

# Zoo education in focus

Thesis topics regarding zoo education about biodiversity for primary & secondary schools

## Supervisor(s):

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## Description:

Biodiversity loss, both locally and worldwide, forms one of the most urgent and accelerating sustainability challenges humanity is presently facing. Zoos generally consider it their educational duty to teach about conservation efforts to protect endangered species and help visitors form connections to the natural world. The emotional power of encountering (endangered) animals close-up is seen as a stimulus to persuade people to live more sustainably. Many zoos are currently revising their educational programs on offer and developing didactical approaches suitable to working with students from primary and secondary schools.

The Education and Learning Sciences group at Wageningen University has been supervising internship students in various Dutch zoos. In addition, we are carrying out an in-depth 3-year research project about biodiversity education in zoos. There are many potential thesis topics that this larger research project has to offer. If you are interested in one of the following topics, or if you have your own idea do contact us to discuss the possibilities.

1. Investigating the design principles of zoo education that can contribute to:
  - a) enhancing learner's knowledge and engagement regarding loss of biodiversity
  - b) developing the skills needed to manage such complex and uncertain sustainability challenges.
2. Investigating what the characteristics are of a zoo as an authentic learning environment. For example, what social and physical-ecological elements of the zoo environment support the development of cognitive, social-emotional, and skills related competences?
3. Investigating how best to support the pedagogical/didactical needs of school teachers, as well as zoo educators involved in zoo education.

## MSc and ECTS:

Students doing a MSc Environmental Sciences (MES), Animal Sciences (MAS), or Organic Agriculture (MOA) can apply for this thesis as part of their educational track (See Study Handbook for requirements). Students from other programmes are invited to conduct the project under shared supervision with another chair group. This should be a chair group listed by your study programme as optional chair group for doing a thesis. Please contact your study advisor to inquire about the possibilities. This thesis project can be 24 or 36 ECTS in consultation with the supervisors and depending on your availability.

## Location

In consultation with supervisors.

## Planning

In consultation with supervisors.

## Contact

For more information send an e-mail to [Rebekah.Tauritz@wur.nl](mailto:Rebekah.Tauritz@wur.nl)