

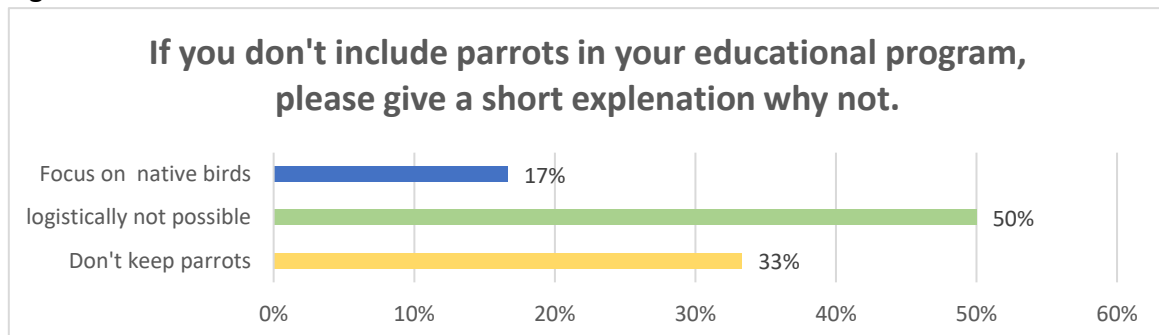
The role of parrots in zoo education

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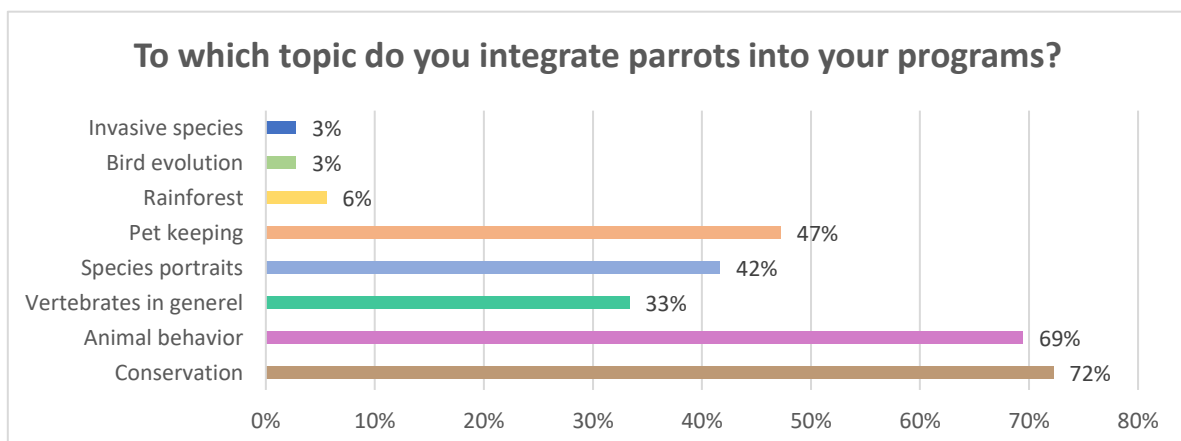
As Education Advisor for the EAZA Parrot TAG I wanted to get an overview of the extend to which parrots are involved in conservation education. For this purpose, I created a corresponding survey, which was distributed in different ways (e-mail distribution list, social media groups) among the zoos and zoo educators. The results of the survey are based on 43 zoos that participated in the survey between August and November 2020.

Parrot education in general

85 % of all participating zoos include parrots in their education somehow and 15 % do not integrate them. Half of the zoos which do not integrate parrots indicate that the parrots are in unfavourable positions in the zoo to reach them with school classes. Another 33 % do not keep parrots. Due to that most of these zoos focus on native birds. Also, two participants commented that bad holding conditions and unattractive enclosures were reasons not to integrate parrots in their educational program. **Parrot TAG recommendation:** As a result, the education departments should be more integrated into the planning of zoos. So that the enclosures are also attractively located for education and can be easily integrated in education programmes.



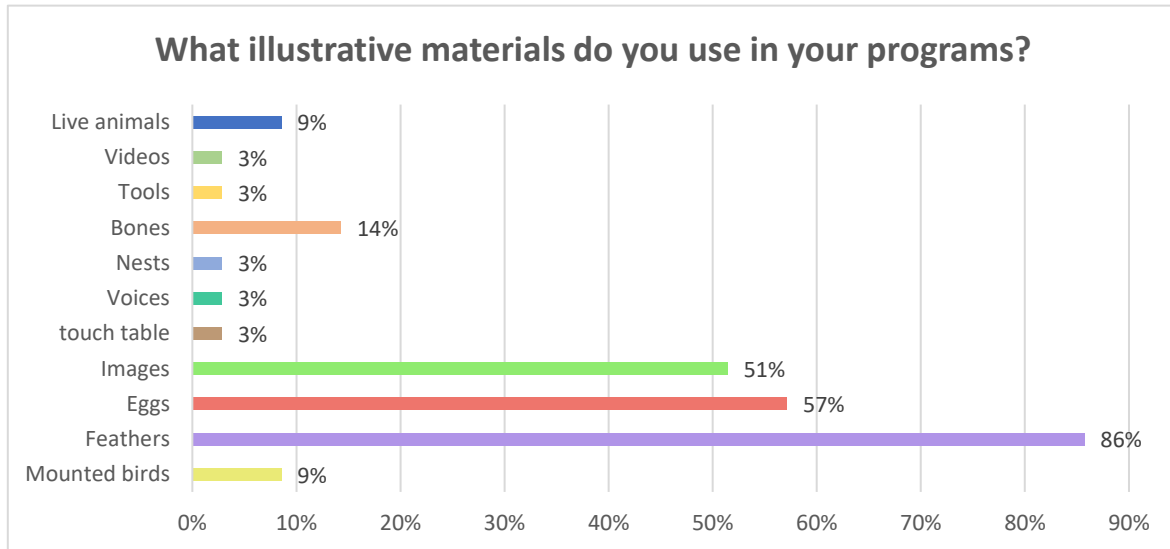
10 % of zoos which educate about parrots have special programmes only about parrots. The remaining 75 % include parrots in programmes with other themes. Most educators mention parrots in topics like conservation, behaviour, pet keeping or vertebrates in general. Or they present the species without linking them to an overall theme.



In each case only 3% talk about invasive parrot species or the evolution of the birds. **Parrot TAG recommendation:** Especially for introduced species it would be good to increase proportion because, as parrots are rarely perceived by people as invasive species that potentially cause problems in nature, such as raccoons or the North American crayfish.

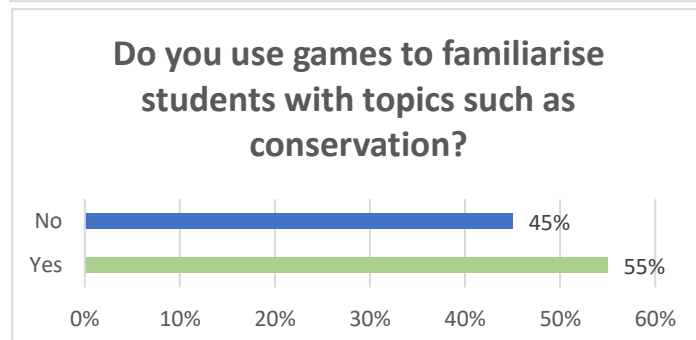
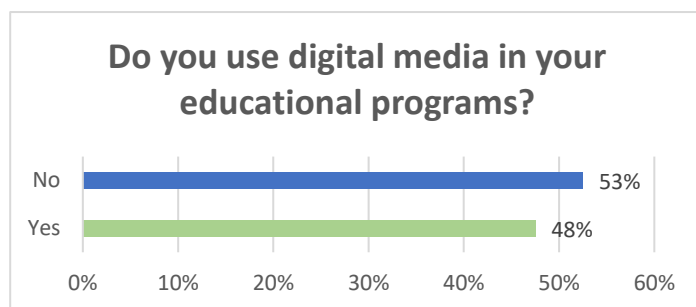
Education material

Most participants use feathers, eggs or pictures as illustrative material during their classes. This was expected because these materials are easy to transport outside in the zoo.



Only a limited number (9 %) of zoos use live animals in their classes. I can't imagine why, because there is no better teaching material than the real bird to show characteristics and behaviour. But also, one participant commented that they have their own parrots in the education department.

Nearly 50 % use digital media but only three participants mentioned them as illustrative material for parrots. In each case one participant use videos, touch tablets and recordings of voices. So, I wonder why so few use it for parrots. Maybe they use digital material for games or to explain facts which are not directly related to parrots, e.g. the interactions in an ecosystem. Digitisation is currently a major issue in education. I think the Parrot TAG should therefore try to make digital materials available as education resources. For example, calls of different parrot species, or short video of a certain behaviour.

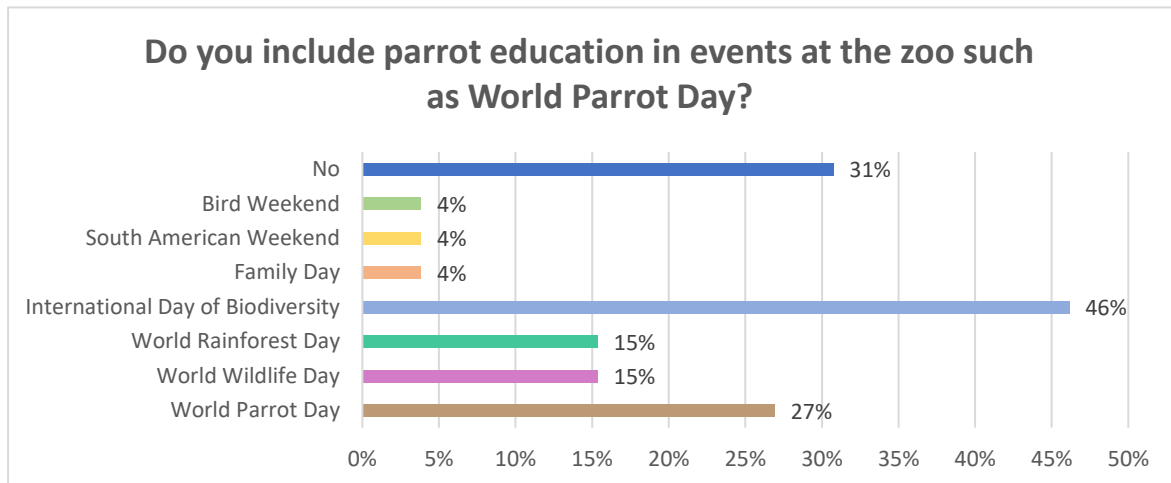


Especially voice recordings are important because parrots react to foreign calls. So, the class can observe and analyse the occurring behaviour of the birds in front of them.

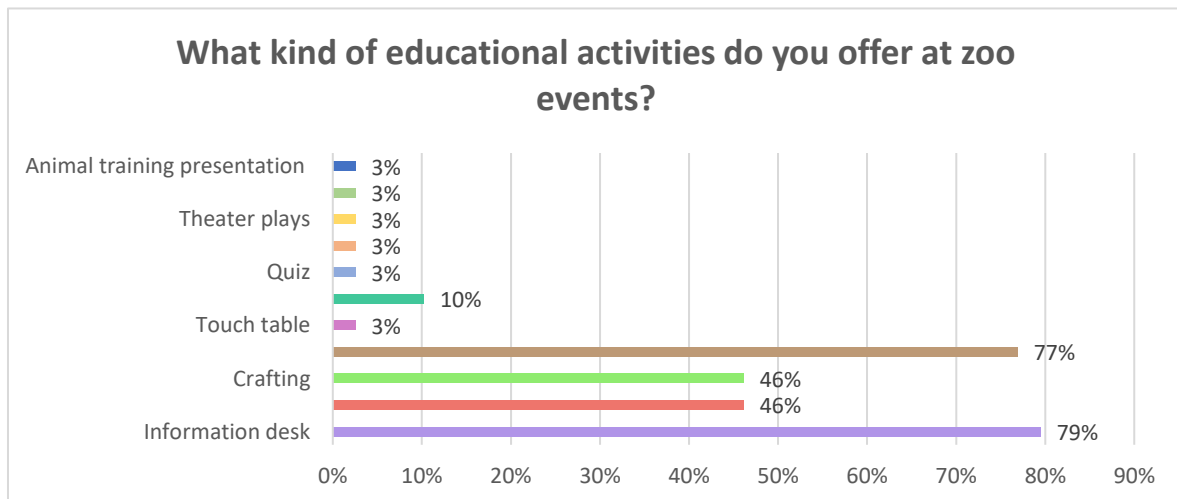
Also 50 % use games for the transfer of knowledge. That’s great because it is really conducive to children’s learning.

Other educational activities

As already said before 85% of all participating zoos include parrots in their general education program but only 54% of them include parrots in zoo events. The other 31% do not include parrots in zoo events. Anyway, the zoos which do parrots education on zoo events, implement parrots not only in one event. They do mention them at various events. Parrots are mostly integrated in “International Day of Biodiversity” (46%), “World Parrot Day” (27%), “World Wildlife Day” (15%) and “World Rainforest Day” (15%). However less than a third of the zoos celebrate World Parrot Day. That means we really have to work on the recognition and popularity of World Parrot Day as an shared education and conservation awareness activity.



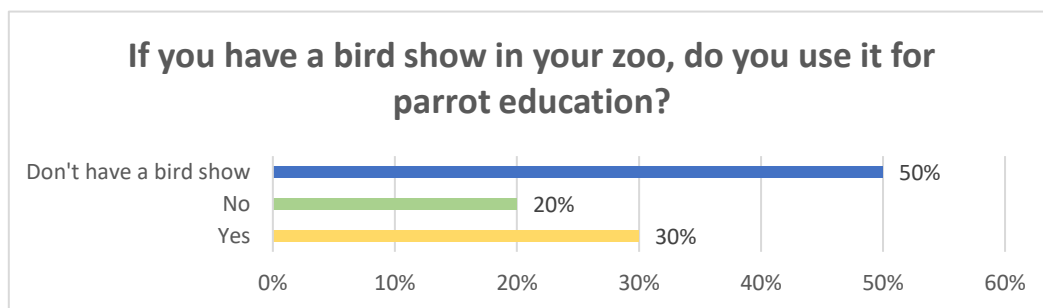
No matter which International day is being celebrated, most of the participants use information desks, guided tours, games and crafting activities to educate their visitors.



One participant uses animal training presentation. This suggests that animal keepers seem to be less involved in such days. **Parrot TAG recommendation:** More involvement of animal keepers in events as they play an important role as educators. They spend every day with the animals and can convey their knowledge in an emotional and very credible way.

Furthermore, one Zoo uses theatre plays for education. Story telling is one of the main topics during the last education EAZA Education conferences. The question is why so few participants implement it in their educational work because for parrot themes it is really simple to source material, like soft toys or carnival costumes.

Besides the international events, there are also other opportunities for parrot education. 50 % of the participants have their own bird show in the zoo. But only 30 % of them uses bird shows for parrot education. That's sad, I wonder if it is because there are more birds of prey than parrots in these shows?



In Summary

The majority of the participating zoos involve parrot related topics in their conservation education classes. Regarding to other conservation education relevant activities such as zoo events or bird shows there is still a lot of potential to involve parrots more. Especially when it comes to new forms of knowledge transfer, such as storytelling, games, or the use of digital media.

List of Parrot TAG recommendations for education:

- More integration of education departments in planning so enclosures are attractively located and easily integrated in education programmes.
- Add more information on invasive and introduced species. Parrots both suffer from invasive species and are in some cases themselves potentially invasive.
- Consider more use of live parrots as ambassadors there is no better teaching material than a real bird to demonstrate characteristics and behaviour.
- Introduce games for the transfer of knowledge. If in doubt, see resources on the World Parrot Day website: <https://www.silentforest.eu/parrotttag/world-parrot-day/>.
- More involvement of animal keepers in events as educators. They can convey knowledge and messages in a different way.
- Use props like soft toys or carnival costumes to facilitate story telling or initiate awareness conversations with visitors.



- Please actively provide the Parrot TAG with feed-back on the type of materials you use or would like to have from the Parrot TAG as education resources.
- Please support us in promoting the World Parrot Day as an event for communicating about parrot conservation amongst colleagues.