Volker Smit

Angela Ziltener

2nd workshop on
„Communicating marine mammal science to the general public"
6th of April 2014, Aquarium Liège, Belgium

Report

Objectives

· share information about sources related to education;

· exchange ideas and knowledge in new science teaching tools;

· exchange experience in adressing the media;

· foster general networking with all stakeholders;

· exchange about the outreach of education;

· support ECS to address educational questions.

Participants

Sabina Airoldi	Tethys Research Institute
Jen Adams	Manx Whale and Dolphin Watch
Isil Aytemiz	TUDAV/Istanbul University, Turkey
Luca Bittau	University of Sassari, Italy
Elena Fontanesi	University of Bologna, Italy
Catarina Fonseca	AIMM, Portugal
Sara Galego	AIMM, Portugal
Volker Smit	MEER, Germany
Andrew Wright	USA
Angela Ziltener	Dolphin Watch Alliance, Switzerland
Delphine Haesaerts	Belgium
Nicoló Roccatagliata	Italy
Catherine Rossillion	
Armanda Pittmann	Denmark
Arda Tonaj	TUDAV/Istanbul University, Turkey
Aylin Akkoya	TUDAV/Istanbul University, Turkey
Erdem Danjer	TUDAV/Istanbul University, Turkey

Presentations (morning session)

1) Long-term data collection as a basis for public outreach in the context of whale watchig tourism – an educational perspective **Volker Smit** (MEER; http://www.m-e-e-r.org)

2) An unparalleled research approach on Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphins in the Egyptian Red Sea, **Angela Ziltener**, Dolphin Watch Alliance

3) Going viral: using social media to deliver conservation messages, **Andrew Wright**

4) Marine Wildlife Workshops in Turkey, **Aylin Akkaya**, TUDAV/Istanbul University

Discussion (afternoon session)

1) Whale-watching

2) Public Schools

3) New Tools

4) Social Media

Discussion (afternoon session)

1) Whale-watching Communication with Operators

- Collaborations are very helpful
- Need to create a win-win situation (benefit for the operator)
- Closer relationships with most like-minded companies may lead to others following suit due to the perception of public of better quality 'products'
- Collaborations with field teams on such vessels bring expertise to the boats, as well as credibility.
- Scientists can write letters to tour companies on behalf of operators in support of their environmental credentials. This could be flipped to have scientists work with tour companies and approach operators.

1) Whale-watching - conservation & education

- Need to provide rationale behind rules and regulations so that they can understand why they are important.
- So much potential for public education, but often unrealised.
- Operators and boat captains are not always on the same page. Galapagos has a wildlife watching captain certificate, which requires 3-month training and is necessary for being hired by the businesses.
- Captains may only be seasonal hires.
- Label / certification for compliance with standards and/or codes of conduct.

1) Whale-watching - conservation & education

- Regulations preferable, but needs enforcement and labels may be easier.
- Labels can be self-sustaining and tourists may demand compliance within the label system.
- Labels may also need 'enforcement'.

BUT: Surveys before and after tours have revealed that tourists want very close interactions.

- Labels can be rolled into and/or supported by regulations.
- Change in political processes may require a champion to push things through.

- Operators may 'spy' on each other when regulations are in place to improve their share of the business.
- International pressure?
- Licencing fees, etc. Handy tools for inducing compliance.
- Cetaceans are a resource. Too much disturbance, you lose the resource and you lose your business.

2) Public Schools

- Teacher-up approach may also be possible, but it might take a while.
- Departmental heads and regional/state co-ordinators are important people to reach, but this may not be easy.
- Avoid mailing lists as school teachers are typically used to more personal contact.
- Teachers do not typically have 'extra' time for non-required commitments.
- Find and work with the more enthusiastic teachers (often the younger ones) and use a more personal approach.

2) Public Schools

- Scientists need to optimise efforts at reaching out to students, as these efforts are often time consuming and typically unfunded. You can produce materials for distribution (e.g., fliers, online, etc.) OR you can talk to one class. You can reach more through the first choice, but the latter may also convey your enthusiasm much better.
- Teacher training can also be effective, BUT it depends on which teachers you are training.
- Curricula are typically public and scientists can get a feeling for which age groups could be best targeted. You can access these things to improve your timing as well.
- It may be better to reach the pupils rather than teachers as they are more likely to take up the information.

2) Public Schools
- Suggested follow-on activities may lead to continued interest.
- Professor attending to do an experiment with one group only.
- Foundation for an in-school competition, which may generate lots of competitive spirit and incentive for more interest and efforts.
- Coming from outside may actually give you an advantage over teachers as you are different and interesting to the kids.
- Novel tactics, inflatable models, etc. generate interest. More interactive approaches may be more fruitful. However, different approaches are needed for different ages.
- You need to answer questions with confidence so that you don't lose their attention.

3) New tools

• e.g., Anymals +plants app.; whaleguide is also coming.
MANY possibilities and options for use in schools and in the public.

• Sightings apps for citizen science too.

• Several apps open for whalewatching operators too (e.g. Seacams).

• Gaming elements would be beneficial in boosting use and interest.

• Hotpotatoes website generates plug-in word games/questions/crosswords and other things from text and/or word lists.

Note: sight/hearing handicaps may need specific techniques to convey information. Not sure this has been addressed yet.

4) Social media

- 'push' adding links to environmental causes on other ocean-related videos (e.g., surfing, sailing, etc.)
- Examples of use of comedy in public education of conservation efforts exist. Entertainers occasionally address environmental concerns using humour. But reaching those that produce these things is not easy.

Outlook - What happens next?

- How do we bring in the various disciplines (economics, social sciences, marketing, etc.)?
- How do we make the connections to pull off the short-snappy videos?
- Animation skills needed.
- Help with 'entertainment' is needed.
- Foster the exchange between interested via mailing list and cloud