. And yeah, if it's if it's too much, then we typically hide the the comment as well. But I guess it just depends how you're feeling it out and how much the person is engaging how they are engaging. Elizabeth?



23:57

Yeah. And which Elizabeth is also as as you can see, there, there are two Elizabeth logged on and one of them is actually my manager, Kiersten. We don't know why my name is on there twice, but whatever. Um, we do a lot of similar things to what to what you guys do if someone swears or is being nasty or trolling another person, we absolutely hide those comments. If somebody posts something that we don't necessarily like or that is a little misleading. Sometimes we give it a chance because our audience often sets them straight. We have enough highly educated people in our audience. And I don't mean that in a derogatory way

towards the folks who might you know, there's some folks who just anthropomorphize too much and like, oh, that Jaguars obviously lonely and sad and you know, stuff like that. And we some we oftentimes let our audience explain like Oh, Jaguar. Words are solitary, you know. So, you know, while you might be sad, if you're alone, you know, let's not assume that the Jaguar is this jaguar is actually, you know, really engaged or whatever. If there is something very misleading or just factually wrong, we will go. Or if somebody asks a legit question, we will go in and answer it. There are times where people ask the same question over and over and over, we're not going to answer it every time we'll answer it once. And it's like, you can do a little bit of work and read, read through the thread. Oftentimes, we're posting with a link to something and we'll just tell people like the answer to what you've, you know, great question, you can find the answer in this thing that we posted here. So yeah, I mean, the only times we delete our again, if it's something horribly, you know, offensive, trolling, racist, swearing, totally inappropriate, then then we will delete those, but otherwise, for the most part, they stay.



26:10

Awesome. Thank you for sharing.



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 26:11

I do want to say, Suzanna had a question earlier on in the chat. I want to make sure we don't skip past that. She said, Hannah, you mentioned how your organization currently has an older audience. Are you also considering how to attract and engage younger or



26:26

more diverse audiences?



26:29

Yes, 100%, we're actually hiring for a diversity initiatives officer. Because we like don't shy away from the fact that like all of our audiences, like old white men, for the most part old white women, so we definitely keep that in mind. And that was just like, yeah, looking at our demographics on Sprout Social. And that's why I think we do have a tic toc. I don't know how much we use it, to be honest. But like, just on the younger audience side, and then when we hire that diversity initiatives officer, like they're gonna that's definitely a role that they're going to take. And we're also thinking that for hiring and stuff, too, but for Yeah, if there any tips on that from any other? Any anywhere else on that? That'd be amazing. But we're definitely keeping that in mind.



27:14

Thank you for the question.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 27:17

Awesome. And then we also had a comment in the chat, we also assume good intentions, often questions can come off as snarky. But when we take the time to answer, we usually met with confidence. So the thing to keep in mind as well. Any other questions for Brooke, Hannah? Or Ryan?



27:35

I have a question for kind of everybody else in this is not it's a teeny group. So there might not be a lot of responses. But when I was thinking about challenges that occurred to me that challenge that we don't really have to face your much is department separation, because we're so tiny, there is six of us, five of us full time in the education department and one of Kristen and all I had to do was send Chris in email and be like, Hey, can we meet to chat about empathy stuff, and she was like, sure that we met two days later on. But I imagined that advancing this sort of work would be much more difficult and an institution with a lot more levels of leadership and more red tape to climb through. On so I just, if we had a larger group, I would I would ask like, if that's something anybody has ever faced, or even in our smaller group, because I imagined I came here from from Animal Kingdom at Disney, and even the thought like that's the thought of trying to increase empathy, focus language about animals at Disney is like a whole. That's not even in the realm of possibility, really. So I imagined that larger places that would be more difficult to kind of get the ball rolling with that.



28:39

Yeah, I can speak to that a little bit from within Park, we're fairly large organization, you know, middle size, I would say, we do have the empathy team here. So we sort of have an upper hand on like, specifically talking about but the right and getting folks on board. Obviously, that empathy initiative is based here. So we've got that one up. However, I would say that there's, before our empathy team was created, and that initiative sort of started, it was definitely challenging to get, you know, some of the folks who were doing some of the folks in animal management who'd come from a more scientific background, you know, you guys talked about, like, connecting 60, press release, right? Like, that's real. And we had the same thing. We sort of had this sea change, I would say, and, gosh, I started the zoo in 2011. And Elizabeth chime in here, or did you but I mean, I would say that we've kind of had a sea change around 2015 where it was like something just, honestly, we just started using empathy. We didn't even know what we were doing. I mean, it was it came naturally. We weren't calling it empathy with capital H. It was just talking about animal personalities using those pronouns using that. Those feelings that we all have about our pets, we just started doing it more and sort of you were quieting those voices saying, Hey, you shouldn't talk about animals in that way. And so sort of a natural progression to get folks on board. But that being said, I think there was a lot of pushback with certain departments, because that's not how they were, you know, that wasn't their experience, and they didn't want to.



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I think there was definitely like



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an age thing, I will say, because they had just been doing it for so long. I think that was a big part of it. But I think even beyond that, I think there was an expectation that that's not how you talk about animals like in their, in their world, right. And so in conservation and in animal management, and so it was, like having gone through that. I, I would say that, like, if a huge organization was asking, you know, how do we infuse empathy into this? Just doing it and just showing examples and showing people how much it works, right? Like just what you guys showed today, I'm showing your peers, hey, this is the engagement when we're talking about, you know, can handle what their first name and how they might feel and how they how what their perspective might be. Especially when you're talking to people who are more science based, when they see those numbers, they're like, Oh, something clicks, right. It's like, that's it. And so using that, kind of to their advantages, would be my advice. Let's get them on it. No,



31:20

no. Oh, I was gonna I 100% agree with everything you said, I think some of the sea of change that happened. I've been at our zoo for almost 15 years. And Gigi who is our PR, senior manager has been there even longer. She's on this meeting, too, in case she wants to chime in. But one of our curators a few years ago, I don't remember which year it was a responded to an email saying like, yes, maybe now it is okay for us to use the word happy, like he or she seems happy, we don't say is, you know, but But it's okay to use that word. And it was strange for I mean, I come from more the science side of it yet. I still have a hard time helping some of our animal management folks understand the difference between empathy and anthropomorphizing like it, they're not. Sometimes, yeah, sometimes in social media, you know, we'll be like, you know, oh, clearly, you know, she's loving, you know, blah, blah, blah. But there's a difference between saying that and, and, and declaring that an animal is lonely, you know, I mean, I think those of us who are in this wheelhouse, understand how to feel that difference a little bit more, and I get it, that there's a gray area. We are very deliberate about not anthropomorphizing in certain areas we don't ever do. Like, we don't show our we don't do cartoon versions of things. We don't show our animals wearing clothing, you know, or things like that. I mean, I'm not criticizing those zoos that sometimes do do that. We just, you know, that's not our thing. Yeah, I don't know if anyone else wants to speak to the difference between anthropomorphizing and, and empathy. But we definitely have been winning the battle, I hate to call it a battle with other departments about empathy. I think we're all in and I think a lot of us have been in before we knew that, that it was a thing. It's kind of like, well, that's the way we've always talked about it. So we'll also



33:37

add that Elizabeth kind of jogged my memory that like, it also took a lot of work to describe the difference between anthropomorphism you know, and an empathy when we were doing it and, and there are not now I think, now, we're, we're kind of this machine that everyone's on board, I would say, but, you know, a few years ago, really over explaining why we were doing it and, and adding a ton of context, if you look back at our posts, it's hilarious. You know, now I think we've brought our audience, our internal audience on board as well as our external audience. But if you look back at our posts, even five, six years ago, there's a lot of text. Because we

overexplain were like, you know, this little love muffin, had a birthday and whatever, right? We got really cutesy and then, like below that it would be like, this baby porcupine was beloved, but like, you know, like it just so it was kind of funny. And now I think we have the confidence to use some of that, you know, empathetic, more emotional language without over explaining because people trust us that Oh, actually, we are doing the scientific thing, even though they might not be showing you exactly what that is. And I think specifically with internal two,



34:50

I was just going to bring that point that it's not just our external audiences that we have to explain less. It's our internal audiences too. And some of that is just a matter of develop saying trust in relationships and always reaching out to animal management or conservation department that if we're going to post something, you know, we just want to make sure that we're that we're unsure of, let's verify with them that they're okay with it and that they, you know, won't have a problem. With it, there's a, there's a post that I that I did today that I mean, it's sort of like a fun little haiku that we, we just did the kind of maybe as a bit of a palate cleanser after the news of the last day or so. But I cleared it with the managers last week, like, Hey, are you okay with me using this photo in this way? And, you know, that kind of stuff. We do have one person that has commented saying, like, on that photo, completely misunderstanding what the photo is, and our audience has already corrected them and said, Nope, you know, that's not what this photo is showing. So



35:58

the meeting to know who the animals are, that you're posting is definitely something that has been a challenge in the past and continues to be and part of the work we've been doing with the empathy initiatives is alright, I guess kind of like a side effect that has happened as a result of the work we're doing is increased collaboration between departments, because I mean, just over the summer, we had a breakfast with giraffes brunch with giraffes event. And apparently the picture that was posted was not only not one of our giraffes, it was not the same giraffe species. And your your average person on Instagram might not get it. But our keepers were inflamed. They were not happy, understandably, so I wasn't happy. And you know, in the past, keepers didn't know that they could just if they have good photos of the animals, they take care of it, they can send those directly to Kristen. I've had keepers asked me like, What do I do if I have pictures like send them on over she wants them. So that sort of stuff that is really simple and did not take a long time to form that bridge. But just knowing in the past is really thought of it in the the anthropomorphism versus empathy thing is I think something we all deal with and having a more sane scientific person on like the side of empathy, I think helps increase buy in, because when we did a more in depth empathy training with our keeper staff, we also had our vet tech slash registrar and our, like Animal Care Manager in attendance. And they are both much more skeptical than, you know, the members of the Education Department. And having my colleague Adam there who was hired on the same grant as me, but as the animal behavioral coordinator, and does all the animal behavior stuff really kind of helped increase buy in, because it wasn't just me as just like a fluffy person from the education department being like, we love our feelings of being like, there's actually science behind this. And we wouldn't be doing it if it weren't scientific. And once we explained that, if an animal chooses to eat the cricket before the mealworm, that is showing a preference for crickets over mealworms. And then that implies that she likes crickets. Once you use their language like us

to keep her language, they start to be like, oh, oh, you're okay. Yeah, you're right. Like, if they display a preference, that's a personality trait, because at the end of the day, that's all personality is, is it was a collection of preferences. So I just wanted to throw that in there that that's that's a constant challenge that I think is ever evolving.

E

Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 38:28

I would love in the last couple of minutes to kind of put a question out to everybody in the group. Um, it's obviously very easy to elicit empathy for some animals as opposed to others, right, like your characteristic megafauna, the posts and the you know, infusion of empathy practices into those and the responses you get from your audience are going to be a lot easier or and look different than, you know, a post about a snake or a cockroach or a walking stick or something like that. How have you navigated those differences? Or have you found like really handy tips or tricks for kind of raising empathy or connection to some of those less charismatic or like culturally



39:13

stigmatized animals? Or is that something that you still have questions about?



39:27

I can I can chime in on that one. I personally love writing articles about underrepresented or under loved I mean, I talked about that with with my with my manager and my department and with the animal management team all the time that like, do you is one of your creatures, do you feel they're misunderstood or not getting the love? Reach out to me? Let's write a story about them and why why people should maybe look at them differently or frame it differently. With things like spiders or snakes, I wrote a blog about snakes. A couple of months ago, there was like some international snake day and I was really heartened to see that it got like, there's some people that are like EU, but wow, good to know that they help keep the rodent population in check in our it's I just trying to point out like, you know, we get it why some people might not, you know, the feeling the warm fuzzies but here's why we feel the warm fuzzies when when we see this credit, here's why we love them. And here's the good that they do for the planet. So, yeah, I mean, I'm getting pictures of them and getting quotes and things from the keepers about why they love their animals. Even species that are under represented under loved, you know, I hate to say it that way. But, you know, you guys know what I mean? Those are sometimes my favorite stories to tell because of and they are surprisingly, mostly well received. There's always going to be some people that are like, Nope, you know, or sorry, never not going to happen. But we love dispelling myths I do at least you know, and people, it surprises me that there's still some people who are like, I thought snakes were slimy. So I was really surprised to hear you know, I mean, I don't know where somebody ever got the idea that a snake was slimy. But yeah, so anyway, that's my two cents on that.



41:31

I will say I just had a third grader yesterday say that the snakes all fly me, like, you know, they don't

son's.



41:38

But maybe that third grader doesn't understand the definition of slimy.



41:42

Yeah, yep. Well, they feel wet. And I don't know if you know what, they feel smooth.



41:49

And may be a little chilly, which can translate to wet. But I did want to say I want I feel like doing that sort of thing is easier in person than it is on social media, which is something I think we've most most of us would agree with. Um, it's a lot easier for me to talk to a kiddo and be like, Well, do you want to be eaten? Do you want to be cold? Do you want to be hungry? Like no, no, no. Well, guess what, neither does the snake. Um, but I think a really easy kind of shift at least to avoid it. Encouraging or, you know, yeah, encouraging. Predisposed, you know, fears is changing words. So instead of having like, see some creepy crawlies when we advertise our Dakota Zoo event, using words like a meet some climbing, crawling and slithering friends, so describing our modes of locomotion and using the word meet, and friends, as opposed to just seeing, and then a noun that we have made up. So I think those are really subtle language changes can make a big difference over time.



42:56

I've also found that



42:57

in person Sorry, I've also found this is not social media. But I just realized like recently that I've started prefacing introductions to snakes, and cockroaches and other non popular animals, with asking the audience how they would feel if their friend came up to them really excited to talk about something they were passionate if, like you, they went up to their friend, or like, you want to talk to your friend about something you're super passionate about. And your friend goes, Oh, that's stupid and gross. And every time the kiddos are like, Oh, that would be so me and my Exactly. So please don't do that, for me when I bring out these animals to meet you. And I have found that the programs that I use that for overwhelmingly have better reactions to those animals.



Emily Bernhardt (Woodland Park Zoo) 43:40

Awesome. That's a fun tidbit, I like that. Well, thank you all for attending. If you scroll up in the chat, I did drop a link. Let me see if I can drop it again. There it is. For a post event survey, if you could all take into take less than five minutes to fill out it helps us kind of gauge what is

working and what is not working for the learning groups and other events that we host. So it would be very, very valuable for us to fill that out. And if you have any questions about the survey, or how the information is used, you can email our evaluation specialist Corinne slaughter, just dropped her email in the chat there. She's the one who creates and manages all these surveys. Again, I apologize for all of my tech issues, and that I missed some of your presentations. I really don't want that to happen and all my Zoom meetings later today, but we'll find out. Um, otherwise, it is 12 o'clock on the dot here. Um, I do want to respect all of your time. So thank you for coming. And I'll probably see you all soon.



44:39

Thank you so much, everybody. Thanks, y'all. Thank you. Bye