Impact Planning, Evaluation & Audience Research

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# Front-end Evaluation: Nature Lab

Prepared for the
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
Los Angeles, CA

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# SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A) contracted with the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC) to conduct a front-end evaluation of its Nature Lab exhibition. RK&A conducted 28 in-depth interviews in August 2012 to explore visitors' responses to the proposed exhibition content and interpretation. This summary highlights key findings organized around study objectives. We also propose recommendations intended to help staff find common ground between the Museum's intended messages and visitors' understanding.

The findings presented here are among the most salient. Please read the body of the report for a more comprehensive presentation of findings.

#### **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS**

#### **OBJECTIVE I: WHAT ARE INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LOS ANGELES ENVIRONMENT?**

- Top-of-mind for many interviewees was the cultural diversity of Los Angeles and how busy or fast-paced the city is; one-quarter discussed the natural environment of LA unprompted.
- When probed specifically about LA's natural habitat, about one-third of interviewees discussed the natural habitats in the region and mentioned plants or animals one might find; one-third described the dearth of non-man-made natural habitats in the city; and one-third continued to discuss LA in terms of an urban environment.
- When probed specifically about what lives in LA's natural habitat, about three-quarters of
  interviewees named at least one non-domesticated animal that lives in Los Angeles (e.g., wild
  birds, such as hawks).
- When probed specifically about the term "wildlife," about one-half of interviewees felt that "wildlife" was an accurate way to describe what lives in LA; one-quarter said that "wildlife" was not the correct word to describe what lives in LA; and about one-fifth said the term "wildlife" describes some of what lives in LA, but not all of what lives in LA.

# OBJECTIVE 2: HOW DO INTERVIEWEES CONNECT THE PROPOSED CONTENT TO THE EXHIBITION'S MAIN MESSAGE?

- When asked how, if at all, everything they looked at during testing connected to the big idea on "LA's Urban Nature" panel, nearly all interviewees saw a connection.
- About three-quarters of interviewees gleaned the message that there is more wildlife in LA than you think; some provided specific examples from the panels that linked to this idea (e.g., the narrative of the mountain lion depicts wildlife "in plain sight").
- About one-quarter gleaned the message that humans are negatively impacting LA's wildlife; some provided specific examples from the panels that linked to this idea (e.g., the narrative of the mountain lion described the effects of humans encroaching on the mountain lions' habitat).

#### **OBJECTIVE 3: WHAT ARE INTERVIEWEES' RESPONSES TO THE ANIMAL STORIES?**

- When asked what information the "Losing Ground" panels were trying to convey, many interviewees talked about the main idea of animals losing their territory to human expansion; several referenced the story of the mountain lion crossing 101 as communicating this point.
- One-half of interviewees were most engaged by the "Losing Ground" narrative panel; several said the story caught their attention because it was relatable, noting familiar landmarks (such as highway 101).
- Of those who responded to the "Turtle Troubles" panels, many were engaged by the new facts the panel presents (e.g., "favorite facts" from the Museum scientist).
- About three-quarters of interviewees who responded to "Turtle Troubles" were engaged by the turtle shells because they could touch them and compare the sizes of the two turtles.

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: WHAT WOULD INSPIRE INTERVIEWEES TO VISIT THE WILDLIFE GARDENS?**

- Many interviewees preferred the panel depicting what squirrels' tails communicate because it
  gave them new information about a familiar animal (an "ah-ha" moment), as well as specific
  information to look for when watching squirrels in the Wildlife Garden.
- Several who preferred the panel depicting the tail communication of squirrels said it should more explicitly direct them outside (something they missed because they were drawn to the black graphics of the squirrels).
- A couple said they would like to see photographs of the two squirrel species referenced on the panel so they know what to look for in the Wildlife Gardens.

# OBJECTIVE 5: WHAT WOULD INSPIRE INTERVIEWEES TO PARTICIPATE IN A CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT?

- About one-half of interviewees liked "Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!" because the panel used words like "explore" and "adventure" that made the task seem fun and engaging, especially for children and families; a few liked that the panel pinpointed their backyard as the starting place for exploration, making the task approachable and familiar.
- One-quarter also liked "Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!" because it pulled out the reason *why* the task was important to the Museum's scientists (using the circle graphic).
- One-quarter liked "Help Our Scientists!" because the word "help" in the title as well as the text made the task seem important (like a real project or research).
- Several each liked the icon-illustrated three-step-process on both panels because it simplified the task; likewise, several also liked the scientist tips for finding lizards for the same reason (preferring the tips framed by the clipboard that drew the eye).
- One-quarter said hearing the information in the video was easier to process than reading, and one-quarter also said they liked seeing the real lizard in the video so they knew what to look for.
- About one-half of interviewees said they would like to see their and others' photograph submissions for a few reasons:
  - seeing examples would motivate them to submit one of their own;
  - recognizing their submitted photographs would demonstrate that their contribution is valuable; and
  - collectively viewing the photographs, along with information such as the species of lizard and geographic location, would place the information in a relevant context.

About one-quarter said they and others would be more likely to submit a photograph if the task
was connected to existing social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (e.g.,
using a Hashtag such as #LAMuseumlizards).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings above, RK&A proposes the following recommendations for the Museum to consider when designing the Nature Lab and Wildlife Gardens:

- Findings reveal that the main message of the exhibition ("LA is a biodiversity hotspot") will likely serve as a powerful hook for visitors because it introduces new and surprising information about the place they live. Many interviewees' top-of-mind perceptions of LA's environment do not include LA's natural habitat or wildlife; yet, after testing, many interviewees gleaned the message that there is more wildlife in LA than you think (an "ah-ha" moment). Thus, staff should continue to emphasize this message wherever possible throughout exhibition content.
- Interviewees' perceptions of the appropriateness of the word "wildlife" to describe what lives in LA varied; when designing interpretation, staff might consider emphasizing *why* certain animals are considered "wildlife," even though some people might not initially consider them as such.
- Findings suggest that the animal stories are successful strategies for helping visitors glean the primary thematic messages; many grasped the main message about habitat loss from the narrative panel about the mountain lion. Thus, staff should continue to use narrative as a primary interpretive strategy, weaving in information (like highway 101) which visitors appreciated as something familiar and relatable.
- Again, findings suggest that presenting new information about something familiar (such as squirrels) enables visitors to have an "ah-ha" moment. Interviewees also said that drawing their attention to something specific (such as what a squirrel's tail is communicating) would inspire them to visit the Wildlife Gardens. Emphasizing new, surprising, and specific information about a familiar animal is likely to inspire more visitors to venture outside.
- Responses to the citizen science interpretation suggest that varied methods will be successful for inspiring visitors to participate in research. Common strategies that seemed to engage and inspire visitors are: emphasizing *why* visitors' contributions are valuable and *how* visitors will be recognized for their contributions (displaying photographs, linking photographs geographically to participants' communities); and streamlining the process so it is as simple and straightforward as possible (linking to social networking; showing examples; outlining steps and tips; combining interpretive modes—video and text; emphasizing the task as fun for the whole family).

## INTRODUCTION

Randi Korn & Associates, Inc. (RK&A) contracted with the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC) to conduct a front-end evaluation of its Nature Lab exhibition. RK&A conducted 28 in-depth interviews in August 2012 to explore visitors' responses to the proposed exhibition content and interpretation and help staff find common ground between the Museum's intended messages and visitors' understanding.

The study objectives are to:

- Identify how visitors talk about their perceptions of LA (as an urban environment teeming with wildlife);
- Explore whether visitors see the thematic areas fitting together and supporting the big idea: "LA is a surprising biodiversity hotspot";
- Explore visitors' reactions to the animal stories to determine how they make sense of them;
- Explore what might inspire someone to visit the Wildlife Gardens; and
- Explore what might inspire someone to participate in a citizen science project and collect data and submit it to the Museum.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

RK&A conducted in-depth interviews with visitors about the Nature Lab exhibition. In-depth interviews are exploratory, producing detailed information about the nuances of potential visitors' thoughts and opinions as they relate to, in this case, interpretive content about LA as a biodiversity hotspot. Interviewees are encouraged and motivated to express their opinions and feelings and share with the interviewer the meanings they associate with this idea and proposed exhibition content.

RK&A conducted interviews in two locations at NHMLAC—the exhibition space (under construction) where the Nature Lab will be installed and the Discovery Center. While all testing was originally scheduled to take place in the exhibition space under construction, after consulting with NHMLAC staff, RK&A chose to move testing to the Discovery Center on the second day in order to capture the voice of the family audience (who was declining to participate in the original space since children could not accompany adults into the construction area). NHMLAC staff recruited eligible visitors (18 years and older) using a continuous random sampling method. In accordance with this method, staff chose an imaginary line and intercepted the first adult visitor to cross that line. If the adult visitor agreed, NHMLAC led the visitor group to the testing area to participate in an interview conducted by RK&A staff. A small gift was presented to each visitor group to thank them for participating in the study.

To be sensitive to interviewees' time and maximize the depth of responses, RK&A alternated asking the questions related to the "Turtle Troubles" and "Call to Action" panels. All other questions were asked of all interviewees (see Appendix A for the interview guide and Appendix B for associated exhibition content); following the interview, each interviewee also filled out a one-page questionnaire capturing demographic and visit information (see Appendix C). Each interview guide was intentionally openended to allow interviewees to discuss what they felt was meaningful; interviews were audio-recorded with interviewees' permission and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

#### DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING METHOD

Interviewees' responses to interview questions were analyzed qualitatively, meaning that the evaluator studied the data for meaningful patterns and, as patterns and trends emerged, grouped similar responses. Trends and themes within the data are presented in thematic sections, and, within each section, findings are reported in descending order starting with the most-frequently occurring.

The data are presented in narrative. Interviewees' verbatim quotations (edited for clarity) are included and the interviewer's questions appear in parentheses. Interviewees' genders and ages are included in brackets following quotations.

#### **SECTIONS OF THE REPORT:**

- 1. Perceptions of the Los Angeles Environment
- 2. Responses to "Losing Ground" Panels
- 3. Responses to "Turtle Troubles" Panels
- 4. Responses to "Call to Action" Panels
- 5. Responses to Citizen Science Interpretation
- 6. Connections to "LA's Urban Nature" Panel

## PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

#### **INTRODUCTION**

RK&A interviewed 28 visitor groups comprised of 32 adults (18 years and older). Interviewees were divided evenly between male and female (53 percent versus 47 percent). Interviewees' ages ranged from 18 to 76 years, with a median age of 31 years. More than one-third of interviewees were visiting with children (39 percent). About one-third identified as Caucasian/White (34 percent), and slightly less than one-third identified as Hispanic (31 percent). Interviewees were divided fairly evenly between repeat visitors and first time visitors (55 percent versus 45 percent).

#### PERCEPTIONS OF THE LOS ANGELES ENVIRONMENT

Interviewees were asked a series of questions about their descriptions of the Los Angeles environment and what lives in LA's natural habitat. Additionally, interviewees were asked about their feelings regarding the use of the word "wildlife" to describe what lives in the Los Angeles area.

#### **TOP-OF-MIND DESCRIPTIONS OF LA'S ENVIRONMENT**

Interviewees were asked to describe the Los Angeles environment to someone who has never been to the city. About two-thirds of interviewees mentioned the diversity of Los Angeles, with several describing the diverse cultural and entertainment opportunities the city affords (see the two quotations below). A few interviewees talked generally about the diversity of the city (e.g., "I think it's very diverse"), and a couple said there is a lot to see and do in Los Angeles.

There's tons to do.... You can go to the beach and then go snowboarding in the same day.... and then go to the city, and then there's just so many things to do. So it's not a place where you're ever [going to] get bored. [male, 19]

[LA is] really diverse, from anything, you know, museums that you'd want to go to, to sporting events, to restaurants, to just a number of attractions I haven't listed. [male, 41]

About two-thirds also mentioned the urban environment of Los Angeles; many mentioned how busy or fast-paced the city is (see the first quotation below); several also talked about the geographical size of the Los Angeles area (see the first quotation below), and several also mentioned how busy or fast-paced the city is (see the second quotation). A few described the urban environment generally (see the third quotation).

[LA is] geographically big, compared to New York City, geographically it is much larger. Even though the population isn't as much as New York City, it is still very geographically large. [male, 19]

I would describe the city as busy, energized [and] crowded. [female, 24]

[LA is] urban. Lots of concrete. [female, 33]

About one-quarter also talked about the natural habitat of Los Angeles, unprompted, with many discussing different habitats that make up the LA region (see the first quotation below). A few also

discussed the climate of Los Angeles (see the second quotation). The remaining responses were idiosyncratic (e.g., LA can be whatever you want it to be, the air quality is not good).

I would describe [LA] as a combination of beaches, coastal, mountains, even desert in some parts of the valley toward the north. [female, 33]

[LA has] great weather. [female, 31]

#### **DESCRIPTIONS OF LA'S NATURAL HABITAT**

Interviewees were asked how their description would change if they were asked to describe the natural habitat of Los Angeles. About one-third of interviewees talked about the natural habitats in the region, with most mentioning plants or animals one might find in the Los Angeles region (see the first two quotations below). A few also mentioned the environment more generally (see the third quotation).

I would say there is definitely wildlife, you know, squirrels, raccoons, birds, coyotes. We also have skunks and mice. There is wildlife out there; you just have to look for it. [male, 34]

There [are] high levels of biodiversity for flora, for flowers, wildflowers and trees, and whatnot. Low levels [of] large animals, not as many insects as some other parts of the United States for LA or California, rather. [female, 33]

[The LA natural habitat] can range from coastal to Mediterranean subtropical, and forest, I guess. And then some desert areas. [male, 22]

About one-third of interviewees also talked about the dearth of natural habitat one would find in Los Angeles. Of these, several talked generally about the lack of natural habitat in the city (see the first quotation below), and several also talked about the need to drive or seek out these areas (see the second quotation). One-quarter also mentioned parks or preserves when talking about natural habitat in Los Angeles (see the third quotation).

Not too much [natural habitat] in LA. [male, 35]

There isn't that much to see and do unless you really know the area. Like in Malibu there's some nice nature trails there. But for the most part, you have to drive about an hour or so away to get some good nature things in. [female, 31]

There are areas of the Santa Monica mountains or the San Gabriel mountains, very large tracts of preserved natural habitats that are very close to the city. [male, 48]

One-quarter of interviewees still described an urban environment (see the quotation below). A couple still talked about the crowding and population of the city, and a couple continued to talk about the cultural and entertainment opportunities the city affords. The remaining responses were idiosyncratic (e.g., LA is livable).

LA is more of an urban setting. It's more of an urban setting than a natural one. [male, 18]

#### **RESPONSES TO WHAT LIVES IN LA'S NATURAL HABITAT**

Interviewees were asked two different questions to address what lives in the Los Angeles habitat. First, interviewees were asked what they think lives in LA's natural habitat. More than three-quarters of interviewees talked about at least one non-domesticated animal that lives in Los Angeles. For instance,

about three-quarters mentioned wild birds, such as hawks. About one-third each also mentioned coyotes and squirrels. One-quarter also listed aquatic animals such as whales, fish or sharks. All other animals were mentioned by less than one-quarter of interviewees (for a complete list, see Appendix D).

Interviewees were then asked what other "wildlife" lives in Los Angeles. At this point, all but one interviewee had mentioned at least one non-domesticated animal that lives in Los Angeles. About one-quarter of interviewees added wild birds to their description, with all other animals mentioned by less than one-quarter of interviewees (for a complete list, see Appendix E). A few interviewees questioned whether the animals they mentioned were actually considered wildlife (see the quotation below).

(Can you think of any other wildlife that lives here?) I can't think of any other ones really. Hold on, crows and things like that, but nothing I would really consider wildlife. [male, 35]

#### **RESPONSES TO USING THE WORD "WILDLIFE"**

Interviewees were asked what their thoughts are on using the term "wildlife" to describe what animals live in Los Angeles. About one-half of interviewees felt that "wildlife" was an accurate way to describe the animals that live in LA (see the first two quotations below). One-quarter said that "wildlife" was not the correct word to describe what lives in Los Angeles (see the third and fourth quotations). About one-fifth said the term "wildlife" describes some of what lives in Los Angeles, but not all of what lives in Los Angeles (see the fifth quotation). A few said that the term "wildlife" might be an accurate description of what live in LA, but that is not the first word that comes to mind (see the sixth quotation).

I would consider them all wildlife, just because this is their home, this is their habitat. I mean, they're not in a zoo or anywhere. . . . They're wild. [female, 33]

Well, I mean, nobody's feeding them and they're foraging for themselves. [male, 48]

There's no real wildlife here. [male, 61]

I don't really think of LA as being a place that has wildlife. I don't see, unless it's like a zoo of course. (And why not?) Because we're very urban, there's lots of cities and development here, so that's pretty [much] gotten rid of all of the natural habitat for wildlife. Like, up north you have marshes and stuff, there's [a lot] more of that, so you have more birds and what-not. You don't really have that here, unless of course it's at a zoo or a preserve. [female, 31]

(Do you think ['wildlife'] describes what lives here?) Sometimes yes. (Can you tell me a little bit more about what you mean by that?) Sometimes there are dangerous animals here. [female, 18]

'Natural habitat' might be good. When I think of wildlife, I think of like rain forest or that area. Maybe 'urban wildlife,' that might be a good word. [male, 34]

#### **RESPONSES TO "LOSING GROUND" PANELS**

Interviewees were shown exhibition renderings and three text panels associated with the "Losing Ground" thematic area, including the large L1 story panel and two supporting L2 panels. After looking at the renderings and panels, interviewees were asked a series of questions about what they had seen.

#### **INITIAL RESPONSES TO PANELS**

When asked for their initial reactions to the panels, one-half of interviewees reiterated the main idea of the panels or somehow talked about how humans are encroaching on animal territory (see the first two quotations below). About one-third also talked about the mountain lion narrative. While some of these interviewees talked about this narrative generally (see the third quotation), a few said the story painted a picture for them, or allowed them to visually imagine what was happening (see the fourth quotation).

My initial thought is we've encroached on the animals' habitat too much, [because] if we have wild animals already coming into LA, then we've obviously done something wrong . . . or [taken] something away from them. So basically, we've upset the natural order of their habitats. [male, 18]

(So what are your initial thoughts about these panels?) Very informative. (Can you tell me a bit more about that?) Especially with the whole losing ground, how we're adding more roads and everything and the animals are getting pushed away or just [showing] up in your backyard. [male, 30]

This story of the lion that leaped through the freeway is, [it] gets your attention. Something you don't think about every day. [female, 32]

It [the story] paints a good mental picture for somebody who is driving around here and has probably been on the 101 many times. I think it uses good words, the large panel uses some good words to create emotion like, 'chances are slim that the lion can survive.' Descriptive words are good like, 'big rigs,' 'leaps,' you know, 'Leaps away and lopes into the underbrush.' I mean, that sounds good. I think it's good, and it's descriptive. It paints a good mental picture. [male, 35]

About one-fifth talked about at least one design element or the overall impact of the exhibition design (see the first two quotations below). Other responses varied. A few talked about wanting additional information (see the third quotation), and a few also said that the information presented was good information (e.g., the information was useful, informative, or surprising). A few interviewees also mentioned the large amount of information on the panels; one of these interviewees said the "Living in the Lion's Den" panel was too long.

Having the silhouettes of all the animals is a really good visual, and then further talking about all the animals that are losing ground here. [female, 24]

It's great. It's informative, but I would love it if there was an actual visual besides just the taxidermy animal, like maybe a habitat space of where they live or, I don't know. Something more visual. [male, 22]

I'm wondering, not that you want to bring people down, but is it possible to . . . [include] certain statistics of . . . the average number of animals that are lost perhaps? Just to give a picture of the seriousness of the threat or the level of the threat. [male, 41]

#### **KEY MESSAGES COMMUNICATED**

When asked what information the panels were trying to convey, many interviewees talked about the main idea of animals losing their territory to human expansion. These interviewees talked directly about human impact on the environment (see the first quotation below). Several referenced the narrative panel (the story of the mountain lion crossing the 101 freeway) as communicating this point. The

remaining interviewees (who did not discuss the main idea of animals losing territory) said the panels presented them with new information (see the second quotation).

Well, the title of this thing is 'Losing Ground,' so how animals are at risk as LA keeps getting bigger and we're expanding more and creating more developments. . . . So I think the point of it is just saying that we're becoming more urban and, we're creating a great city life. But, hello, you know, what about these animals that are losing out on their natural habitats? So, [the panels are] just giving a different perspective. [female, 31]

To me it's educational and maybe just eye-opening as far as, you know, I'm not the only one that's living here. I'm not the only one that's on the freeway, it's mountain lions and other animals. [female, 33]

#### **MOST ENGAGING ASPECTS**

Interviewees were asked what part of the exhibition caught their attention the most, including all of the panels and what they had seen in the exhibition renderings. One-half of interviewees liked the narrative panel, with the story of the mountain lion crossing the 101 freeway. Several of these interviewees said that the story caught their attention because it was relatable, talking about landmarks with which they are familiar (see the first quotation below). A few said the panel is eye catching, either due to its large size or the change from large to small font (see the second quotation). About one-third said the mountain lion depicted in the renderings caught their attention. Many of these interviewees spoke about the visual impact of the mountain lion, saying that it would serve as a hook to get them to explore more of what the exhibition had to offer (see the third quotation). A few said that the "Losing Ground" thematic panel was what caught their attention, with many referring to the silhouettes as eye-catching (see the fourth quotation). A few also talked about the "Living in the Lion's Den" panel, saying it caught their attention because it presented new information.

The [Losing Ground] one, the first panel because it actually gives you a plausible story of what a mountain lion could do in this area, and it gives you what could actually happen to it if it actually survives on the 101. (And why is that engaging?) Because so many people drive on the 101 that everyone would see this, everyone would know what would be happening which means people know that the animals are encroaching into the LA area. [male, 18]

I would say definitely the impact of the expanded text [large font], just [to] start with a story and kind of pull you in. [male, 41]

Well, I think the visual of having the mountain lion on the ledge is going to be what initially captures your attention and sort of draws you into the space. [female, 24]

(In thinking about your initial reaction, what part would you say captured your attention, perhaps more than another?) The actual visual of the animals that are being lost. (These silhouettes here on the Losing Ground panel? Why do you think that is?) It's more eyecatching just because of how it's set up. [male, 22]

#### **CONFUSING ASPECTS**

Interviewees were asked if they found anything confusing or unclear in the "Losing Ground" exhibition renderings and test panels. Three-quarters of interviewees did not find anything confusing or unclear. Of the remaining one-quarter, a few said aspects of the content are confusing (see the first two quotations below). A couple said the language was a challenge (see the third quotation).

I think . . . what they're saying is that there's small patches of habitats; [I] wasn't sure that the point it was trying to make is that they need to be interconnected patches or that because they're sort of islands that's the problem. Or just [simply] that the size of the patches are smaller. [male, 48]

The big "Losing Ground" [panel] [the narrative about the mountain lion], I mean, it was clear after you read it a couple of times over. Something like that I think would be better illustrated with a little mini video that runs along with it, especially if you have a lot of tourists around here. They're not [necessarily going to] pick up on those words that are very English-language specific, so I think a video describing what's [going] on there would be helpful. [male, 35]

#### RESPONSES TO "TURTLE TROUBLES" PANELS

About one-half of interviewees were shown a panel from the "Introduced Species" thematic area, entitled "Turtle Troubles." The panel outlined problems faced by the western pond turtle, as its territory is taken over by the red-eared slider. After spending time looking at the panel, interviewees were asked a few questions.

#### **INITIAL RESPONSES**

When asked for their initial thoughts about the panel, many interviewees talked about the information provided in the panel, calling out specific elements they particularly enjoyed. For instance, many talked about the new facts the panel presents, particularly those that accompanied the video still ("favorite facts" from the museum scientist), and those that accompanied the turtle shells on the right side of the panel (see the first quotation below). A few also liked the turtle shells, and a couple also mentioned the video as interesting, even though they were only looking at a picture of a turtle (see the second quotation).

It's kind of cool to know the difference[s] between the different turtles, like the local LA turtles and the new arrivals. And I like the little facts they have about turtles from scientists. That's really interesting; I never knew that. [female, 23]

I like that there's going to be a video, and there's going to be actual shells. That makes it very interactive. [female, 24]

The remaining responses varied. Some interviewees expressed confusion over some of the content (see the quotations below). A couple stated that the display should include live turtles or a larger number of turtle shells.

I don't know what a turtle on the half shell is. (I think it is supposed to be a play on words . . . like oysters on the half shell. So that was a little confusing to you?) Yeah, that one got by me. [male, 19]

I think it's a good exhibit [because] I like turtles a lot, but I guess it was a little confusing at first about the point of it, like, the red-eared [slider] versus the western pond turtle. Maybe I started at the wrong area, like if I came in on this side [main text panel] this will give me more of a background. . . . Whereas reading this at first, I was a little confused. Or maybe if I saw the video first then that would have been better instead of starting out [here]. [female, 31]

#### **MOST ENGAGING ASPECTS**

Interviewees were then asked what the most interesting or engaging parts of the panel were, keeping in mind that the photo would be a video and the shells would be actual turtle shells that visitors could touch. About three-quarters of interviewees said that the shells were the most engaging part of the panel, with many saying the shells were most interesting because they would be touchable (see the first quotation below), and a few saying it was because they gave you an easy reference to compare the size of the turtles (see the second quotation). About one-half also mentioned the video as the most interesting aspect because it would draw you in with sound and something to watch (see the third quotation). About one-fifth also stated that the information presented was the most interesting part of the panel (e.g., the information about how aggressive turtles can be was surprising).

The shells [are most interesting] because you'll actually get to touch [them] and that draws me [in] first at least. Then you can get a sense of what we're talking about here, gives you some background and then you can read more about it or watch the video. [female, 31]

The shells popping up with the graphics on them [are the most interesting part.] (Why are the shells most engaging?) [Because] I'm assuming they're to scale, so like just seeing how the sizes, they're the different sizes of turtles. [male, 27]

Well, I think the video will be the most engaging. (Why is that?) Because I'm sure it's going to be well done and it'll just draw you in. The voice will draw you in of the narrator, [and] the images of the turtles. [female, 24]

#### **RESPONSES TO "CALL TO ACTION" PANELS**

RK&A asked about one-half of interviewees to look at two versions of the "Call to Action" panels to gauge their responses (both titled "Eastern Fox Squirrel"). These panels are intended to inspire visitors to explore the Wildlife Gardens.

#### PREFERENCES FOR PANEL APPROACH

Of these interviewees, many preferred the panel depicting what squirrels' tails communicate because it gave them new information about a familiar animal, as well as specific information to look for when watching squirrels in the Wildlife Garden (see the first two quotations below). Some also liked that the colors used on the panel stood out ("popped") compared to the other, more minimalistic panel (see the first quotation). A couple preferred the panel with the Wildlife Garden icon; one because the design was minimalistic, and the other because the text invited readers to go outside to observe the squirrels. Similarly, several who preferred the panel depicting the tail communication of squirrels said the text explicitly direct them outside (something they missed because they were drawn to the black graphics of the squirrels) (see the third quotation).

I have to say the first one [about squirrels' tail communication] is better. (Why do you say that?) The color contrast makes it pop out to the eye more, while the pictures actually tell you what squirrels might be feeling because it gives you an example of what they could do [with their tail] if they are angry, scared, or interesting. (Why is that engaging?) Because if you were to go outside and see a squirrel you might actually know what it was actually feeling so you'd be able to not get the squirrel angry at you. [male, 18]

(What are your initial thoughts?) I like the top one better [about squirrels' tail communications]. (Can you tell me why?) It gives you specific things to look for, and I think in the bottom one

[with the Wildlife Garden icon], I don't want to speak for everyone, but I think a lot of people are already aware of how comfortable squirrels can be. You can feed them in the park all the time. And then, 'what mad skills do they use to stay away from you . . .?' (What is your reaction to that? Obviously, everyone knows they can run fast and climb but the top one [about squirrels' tail communication] teaches you something that you didn't know already, and it gives you something specific to look for. [male, 34]

Maybe hav[e] the 'see nature in action . . .' [part] on a lower area here because you pass right over it when you're looking at the animations of the squirrels' [tail]. Having it down below as opposed to having it up above so as a sequence you'd read through it then [go] see the squirrels outside. [male, 61]

#### **UNDERSTANDING OF WILDLIFE GARDENS ICON**

When probed specifically about the Wildlife Gardens icon, some said they noticed it, while others did not. Regardless, when probed about its meaning, most said they interpreted the symbol to mean that they could find squirrels in the Wildlife Gardens (see the first quotation below). A few were unsure of what the icon meant (see the second quotation).

I noticed it [the symbol] and didn't really think about it or understand what it was supposed to mean. (If you were to take a guess as to what you thought it was supposed to be communicating?) It looks a speech bubble, and I assume it means you are going to see those [squirrels] in the Wildlife Gardens. [male, 34]

(Did you notice this symbol up there at all?) Yeah. (What did you think it meant?) It looks like an ice cream, makes you want to get ice cream. (Did it mean anything to you?) Not really. [male, 34]

#### WHAT ELSE WOULD INSPIRE VISITORS TO VISIT THE WILDLIFE GARDENS

When asked what else, if anything, might inspire them to explore the Wildlife Gardens, interviewees' responses varied widely. While the panel depicting the squirrels' tail communication says, "See Nature in Action Outside in the Wildlife Gardens," several said that this panel should more explicitly direct visitors outside (see the quotation below). A few said the panels already inspired them to go outside and nothing needed to be added. A couple said they would like to see photographs of the two squirrel species referenced on the panel so they know what to look for in the Wildlife Gardens. The remaining responses were idiosyncratic (e.g., give visitors opportunities to feed the squirrels, alerting you to plant species to look for, creating an aesthetically pleasing space that you could see through the glass, etc.).

I didn't notice that there was an outside because I focused on the images here [referring to the black images of squirrels' tails and what they communicate]. So maybe taking one image out, blowing it up just a little bit, and then highlight 'go outside' or something. Or have something here that says, 'Hey, go outside.' I wouldn't have known to go outside unless I read it because, as a passerby, I would just look at the pictures. [male, 34]

#### RESPONSES TO CITIZEN SCIENCE INTERPRETATION

RK&A asked interviewees to look at three approaches intended to inspire visitors to participate in a citizen science project, Lost Lizards of Los Angeles. Interviewees also completed a questionnaire that asked multiple choice questions about their past and potential participation in citizen science projects.

#### CITIZEN SCIENCE BACKGROUND AND PREFERENCES

Three-quarters of interviewees had never participated in a citizen science project before.

When asked to pick the method that best describes how they might choose to participate in a citizen science project, about one-half of interviewees indicated they would collect data for a museum science project once so that they could say they have had the experience; one-quarter indicated they would want to collect data for a citizen science project for a long time. About one-fifth indicated they would want to see the data that others contribute to the project, but would not be interested in collecting any data on their own. One interviewee said they would not participate in a citizen science project.

Interviewees also were presented with a list of potential citizen science project activities and were asked to select one activity, if any, they would participate in. Some interviewees selected multiple options. About two-thirds of interviewees indicated they would take photographs with their phone or another camera and send them to the Museum via its website. About one-fifth indicated they would draw wildlife either in the Museum or another place and share it with the Museum; another one-fifth indicated they would want one of the museum scientists to tell them how to collect data so they could do it and share the data with the Museum. About one-fifth also suggested other activities in which they would participate (e.g., teaching children to enjoy nature, leading a school group in collecting and sharing data).

#### PREFERENCES FOR INTERPRETATION

Interviewees' responses to the idea of contributing information (such as photographs of lizards) to the Museum were mostly positive (see the first quotation below). Of the approaches, about one-half of interviewees expressed a preference for "Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!"; about one-third expressed a preference for "Help Our Scientists!"; and the remaining approximately one-quarter expressed a preference for the video. Interviewees liked different aspects of each approach for various reasons (see below).

(What are you initial thoughts?) I think it is really interesting to put research in the people who come to the Museum's hands, especially I think that makes [it fun] for kids to do if they go with family. [They can] go out and explore wildlife to get out of their house and go outside and help increase [the Museum's] research. I mean that'd be really awesome. [female, 23]

#### GO ON A LIZARD SCOUTING ADVENTURE! PANEL

About one-half of interviewees liked "Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!" because the panel used words like "explore" and "adventure" that made the task seem fun and engaging, especially for children and families (see the first quotation below). One-quarter also liked this panel because it pulled out the reason *why* the task was important to the Museum's scientists (using the circle graphic) (see the second quotation). A few also liked this panel because it pinpointed their backyard as the starting place for exploration, making the task approachable and familiar (see the third quotation).

Out of these two, I would have to say the second one ['Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!'] is the best because, well the one that says 'Help our Scientists!' makes it seem like it's work, while the Lizard Scouting Adventure makes it sound like you're going out, and you're going to have fun so you could get more children [to] actually accomplish this. [male, 18]

I do like that little 'Why?' bubble in the bottom one ['Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!']. (Okay what do you like about that?) I like understanding why I'm doing something, and I realize the same sentence is in the top [panel] but it kind of gets lost at the end of the paragraph. [male, 34]

It was the first one ['Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!'] that made me want to go out and do it. It [told] me [to] go explore [my] backyard; [those] first words made it accessible to me. Because the second one where it says, 'we're interested in finding out where lizards live in the LA region,' made it to broad [and] inaccessible for me. But that word 'backyard' made it seem [like] I could contribute. [male, 54]

#### **HELP OUR SCIENTISTS! PANEL**

When discussing aspects of "Help Our Scientists!" that they found engaging, about one-third liked aspects of the panel's design such as the large lizard graphic and clipboard used to frame the scientist tips, both of which drew their eye (see the first quotation below). One-quarter also liked this panel because the word "help" in the title, as well as the text, made the task seem important (like a real project or research) (see the second quotation).

I like the clipboard setting on that one ['Help Our Scientists!'] rather than just the plain setting on that one ['Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!'] (Why is that?) It makes it [the tips] stand out a little more, and it [the clipboard] makes it look more obviously like tips. [male, 18]

I'm drawn to the phrase, "Help our scientists!" more than 'Go on a lizard scouting adventure!' That ['Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!'] doesn't seem as purposeful as 'Help our scientists!' That ['Go on a Lizard Scouting Adventure!'] seems like something fun to do with the kids, go scout for lizards. It doesn't get across immediately that you're doing something to help scientists, or that you're doing something for [the Museum], too. [female, 24]

#### **BOTH PANELS**

Interviewees also discussed aspects of both panels that they found engaging. Several each liked the icon-illustrated three-step-process because it simplified the task (see the first two quotations below); and several also liked the scientist tips for finding lizards for the same reason (see the second quotation).

I like how it [the task] is simple; it's like 'go out and find lizards, step two, take a picture, step three upload it.' I mean we could all do that on our cell phone, just very simple. It's simple and fun. [female, 33]

(Okay and what do you like about the tips?) [They] just make it really easy; you realize it's easy to do, easy directions anyone can follow, and then the scientist's tips will help people find lizards easier rather than just wandering around with absolutely no clue as to what they're doing. [male, 34]

#### **VIDEO**

When discussing aspects of the video approach that they found engaging, one-quarter of interviewees said hearing the information was easier to process than reading (see the first quotation below); almost one-quarter also said they liked seeing the real lizard so they knew what to look for (see the second quotation); a couple also said they liked hearing the information because it personalized it; and a couple also said they thought the video should be combined with a text approach to accommodate multiple learning styles.

I like the video the best because I just like watching videos I guess, and I think it's just harder to ignore a video, harder to ignore someone talking to you than [reading text] in a poster. [male, 19]

The video's nice too because it shows the lizard. . . . You saw the lizards so you were engaged [by] what to look for and it drew you in. [female, 31]

#### WHAT ELSE WOULD INSPIRE PARTICIPATION

When asked if there was anything else that would inspire them to participate in a citizen science project like the Lost Lizards of Los Angeles, about one-half of interviewees said they would like to see their and others' photograph submissions for a few reasons: (1) seeing others' photographs would concretize the task by providing examples (helping motivate them to submit one of their own) (see the first quotation below); (2) recognizing those who submit photographs makes them feel that their contribution is valuable (see the second quotation); and (3) collectively viewing photographs, along with information such as the species of lizard and geographic location, would place the information in a relevant context (see the third quotation).

You know what! I would say showing some pictures that were already taken by people up there next to it [the exhibit], a screen perhaps that's uploaded that week of some of the pictures might inspire someone [to say], 'yeah, I can do that,' and they might go out and try to take these pictures. [male, 41]

Perhaps [having] a section in the Museum where the top pictures will be shown next to your name, giving [you] credit so that other people can see your pictures . . . and making the pictures part of the exhibition. (Why would that be something that would be of interest?) Because you would feel like you are actually part of [the] Museum; you bring something to it rather than just sending a picture. I'll actually appreciate more sending it [the picture]. [male, 21]

To see the results, see what your data does. (And how would you like to see that information?) Perhaps a monitor next to this [the exhibit] where the webpage results [are] being displayed. . . . I'm not sure how the results [would] be presented but perhaps with a map, maybe there are different maps . . . [so] that people say, 'oh look, people are not sending pictures in [from] Silver Lake. I live in Silver Lake, I [can] contribute some pictures.' Or, if you're in Burbank you see the kinds of lizards so you understand now the different [lizards] [in] the different habitats. I [think] it's a cool idea but I think it could be really developed into something where people want to participate because there's something at stake. And, I think [you] mostly [do that] by connecting their neighborhood to the project. [male, 48]

About one-quarter said they and others would be more likely to submit a photograph if the task was connected to existing social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (e.g., using a Hashtag such as #LAMuseumlizards); and a couple of these interviewees also mentioned using a QR code to streamline the process of uploading photographs to the Museum's Web site (see the two quotations below).

I don't know how many people would go [to the Web site], you know what I mean? Like remember to go home and go on their computer and [upload] some pictures you know what I mean? I just know I have Instagram; I Instagram a lot. [female, 22]

[Visitors] can use their mobile phones immediately, and they're already locked in and keyed into Facebook on their phones so they can utilize the tag feature where they can tag back to the Museum, or they can just post the picture on the Museum wall directly from their mobile phone. But chances are they probably won't have their digital camera by their side. [male, 34]

A few said they thought the Museum should provide an incentive to participate such as a contest for the best photograph and/or prizes (e.g., free pass to the Museum) (see the quotation below).

(What else might inspire you to participate in this type of project?) Free admission; I contribute to the database of the Museum program [and] in exchange the Museum lets me in for a day. That [would] be a real easy thing to do; or, if you guys held an event for anybody who takes a picture, just like a one-day thing, and it shows everybody's picture. [male, 22]

A few said the panels and video are already inspiring without any additional incentive; and a few gave idiosyncratic responses (e.g., add text to the video, add the scientist tips to the video, etc.).

#### **CONNECTIONS TO "LA'S URBAN NATURE" PANEL**

When asked how, if at all, everything they looked at during testing connected to the big idea on "LA's Urban Nature" panel, nearly all interviewees saw a connection. For instance, about three-quarters of interviewees gleaned the message that there is more wildlife in LA than you think, and some linked this idea back to specific panels they read during testing (see the first quotation below). About one-quarter realized the message that humans are negatively impacting LA's wildlife, and some provided specific examples from the panels that linked to this idea (see the second quotation). A few said the panels they saw during testing connected to the big idea, but did not elaborate about the big idea or how it connected (see the third quotation). A few also struggled to connect certain panels to the big idea (such as the "Turtle Troubles" panel) (see the fourth quotation).

(How, if at all, do you think what you have seen today connects to this idea?) Oh, [it] completely connects. (Tell me how you think it connects.) Back to the mountain lion, you drive on the freeway, and we don't realize that this animal's in nature all around you. You're on the freeway so it connects completely as far as the fact that we live in LA, it's not just buildings and cars. [There is] nature so I like how it says 'hidden in plain sight,' because it [nature] is in plain sight. We just don't notice it; we're in a hurry. [female, 33]

In LA, we can see a lot of families who have turtles, and they [are] not taking care of those animals... Also, we can see [in] these pictures, there are so many animals [whose houses] we steal. Sometimes we don't care about them or plants. I think we need a lot more trees and plants in this area. We need to take care of them because that will help the environment for those animals, too. [female, 48]

I mean it all ties into it; it all blends really nicely. It's like you're sending the same message but different ways, and that's great. I hope that helps. [female, 33]

The small display ['Turtle Troubles'] does not really explain what happens when the native turtles [disappear] . . . what's the negative you know? So, we have two different kinds of turtles; one is doing better because it's bigger, but is [it] the other one, the native one, doing so poorly that's a real problem? [male, 48]

# **APPENDICES**

#### **APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES

### **LOSING GROUND**

It's 2:46 a.m. A young mountain lion slinks across the 101 as it cuts through the Santa Monica Mountains.

Just a year old, this cat is already big enough to compete with his father for territory. It's time to look for new ground.

The lion freezes as a big-rig lumbers up the freeway. Just in time, he leaps away and lopes into the underbrush. Even though he makes it across the freeway, room to hunt and roam free will be scarce. Chances are slim this lion can thrive.

#### **LOSING GROUND**

Many of our local animals and plants lose out as LA expands

When we build our communities, we wipe out habitat for native wildlife. Our roads are barriers to their migration, hunting, and building new families. Scientists call this habitat loss.

Having only small patches of habitat especially affects animals pushed to the edges that cannot survive in the environment we have created in our backyards and cityscapes.



#### LIVING IN THE LION'S DEN

Once common throughout the mountains in the LA basin, this big carnivore has lost ground to humans

Mountain lions are elusive. They stay away from people as much as they can. But they need room to hunt mule deer and smaller prey. We break up their vast home ranges when we expand our roads and communities into the foothills and mountains, their last remaining habitats.

This habitat loss means lions have more conflict with people, trouble finding mates, and continuing to survive in our shrinking mountain wildlands.

Habitat loss affects more than mountain lions many of our local animals and plants have lost out as LA expanded.



# **TURTLE TROUBLES**

The western pond turtle's survival is threatened by humans—and other turtles

Western pond turtles have it hard enough. For decades, they've lost ground to farms, cities, and dams. They get hit by cars as they search for nesting sites. And predators that live alongside humans prey on turtle on the half shell.

Now they also struggle to compete with the larger and tougher red-eared slider turtle. Today, western pond turtles live in just a few spots in southern California carefully monitored and protected by scientists.



Is the red-eared slider really one of the world's "too worst invasive specles"? Dr. Gregory Pauly reveals the secrets behind this turtle's spread from East of the Rockies throughout the U.S. and around the world.

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Western pond turtles have it hard enough. For decades, they've lost ground to farms, cities, and dams. They get hit by cars as they search for nesting sites. And predators that live alongside humans prey on turtle on the half shell.

Now they also struggle to compete with the larger and tougher red-eared slider turtle. Today, western pond turtles live in just a few spots in southern California carefully monitored and protected by scientists.



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Advance Conservation
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PL.A. LOCALS:
Western Pond Turtle

More
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Can you
see the
difference?

The world's most common p (and food) turtle takes over Cute when they're little, sliders grow to be the size of dinner plates. Mean dinner plates. People dump their unwanted pets into waterways. There, the sliders push pond turtles off choice basking spots, out swim them for food, and introduce disease they catch in germy pet stores and home.

### **EASTERN FOX SQUIRREL**

#### Squirrel vs. squirrel

In 1903, Civil War veterans released the first Eastern fox squirrels into walnut groves around Westwood. Others have let the squirrels go in parks and golf courses. This native of the southeastern U.S. liked what it found, and the squirrel has spread right up to the edges of the city.

But we already have a native Western gray squirrel living in the foothills and mountains. What will happen when these squirrels make contact? It's too soon to say, and scientists are keeping close watch.

# SEE NATURE IN ACTION OUTSIDE IN THE WILDLIFE GARDENS!

Ever wonder what all that tailtwitching and squirrel chatter means? These are just a few ways that squirrels communicate.



Flicked Tail = Alarmed



Puffed Tail = Angry



Sneezes = Interested

### **EASTERN FOX SQUIRREL**

#### Squirrel vs. squirrel

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But we already have a native Western gray squirrel living in the foothills and mountains. What will happen when these squirrels make contact? It's too soon to say, and scientists are keeping close watch.



#### GO, SQUIRREL, GO!

Visit the Wildlife Gardens outside and watch how comfortable squirrels are around people. Imagine trying to catch one. What mad skills do they use to stay away from you?

#### **CITIZEN SCIENCE PANELS**



# GO ON A LIZARD SCOUTING ADVENTURE!

Go explore your own backyard, a neighborhood park, or a wild space and look for lizards. Our scientists are interested in your lizard adventures! By sending us photos of lizards you find we can get a sense of which lizards live in L.A. Without your help we really can't have the full picture. And hey, you might even discover a lizard that scientists didn't know was here!

#### WHY?

By participating in this study you'll be providing our scientists with valuable data to help us answer the question: How does our urban environment affect lizard populations?

#### **CAN YOU HELP US?**









UPLOAD ALL OF YOUR INFORMATION TO: www.nhm.org/lostlizards

#### SCIENTIST TIPS:

- Best time to look for lizards is late spring through early fall.
- Approach lizards slowly or they will run away!
- Use a camera with a zoom function to get the perfect picture without getting too close.

# LA'S URBAN NATURE

Diverse. Surprising. And hidden in plain sight!

You may think there's no nature in LA. But from the heart of the city to the edges of urban sprawl, LA is a wildlife hotspot. Spend time looking more closely, and you'll encounter nature around every corner. Start right here. Explore our Wildlife Gardens, and make your own surprising discoveries. Share them—and make a real contribution to science in LA.

# **APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE**

### REMOVED FOR PROPRIETARY PURPOSES

### APPENDIX D: SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO WHAT LIVES IN LA'S NATURAL **HABITAT**

ANIMAL ( <i>n</i> = 28)	%
Birds <sup>1</sup>	79
Coyotes	36
Domestic Animals <sup>2</sup>	32
Squirrels	32
Aquatic Animals <sup>3</sup>	25
Reptiles <sup>4</sup>	21
Insects or Bugs	18
Mountain Lions	18
Raccoons	18
Rodents <sup>5</sup>	18
Opossum	14
Deer	11
Skunks	11
Spiders	11
Foxes	7
People	7
Plants <sup>6</sup>	7
Bats	4
Bears	4
Bobcats	4
Butterflies	4
Rabbits	4

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Birds listed include: pigeons, hawks, seagulls, sparrows, owls, eagles, ducks, swallows, finches, and ravens

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Domestic Animals listed include: cats and dogs

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Aquatic Animals listed include: fish, dolphins, whales, sharks, and seals <sup>4</sup> Reptiles listed include: lizards, snakes and turtles

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Rodents listed include: rats and mice

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Plants listed include: trees and aquatic plants such as algae and kelp

#### APPENDIX E: SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO "WILDLIFE" PROMPT

WILDLIFE ( <i>n</i> = 28)	%
Reptiles <sup>1</sup>	39
Birds <sup>2</sup>	29
Coyotes	21
Domesticated Animals <sup>3</sup>	18
Aquatic Animals <sup>4</sup>	14
Mountain Lions	14
Insects or Bugs	11
Bats	7
Bears	7
Deer	7
Foxes	7
Rodents <sup>5</sup>	7
Squirrels	7
Frogs	4
Horses	4
People	4
Plants	4
Rabbit	4
Skunk	4
Spiders	4

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Reptiles listed include: lizards and snakes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Birds listed include: hawks, crows, eagles, seagulls, ducks, condor, pelican, and parrot <sup>3</sup> Domestic animals listed include: cats and dogs <sup>4</sup> Aquatic Animals listed include: fish, whales, porpoises, octopus, dolphins, sharks and seals

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Rodents listed include: rats and mice