



Impact Planning, Evaluation & Audience Research

Randi Korn & Associates, Inc.  
2417B Mount Vernon Ave.  
Alexandria, VA 22301

# **Audience Research: Central Park Zoo**

*Prepared for the*  
**Wildlife Conservation Society**  
**Bronx, NY**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## **SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS..... ii**

Visitors Value Relating to Animals and Each Other .....	ii
Visitors Value the Zoo as an Educational Experience .....	ii
Visitors See Size and Location as Central Park Zoo’s Distinct Qualities .....	ii
Visitors Perceive that Zoos and Parks Offer Different Ways to Spend Time in Nature .....	ii
Implications for Phase 2 .....	ix
References Cited.....	ix

## **INTRODUCTION ..... I**

Methodology.....	1
Data Analysis and Reporting Method.....	1

## **PRINCIPAL FINDINGS ..... 3**

Motivation to Visit the Zoo .....	3
Visitors’ Experiences .....	4
Visitors’ Use of Interpretive Materials .....	5
Distinct Qualities of the Zoo .....	6
Perceived Benefits of Visiting the Zoo.....	7
Visitors’ Perception of Wild Nature as it Relates to the Zoo.....	8

## **APPENDICES .....SOME REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES**

## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The study conducted by Randi Korn & Associates (RK&A) for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) reveals many findings about visitors' values and perceptions of the Central Park Zoo (the Zoo). Findings provide the WCS with a preliminary understanding of their visitors and lay the groundwork for RK&A's second phase of audience research to take place in the fall of 2013. In the summary below, we highlight and discuss findings that are most prevalent. The body of the report contains a full account that includes less prevalent findings and details not covered in this summary.

### VISITORS VALUE RELATING TO ANIMALS AND EACH OTHER

Findings indicate that visitors value the Zoo as a place for relating and connecting; they see the Zoo as a place where they can personally relate to animals, with their family, and with Zoo staff. For instance, when it comes to viewing and spending time with animals, interviewees overwhelmingly preferred animals that were more active and seemed excited by the presence of human observers, such as the sea lions, penguins, and petting zoo animals. Interviewees liked that these areas in particular enabled more personal interactions with animals, getting to see them up close, or actually pet and feed animals in the petting zoo. Such findings are similar to those RK&A has found at other zoos. In a front-end study of the proposed children's exhibition *Safari Adventure* at the Bronx Zoo, interviewees were most interested in experiences that promoted direct interaction with animals (RK&A, 2012). Likewise, in a front-end study for the Philadelphia Zoo's children's zoo, about one-third of children said their favorite aspect was interacting with animals, and about two-thirds of parents valued seeing their children interact with animals (RK&A, 2010).

Interviewees also value the opportunity to interact with one another at the Zoo. In fact, when interviewees were asked about the benefits of visiting the Zoo, among the top responses was having a family outing their children would enjoy. Interviewees described the satisfaction they feel in making their child(ren) happy and doing something that is fun for them. Notably, the familial connections occur across time as well, as several interviewees said they visited the Zoo because it is a family tradition. Research from John Fraser and Jessica Sickler's *Why Zoos & Aquariums Matter Handbook* suggests the value of family interaction is not unique to the Central Park Zoo, but applies more universally to zoos in general. Fraser and Sickler's research shows that nearly one-half of the general public visitors sampled said that, aside from seeing animals, spending time with family was their reason for visiting zoos (Fraser & Sickler, 2008).

Similarly, interviewees demonstrated how they value personal connections when talking about preferences for interpretive materials. The most frequent suggestion for interpretation in the Zoo was more opportunities to converse with volunteers and ask them questions about the animals. The presence of volunteers already makes a difference for visitors, as several noted positive experiences they had talking with a volunteer during their visit. Visitors appreciate that volunteers can provide information customized to visitors' queries and can point out animals hidden in their exhibit environments.

## VISITORS VALUE THE ZOO AS AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

In addition to relating and making connections, visitors value the Zoo because they perceive it as an educational experience. Many interviewees mentioned education and learning as a reason for visiting the Zoo or as what they see as a benefit. Many spoke generally of learning about animals and their habitats and seeing new animals, but a portion talked more in-depth about learning to care for and respect animals. Furthermore, findings demonstrate that most visitors read signage while in the Zoo and many had suggestions for additional interpretation—an indication that they are looking for and open to learning. Notably, most visitors were not interested in learning anything in-depth from signage—rather they used interpretation to identify animals or to learn something unusual, like how far a snow leopard can jump.

## VISITORS SEE SIZE AND LOCATION AS CENTRAL PARK ZOO'S DISTINCT QUALITIES

Visitors see Central Park Zoo as distinct, especially when compared to other zoos, because of its size and location. The unique combination makes for convenient and child-friendly afternoon outings. At approximately 6.5 acres, Central Park Zoo is a relatively small, especially when compared to the 265 acre Bronx Zoo. When interviewees compared Central Park Zoo to the Bronx Zoo and other larger zoos around the country, they described it as “personable,” “intimate,” and “manageable,” often remarking about the ease of day trips to the Central Park Zoo compared to the Bronx Zoo, because it is convenient to get to, requires less time walking between exhibits, and generally does not take a full day to visit. Interviewees also value that the small size of the Zoo makes it “kid friendly,” as it is more on a child’s scale and easier for family outings.

Though the Zoo receives many tourist visitors, the sample of this study, which took place over a two-day period, was made up primarily of locals. Nearly two-thirds of interviewees live in New York City (including one-quarter who are Manhattanites) so it is easy to understand why so many appreciate the Zoo’s location as convenient or close to home. In fact, the Zoo’s location in the city played a role in about one-third of interviewees’ decision to visit, and a few members said they stopped by the zoo because they were in the area or as a way to spend time in between errands. The Zoo’s location in Central Park also makes it attractive to visitors, and several cited the ability to spend time in Central Park as additional reason for choosing to visit the Zoo.

While the Zoo’s size and location are mostly positive attributes, several interviewees did indicate some drawbacks related to the Zoo’s size. The most frequent complaint was the potential for crowding—interviewees described waiting in line for restrooms, the petting zoo, and to purchase tickets. Nevertheless, most interviewees viewed crowding as simply part of coming to a zoo in New York City, and while the crowding may have been an annoyance, it was not a deterrent to their visit.

## VISITORS PERCEIVE THAT ZOOS AND PARKS OFFER DIFFERENT WAYS TO SPEND TIME IN NATURE

The Zoo’s unique presence in the middle of Central Park, the fifth largest natural park in New York City, sparks an interesting conversation about how visitors view the Zoo in relation to its neighboring parkland and wild nature in general. Findings suggest that visitors relate both zoos and parks to nature, but in notably different ways. Not surprisingly, most interviewees associate parks with being surrounded by plants and trees, and associate zoos with seeing and spending time with animals. For

example, when asked how they connect to wild nature at the Zoo, visitors cite opportunities to get close to and have hands-on experiences with the animals. And when asked what they value about parks, interviewees most frequently talked about spending time in nature. Far fewer interviewees saw clear similarities between zoos and parks or made the leap that they could view animals in a park or be surrounded by plants and nature in a zoo.

Interestingly, visitors also perceive distinctions between the ways they are able to connect with nature (be it animal or plant life) in each location. Interviewees describe visiting zoos as a structured and educational form of family entertainment, with the distinct goal of viewing animals. On the other hand, visitors consider parks a venue for unstructured play and relaxation. These visitor agendas can be analyzed using John Falk's identity-related motivation categories. Interviewees' motivations for visiting the Zoo often relate to sharing a recreational or educational experience with family, and tend to align with Falk's facilitator category. Facilitators, as Falk describes, "are focused primarily on enabling the experience and learning of others in their accompanying social group" (Falk, 2007). This finding is consistent with Falk's own research on zoos as part of the *Why Zoos Matter* study, in which facilitators made up one of the two most dominant identities (Falk, 2007). In contrast, when Zoo interviewees describe their motivations for visiting a park, there is a strong association with Falk's spiritual pilgrims category, described as those "primarily seeing a contemplative and/or restorative experience" (Falk, 2007).

Although visitors view time spent at zoos and parks as distinctly different based on the type of wild nature they are seeing (animal or plant life) as well as their motivation for visiting, there is still an opportunity to show that these two nature-based experiences are complementary to each other. Situated in Central Park, the Zoo has a distinct advantage over many other zoos to bridge these opposing perspectives. The Zoo's location enables it to more easily blur the boundaries visitors perceive between parks and zoos. The Zoo can train visitors to observe animals (and their tracks, for instance) in natural environments and help visitors recognize that wild animals exist in Central Park and their own backyards. Similarly, the Zoo can develop ways to reach park visitors who are interested in nature as a place to relax or play, by providing rocks to climb playground space for children as well as more tree-shaded seating for adults.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PHASE 2

- ◆ This study was limited to data collection over a two-day period and the sample was made up primarily of local families. Stage 2 will have a much larger sample and data collection will take place at multiple areas within the Zoo and possibly over multiple seasons, allowing the Zoo to learn more about their other audiences, such as foreign visitors, tourists, and adult-only groups. It will be interesting to see how these audiences may differ from one another.
- ◆ Interpretation is important to the visitor experience at the Zoo. Visitors had many ideas about interpretation, their preferences for mode of interpretation as well as the type of content. A questionnaire would allow the Zoo to hone in on its audiences preferences as well as differences among audiences.
- ◆ The Zoo's small size and location in Central Park seem to be assets and defining characteristics of the Zoo. A questionnaire would allow you explore this across audiences to find opportunities to use the Zoo's size and location to your advantage in marketing and programming.
- ◆ The Zoo is interested in utilizing Central Park through programming, but currently visitors do not explicitly see the direct connection between the two places other than the convenience of moving from one to the other easily. Phase 2 would explore in more depth visitors' perceptions of the

relationship between the Zoo and Park in order to find opportunities for strengthening and taking advantage of that relationship. What is the difference for locals versus tourists?

- ◆ About one-quarter of visitors valued the Zoo as a place to teach their children to care for and respect animals. The Zoo could explore the nuances of this idea and differences among visitors through a questionnaire.

## REFERENCES CITED

- Falk, J.H., Reinhard, E.M., Vernon, C.L., Bronnenkant, K., Deans, N.L., & Heimlich, J.E. (2007). *Why Zoos & Aquariums Matter: Assessing the Impact of a Visit*. Silver Springs, MD: Association of Zoos & Aquariums.
- Fraser, J., & Sickler, J. (2008). *Why Zoos and Aquariums Matter Handbook: Handbook of Research, Key Findings and Results from National Audience Survey*. Silver Spring, MD: Association of Zoos & Aquariums.
- Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (2012). *Front-end Evaluation: Safari Adventure*. Unpublished manuscript. Bronx, NY: Wildlife Conservation Society.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2010). *Front-end Evaluation: Messages and Ideas for the Hamilton Family Children's Zoo and Education Center*. Unpublished manuscript. Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Zoo.

# INTRODUCTION

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) contracted Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A) to conduct audience research for the Central Park Zoo (Zoo), located in the heart of New York City. RK&A conducted in-depth interviews with Zoo visitors to explore their thoughts and perceptions of the Zoo, as well as to understand the value visitors place on nature play and their Zoo visit. Findings from this research provide the WCS with a preliminary understanding of their visitors and lay the groundwork for RK&A's second phase of audience research to take place in the fall of 2013.

Specifically, the research objectives are to:

- ◆ Determine how visitors use and visit the Zoo (e.g., what areas and interpretive elements do they use and not use);
- ◆ Determine how visitors use and visit the surrounding area (Central Park);
- ◆ Determine how visitors perceive the Zoo (including its relationship to Central Park and WCS);
- ◆ Determine what experiences at the Zoo are most meaningful for visitors and why;
- ◆ Determine what experiences at the Zoo are least satisfying for visitors and why;
- ◆ Gauge what visitors perceive as the benefits of (or value most about) visiting the Zoo; and
- ◆ Explore visitors' perceptions of nature as it relates to the context of the Zoo.

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

For this study, RK&A utilized in-depth interviews to explore how visitors value and perceive the Zoo; interviews were audio-recorded with interviewees' permission and transcribed to facilitate analysis. In-depth interviews encourage and motivate interviewees to describe their experiences, express their opinions and thoughts, and share with the interviewer the meaning they construct about ideas, concepts, and experiences. Hence, they are useful for understanding ideas and concepts from the visitors' point of view and produce data rich in information.

Interviewees were intercepted using a random sampling method: the interviewer approached the first eligible visitor to cross an imaginary line near the exit of the Tisch Children's Zoo.<sup>1</sup> Eligible visitors included English-speaking, adult-only or family groups, who had visited the main zoo that day or as part of a recent trip. If a visitor declined to participate in the interview, RK&A logged the visitor's gender, estimated age, and reason for refusal. If the visitor was eligible and agreed to the interview, the interviewer conducted an in-depth interview with the visitor according to the interview guide (see Appendix A for the interview guide). Interviewees then completed a one-page survey on their own detailing their visit characteristics and demographic information (see Appendix B for survey). Once the interview was completed, the interviewer thanked the participant with a small key chain and returned to the designated area to intercept the next eligible visitor.

---

<sup>1</sup> RK&A interviewed visitors who had been to both the main zoo and the children's zoo. As visitors tend to view the children's zoo after visiting the main zoo, data collectors intercepted visitors near the exit of the children's zoo and verbally confirmed that they had been to both sections of the Zoo.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING METHOD

In-depth interviews produce data that are analyzed qualitatively, meaning that the evaluator studies the interview transcriptions for meaningful patterns and, as patterns and trends emerge, groups similar responses. Findings are reported in narrative and verbatim quotations from interviews (edited for clarity); quotes are included to illustrate interviewees' thoughts and ideas as fully as possible. Within the quotations, the interviewer's questions appear in parentheses. In the case that two interviewees made comments, the first speaker is designated with a single asterisk (\*) and the second speaker is identified with a double asterisk (\*\*). Interviewees' gender and age is indicated in brackets following the quotation.



# PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

## INTRODUCTION

Audience Research was conducted on one weekday and one weekend day in July, 2013. RK&A approached 63 visitors at the Central Park Zoo, and 45 individuals agreed to participate, for a participation rate of 71 percent.

Of the individual respondents:

- ◆ A little more than one-half were female (61 percent), and the median age is 41 years;
- ◆ Most visited the Zoo with children, and the median child age is 5 years;
- ◆ Two-thirds were repeat visitors to the Zoo (67 percent), with the majority having made two or three prior visits. Additionally, about one-third of interviewees were members (38 percent);
- ◆ About one-half of visitors (48 percent) correctly identified the Zoo as an affiliate of the Wildlife Conservation Society; about one-third said they were uncertain about the Zoo's affiliation (32 percent) and several each said the Zoo was part of the Central Park Conservancy or was an independent non-profit organization (both 9 percent);
- ◆ When asked about their visit, many indicated that they watched the penguins (86 percent), the sea lions (82 percent), and/or petted animals at the Tisch Children's Zoo (82 percent);
- ◆ Most interviewees were college graduates, with about one-half having completed a graduate degree (46 percent);
- ◆ About two-thirds self identified as Caucasian (68 percent);
- ◆ Nearly all were U.S. residents, with nearly two-thirds living in New York City (64 percent). The few visitors who were foreign were residents of Denmark, India, or Finland;
- ◆ Most visitors spoke English as their primary language, though one interviewee each listed Cantonese, Danish, Finnish, Kanada, Polish, Russian, or Spanish as their native language.

## MOTIVATION TO VISIT THE ZOO

Interviewees were asked why they were interested in spending time at Central Park Zoo. A little more than one-half said they visited because of the animals; some said they or their child(ren) are generally animal lovers, and several each said they like seeing animals or petting and feeding animals at the petting zoo (see the first quotation below). Another one-half said they decided to visit the Zoo because it is child friendly, and of these, about one-half said their child made the decision to visit (see the second quotation). About one-third others described the Zoo's location as a factor in their decision, saying that the Zoo is near their home, in Central Park, or closer than the Bronx Zoo. Several others said they visited because they have a membership to the Zoo, and a few each said they visited because of the manageable size of the Zoo or a family history of visiting (see the third quotation).

(So what is it about the Zoo that made you decide to visit today?) Definitely my daughter and her interest in animals, and just being able to interact with a bunch of different species and for her to see them in action is really why we're here. We have cats at home, but it's not quite enough. [female, 35]

(So I'm just wondering what about the Zoo brought you here today?) My granddaughter. (And why the Zoo?) That was her request. She's from out of state, and she wanted to see the Zoo. [male, 61]

For me it's like the third generation coming [to the Zoo]. This is tradition. We go to the Central Park Zoo. . . I came here as a kid. My father came here as a kid. And now my kids are coming here with their little cousins. [male, 36]

## VISITORS' EXPERIENCES

### NAVIGATING THE ZOO

When asked how they decided where to go in the Zoo, about one-third of interviewees said they used a map to navigate the Zoo and referenced both the paper handout and posted signage. About one-quarter said that a child dictated their route, with some children using the map as their guide. Several others said they were guided by the Zoo's circular pathways, and a few said they navigated the Zoo based on prior experience. Interviewees also said they intentionally visited specific parts of the Zoo. For instance, about one-quarter each said they first visited the Tisch Children's Zoo, the penguin exhibit, or the sea lion show. Another one-quarter said their goal was to see the Zoo in its entirety.

### WHAT VISITORS ENJOYED MOST ABOUT THEIR VISIT

When asked what they enjoyed most about the Zoo, many interviewees named one of three exhibit areas: about one-third said the petting zoo, another one-third said the penguin house, and about one-quarter said the sea lion pool. Generally, interviewees liked these three areas because the animals were active and responded to visitors' presence in the exhibit area. In regard to the petting zoo, interviewees talked about the ability to touch, pet, or feed the farm yard animals (see the first quotation below). In talking about the penguin house, visitors said they liked how close they could get to the birds—viewing them both above and below the water—and how actively the birds responded to visitors (see the second quotation). Interviewees who named the sea lion pool primarily commented on the scheduled feeding activity, noting how active the animals were and how entertaining it was to watch them (see the third quotation). The remaining interviewees said other aspects of their visit were most enjoyable, with several talking about the social nature of the Zoo visit, including opportunities for family bonding and watching their children have fun. A few others liked novel experiences, such as being able to see or touch an animal or the ability to see unfamiliar animals.

(Can you tell me about an experience you had today that stands out as most enjoyable?) Just petting the animals and feeding them. (And what about that experience made it stand out?) For my daughter, it's nice for her to touch the animals and be up close to them. [female, 35]

(Can you tell me about an experience you had today that stands out as being most enjoyable?) Yeah, actually, the penguins were great. Today the penguins were really active . . . so moving really fast and swimming, diving, and hopping up, feeding. I think when the animals are really active, of course for the kids [but] also for us, [that] they're highly entertaining at that point. [male, 51]

(Can I ask you, what was the most enjoyable experience so far for you?) Oh the seals. So fun! (What about them?) I just like the way they interacted with everybody, it was feeding time, and the acrobatics that they did. It was all so fun, so we had a good time with the seals. [male, 45]

## WHAT VISITORS ENJOYED LEAST ABOUT THEIR VISIT

When asked about what they liked least about their experience at the Zoo, nearly one-half of interviewees voiced disappointment that certain animals were not visible. A few of these visitors complained that the price of admission is too high given how few animals they were able to see (see the first two quotations below). These visitors cited between one to three animals that were either off view or not visible in their exhibit area. In particular, nearly one-quarter mentioned the polar bear and several mentioned the snow leopard. Several other interviewees said they disliked how crowded the Zoo was, specifically the lines for the bathroom/changing area and petting zoo (see the second quotation). A few interviewees generally wished there were more things to do at the Zoo, and one or two interviewees each commented on the high price of admission, poor quality of food services, or the perceived maltreatment of animals.

(Can I ask you what's the least satisfying about your visit?) I think half of the main zoo exhibits seem to be either animals [that] were not available. Sometimes at the Bronx Zoo [they have cameras where] you can see the inside [of the animal's indoor zoo enclosure] when they're not out in the field. And they didn't have that. So we did walk around a bit and have a little disappointment in the polar bear area and things like that. [female, 35]

(And can you tell me about an experience you had today that was less enjoyable or unsatisfying?) A lot of the animals I was interested in weren't out to see. I guess because it's too hot. The polar bears, the snow leopards. I feel like the exhibits could be bigger. There could be a little more animals. (So tell me what about those things were unsatisfying for you?) You pay a certain price to get in and you don't see anything. It's kind of disappointing. They should be out feeding them so we can see them or something like that. [female, 27]

(Can I ask you what was least satisfying about your experience here?) I think the restroom. They need to add more restrooms. Yes, because there are so many children. You have to fall in line just to [use] a changing table. And as a matter of fact, we did not even use a changing table because there was a big line. And I think since it's a children's zoo, it's understandable that children need to be changed. They need to add [more tables]. [female, 40]

## VISITORS' USE OF INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS

### HOW VISITORS USED ZOO SIGNAGE

When interviewees were asked if they had used the interpretive materials and signage in the Zoo, about two-thirds said they had. Of these, about one-third said they used signage to learn more about animal behaviors, including how far snow leopards can jump, the ways snow monkeys socialize, or how long goldfish live, among other things (see the quotation below). About one-quarter used signage to identify unfamiliar animals, such as the Patagonia cavy. A few others reported reading instructional signage, such as not to throw coins into exhibit areas or attempt to feed the animals.

(The Zoo uses signage to give visitors information about the animals. Can you give me an example of something you remember reading or maybe interacting with today?) [The snow leopard exhibit] has lots of information. It's not just words, but there's also lots of images. The ibex horn that's out is pretty compelling, so there's tactile as well as [provide] cognitive information. The fact that it has also a kinesthetic aspect to it, the jumping lines where you can see how far the snow leopard can jump, gives you an idea and kind of makes it a whole-body experience. I think that that is a kind of quintessential example of what makes a great exhibit in all of your zoos. [male, 51]

## VISITORS' PREFERENCES FOR OTHER INTERPRETIVE MATERIALS

Interviewees were probed further to determine what other ways they would like to receive information at the Zoo. About one-fifth said they prefer learning about the animals by talking with a volunteer, and a few mentioned positive experiences they had with volunteers that day (see the first quotation below). Several said they would like an audio guide available at the exhibits, and several others wanted more kid-friendly, interactive signage or activities (e.g., flip panel signs positioned at a child's height) (see the second and third quotations). A few interviewees said they would have appreciated video footage of animals currently not on view in their exhibit area or educational films about the animals, similar to the videos currently on display in the penguin house. Of the remaining interviewees, several indicated that the existing signage was sufficient, while several others were unable to suggest alternative methods of interpretation.

(Based on your experience in other museums and zoos and aquariums, what are other ways you'd be interested in getting information here?) It's kind of the same as here actually. It's usually just brochures and signs, but I kind of like how at almost every stop that we went to, there's usually someone standing close by and they're just kind of talking about the animals, which I think is better than reading a sign. [female, 28]

(So based on your experience at other zoos, aquariums, or museums, in what other ways might you prefer to get information?) I know you have a 4D animated movie. Sometimes films about the animals where you could just sit for a minute and learn about them are nice. [female, 50]

(I'm wondering based on your experience visiting other zoos or aquariums and museums, is there any other forms of signage that you would recommend?) Maybe some more signage at the lower levels for children, like pictures or something. Anything for them [that is] interactive, something that has a sensory aspect to it with different textures, or something that they get their hands on it. While they're looking [at animals], they could touch some old feathers from a bird. Or you could have a table with different bones or something like that. Anything to help them get more sensory into it. [male, 36]

## DISTINCT QUALITIES OF THE ZOO

### COMPARED WITH OTHER ZOOS

When asked to describe the Central Park Zoo in comparison to other zoos, nearly three-quarters of interviewees remarked on the size of the Zoo. Many described the Zoo as small, comparing it to zoos in the Bronx, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Washington D.C., Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston; however, a few individuals said the Zoo was larger than they anticipated for its city location or when compared to the Prospect Park Zoo or Queens Zoo. Interviewees' comments about the size of the zoo were mainly positive, describing it as "personable," "intimate," "easy to navigate," and "kid-friendly" when compared to larger zoos (see the first quotation below). Alternatively, some interviewees remarked negatively about the small space allotted to each animal species (see the second quotation). About one-quarter said the Zoo is unique because of its city location, with a few noting its easy access to Central Park and other child-friendly activities, like the carousel (see the third quotation). Several said the Zoo is distinct because it has less variety of animals compared to other zoos. Several others each said the Zoo is unique because of its animal-friendly environment or the interactive environment of the Zoo, often citing the petting zoo as an example.

(How would you describe the Zoo in comparison to other zoos you've been to?) Oh, this is hands-on, like very family oriented. Everything is small. Like if you go to another zoo, its long walks. Kids get tired and they start whining. Over here [there are] so many activities to do and so many things in so little space that they really enjoy everything without waiting in line too long. Everything is nearby. It's not that much to walk. [female, 48]

(How would you describe the Central Park Zoo in comparison to other zoos?) Well, I'm comparing it to the National Zoo, which is a lot bigger. So, obviously, there's a lot more space [in other zoos]. There's a lot more exhibits – giraffes, elephants, those kinds of things. So that's my comparison, this one is smaller. The exhibits are smaller, so it seemed like some of the spaces for the animals seemed kind of small, like for the sea lions. Seemed like they would need more space, but I don't know if they go somewhere else after the show. [ES3]

(I'm wondering how would you describe Central Park Zoo and what makes it distinct compared to other zoos?) \*It's location. It's probably the only zoo I know that [is] located in the city; others are always outside or in the fringes. \*\*Oh, and also you can just walk through the park. You know there [are] a lot of things to do there. If you still have a lot of energy, you can just walk to the nearby carousel, or a lot of [other] things to do inside the park. [female, 40; male, age unknown]

## COMPARED WITH PARKS

As a way to gauge the way visitors think of zoos in relationship to parks, interviewees were asked what they value about spending time in parks and how that compares with zoos. Interviewees' responses suggest they see the primary difference between the two as structured versus unstructured environments (see the first quotation below). For example, about one-half of interviewees associate zoos with activities such as viewing animals and visiting exhibits, and a few others remarked that zoos offer educational opportunities. Alternatively, interviewees associate parks with spending time in nature and the opportunity for relaxation. Several others said parks offer other self-directed activities ranging from children playing at a playground to organized sports. Of the remaining interviewees, several said both environments are conducive to family time. A few associate parks with animals (e.g., birds and deer) and/or zoos with nature (e.g., surrounded by trees and plant life).

(What is it that you value about [spending time in parks] that might be different from what you value about visiting zoos?) The Zoo is really more [about] learning and it's an opportunity to learn about the animals and other things. But the park is really more about playing and relaxation . . . so there's value to both things. Here it's more about learning and there it's more about simply relaxing. [male, 41]

## PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF VISITING THE ZOO

When asked what they value about visiting the Zoo and what benefits they perceive in bringing their child(ren), interviewees often named multiple reasons. About one-half said the benefit of visiting the Zoo is to have a family outing that their children enjoy (see the first quotation below). Other responses centered more on the Zoo's unique offerings. For example, about one-third said they or their child(ren) value learning about animals' behaviors and natural environments (see the second quotation). Several value the opportunity for their children to have hands-on and personal interactions with animals, often by petting and feeding animals in the petting zoo (see the third quotation). Several others said the benefit of visiting the Zoo is that it is an opportunity to share with their children personal values about respecting animals and being responsible caregivers (see the fourth and fifth quotation). Several said the

benefit of visiting the Zoo is that it is an opportunity to spend time outdoors or in nature, and several others said that visiting the Zoo enables their children to roam free and partake in physical activities. A few interviewees each said they value the Zoo because of its manageable size or convenient location.

(What do you value most about the Zoo today? Or, in other words, what are the benefits of visiting the Zoo?) The grandchildren love it. We did so much in the city that was on the adult level that was boring for them. And this is their day, we're doing things for them today so that they get to enjoy our trip. [female, 51]

(What do you value most about your visit to the Zoo today? Or, in other words, what are the benefits of visiting the Zoo with your children?) It definitely benefits the children and adults to see wildlife in action, because you don't get to see them very much and learn about all the different animals – what they do, how they live, what they eat. (And why is that important to you?) It's important because it's educational. [female, 27]

(May I ask you, what do you see as the value of bringing your kids here? What do you see is the benefit of coming?) The hands-on. The feeding animals, the petting, because they are right there with the animals. Direct experience. It's not the same as looking at them, watching them on TV or watching them from afar. It's a different experience because now it's personal. It's one to one. They touch it and it becomes more important for them. [female, 48]

(What do you see as the benefit or value of bringing your children to the Zoo?) I think a repetitive interaction with animals makes for better human beings and more caring human beings, and then you learn to coexist. [female, 45]

(What do you see as the value of bringing your daughter here?) The main value I think is the experience interacting with the animals, and she's always talked about 'I want to see some animals' or 'pet some animals.' (And why is petting the animals important to you?) It's great because she's interacting with nature and she understands other living creatures and other living things. So that's really the main reason. [male, 45]

## **VISITORS' PERCEPTION OF WILD NATURE AS IT RELATES TO THE ZOO**

Interviewees were asked how the statement "It is important to connect people with wild nature" relates to their experience at the Zoo. About one-third associated the statement with being up close to or interacting with animals, often mentioning the tropics zone and petting zoo as immersive areas where such interactions took place (see the first quotation below). Nearly one-quarter associated the statement with seeing novel animals that they would be unable to see normally, especially, interviewees noted, for people living in New York City (see the second quotation). Another one-quarter associated the statement with seeing how animals behave in the wild and in their natural habitats (see the third quotation). Among the remaining interviewees, several said they did not associate the Zoo with wild nature; these interviewees described the animals as seemingly tame (or farmyard animals) and described the Zoo environment as managed and simulated.

(I'm wondering how has your experience related to that message?) Just being out here and interacting with the animals, especially in the rainforest section. That was kind of an eye opener because it was really humid in there and you were living in the temperature and the environment that they're [the animals are] living in, you know? [female, 28]

(How does this message relate to your experience at the Zoo?) The animals are in their natural habitat and, especially for the kids, it's not so easy to bring them to a farm so they have contact with cows and pigs. You don't see that often, especially within the city. So that's very valuable to families . . . when you come here, it's like you were on the farm. [female, 48]

(How does this message relate to your experience at the Zoo today or recently?) Every time that we come into the Zoo, you are connecting with wild nature and the animals because you're getting insight into their habitats, their food, their whole daily activities. [female, 35]

Interviewees were also asked how the statement relates to them personally. About one-third value learning or teaching others how to respect, care for, and co-exist with animals (see the first quotation below). About one-quarter talked about activities that enable them to connect with wild nature, such as feeding local wildlife, camping, visiting parks, or watching nature-/animal-related television shows. Another one-quarter said they generally value and appreciate wild nature and/or animals, and a few mentioned the importance of taking care of the environment by recycling and using limited natural resources (see the second quotation). Among the remaining interviewees, a few each said they do not feel connected with nature personally or were unsure (see the third quotation).

(How does that message, 'it is important to connect people with wild nature,' relate to you personally?) I think it's just a respect for animals. We want her to grow up with a respect for all living things. So this [visiting the Zoo] is really, really important. [male, 45]

(Do you personally relate to this message? How do you connect to nature today?) To connect to nature, all I do is eco-friendly things like recycle or . . . to turn off the faucet when you're brushing your teeth, or how to conserve natural elements out there. [male, 28]

(How do you personally relate to this message, outside of the zoo?) I'll be honest. I'm not that much of a nature person. I was born in Manhattan, so I don't relate that much to it. I'm not that into it. I just want to have a safe, clean, little life and environment. [female, 50]

# APPENDICES

---

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES

## APPENDIX B

### DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES



## APPENDIX C

### DEMOGRAPHIC TABLES

**TABLE 1**

**VISITATION CHARACTERISTICS**

<b>FIRST TIME OR REPEAT VISITOR (N= 43<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>%</b>
Repeat Visitor	67
First Time Visitor	33
<b>NUMBER OF PRIOR VISITS IN PAST TWO YEARS (N= 43<sup>3</sup>)</b>	<b>%</b>
One	11
Two – Three	32
Four – Six	18
Seven – Ten	14
Eleven +	25

<sup>1</sup>One respondent did not identify visitation characteristics.

<sup>2</sup>One respondent did not identify visitation characteristics.

**TABLE 2**

**WCS MEMBERSHIP**

<b>WCS MEMBER (N= 40<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>%<sup>2</sup></b>
No	63
Yes	38

<sup>1</sup>Four respondents did not identify membership status.

<sup>2</sup>Percentages do not total 100 percent due to rounding.

**TABLE 3**

**ZOO'S PERCEIVED AFFILIATION**

<b>AFFILIATION (N= 43<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>%</b>
Wildlife Conservation Society	49
I don't know	33
Central Park Conservancy	9
An independent non-profit organization	9

<sup>1</sup>One respondent did not identify visitation characteristics.

**TABLE 4****PARTICIPATION IN ZOO ACTIVITIES**

<b>ZOO ACTIVITY (N = 44)</b>	<b>%</b>
Visited the Penguins & Sea Birds	86
Touched or petted an animal	82
Visited the Sea Lion Pool	82
Visited the Polar Circle (Polar Bears)	75
Provided food for an animal	68
Visited the Snow Leopard Exhibit	64
Visited the Tropic Zone/Rainforest (Lemurs, Birds of Paradise)	61
Visited the Temperate Territory (Snow Monkeys, Red Pandas)	57
Watched a scheduled animal feeding	46
Visited the Dancing Crane Café or purchased food	32
Watched a movie at the 4D Theater	25
Visited the Zoo shop(s)	14
Visited the Intelligence Garden	14
Purchased a professional photo	2

**TABLE 5****GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

<b>GENDER (N = 44)</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	61
Male	39
<b>AGE IN YEARS<sup>1</sup> (N = 44)</b>	<b>%</b>
18 – 24	5
25 – 34	23
35 – 44	32
45 – 54	25
55 – 64	14
64 +	2

<sup>1</sup>Age: range = 19 – 92; median age = 40.5; mean age = 42.75 ( $\pm 13.633$ )

**TABLE 6**  
**LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

<b>EDUCATION (N= 44)</b>	<b>%<sup>1</sup></b>
Some high school	5
High school graduate	5
Some college	7
College graduate	39
Post-graduate degree	46

<sup>1</sup> Percentages do not total 100 percent due to rounding.

**TABLE 7**  
**ETHNICITY**

<b>ETHNICITY (N= 42<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>%<sup>1</sup></b>
White	71
Asian	12
Hispanic	10
Black	5
Other <sup>3</sup>	5

<sup>1</sup> Two respondents did not identify their ethnicity.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages do not total 100 percent because respondents may be multi-racial.

<sup>3</sup> Other ethnicity (n = 2): Italian, n = 1; did not identify other ethnicity, n = 1.

**TABLE 8**  
**PRIMARY LANGUAGE**

<b>LANGUAGE (N= 44)</b>	<b>N</b>
English	37
Cantonese	1
Danish	1
Finnish	1
Kanada	1
Polish	1
Russian	1
Spanish	1

**TABLE 9****DESCRIPTION OF VISIT GROUP**

<b>NUMBER OF ADULTS IN VISIT GROUP (NOT INCLUDING THE RESPONDENT) (N= 34<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>%</b>
None	3
One	56
Two	27
Three or more	15
<b>NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN VISIT GROUP (N= 38<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>%</b>
One	50
Two	32
Three	16
Four or more	3
<b>AGES OF CHILDREN IN VISIT GROUP (N= 35<sup>3</sup>)</b>	<b>%</b>
Visiting with at least one child 0-5 years	56
Visiting with at least one child 6-12 years	39
Visiting with at least one child 13-17 years	5

<sup>1</sup>Ten respondents did not identify how many other adults, if any, were in their immediate party.

<sup>2</sup>Six respondents did not identify how many children, if any, were in their immediate party.

<sup>3</sup>Three respondents did not identify the ages of the children in their immediate party.

**TABLE 10**  
**RESIDENCE**

<b>COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE (N = 44)</b>	<b>N</b>
United States	41
Denmark	1
Finland	1
India	1
<b>US RESIDENTS BY STATE (N = 40<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>N</b>
New York	30
Manhattan	13
Brooklyn	6
Long Island	4
Queens	2
Westchester County	2
Bronx	1
Staten Island	1
Wayne County	1
Florida	2
New Jersey	2
Maryland	1
Michigan	1
North Carolina	1
Pennsylvania	1
Texas	1
Virginia	1

<sup>1</sup> One US resident respondent did not identify residence.

**TABLE II****ZIP CODES FOR US RESIDENTS**

<b>ZIP CODES</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>ZIP CODES</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>ZIP CODES</b>	<b>N</b>
10021	4	10475	1	11374	1
07047	1	10580	1	11598	1
07869	1	10603	1	14568	1
10002	1	11010	1	19103	1
10004	1	11050	1	20912	1
10019	1	11201	1	22043	1
10022	1	11209	1	28303	1
10024	1	11211	1	33326	1
10029	1	11217	1	34243	1
10033	1	11230	1	48108	1
10037	1	11236	1	75034	1
10044	1	11357	1		
10310	1	11367	1		