

ZOO CONSERVATION OUTREACH GROUP (ZCOG)

Each year AZA and Zoo Conservation Outreach Group (ZCOG) provide scholarships to attend the professional training courses. Thank you to our sponsors and congratulations to the following recipients for 2011-2012! The next opportunity to apply for a professional development scholarship will begin May 1, 2012. Go to www.aza.org/scholarships for details.

Cameron Park Zoo

Amphibian Conservation Award

Carlos Andrés Galvis Rizo,
Fundación Zoológica de Cali

Dickerson Park Zoo

Conservation Education Award

Catalina Rodríguez Álvarez,
Zoológico Jaime Duque

Disney's Animal Kingdom

Diversity Award

Shelly Raynor, Zoo Atlanta

Ellen Trout Zoo

Crocodilian Conservation Award

Carmen Teresa Linares Arias,
Africam Safari
Luiza Passos, Pontifical Catholic
University of Minas Gerais

Gary Clarke &

Clayton Freiheit Award

Rebecca Stites, Smithsonian's
National Zoo

Houston Zoo

International Conservation Training Award

Alejandro Rodrigo Gutiérrez Trejo,
Africam Safari

Jeff Swanagan Memorial Award

Natasha Fischer, Cosley Zoo

Les Whitt Memorial Award

Danilo Tashima, Fundação Parque
Zoológico de São Paulo

Margaret A Dankworth Award

Jennifer Metzler-Fiorino,
North Carolina Aquarium at Fort
Fisher

National Aviary Avian

Conservation Training Scholarship

Carolina Hartmann Gonzalez,
Africam Safari

San Antonio Zoo

Les Whitt Memorial Award

Catalina Gonzalez, Parque y Zoológico
Piscilago

Robert O Wagner Award

Thomas Ness, Minnesota Zoo

Western North Carolina

Nature Center

Management Award

Andrea Caiozzi, Latin American
Association of Zoological Parks
and Aquariums

Zoo Conservation Outreach Group

Conservation Training Award

Guillermo Cubillos Torres,
Zoológico Nacional del Parque
Metropolitano de Santiago

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Miguel Vieyra

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT COORDINATOR AT
SAN JUAN DE ARAGON ZOO

San Antonio Zoo

Les Whitt Memorial Scholarship Recipient

Course attended: Conservation Education: Effective Program Design course

Working on conservation education in Mexico City is a real challenge. The city has the largest population on earth, complex environmental conditions, and a pervading sense that its residents are disconnected from nature. That is why zoo educators in urban environments like Mexico City must possess the proper tools and techniques to best inspire our visitors to take collective conservation action.

In February 2011, thanks to the support of Zoo Conservation Outreach Group's (ZCOG) Conservation Training Scholarship Program, professionals from four Latin American zoos participated in the AZA's Conservation Education: Effective Program Design professional training course. During the course, my Latino colleagues and I worked alongside professionals from AZA facilities to learn best practices in conservation education program development and evaluation – and it was an incredibly rewarding experience.

Thanks to the training received in this intensive course, I was able to help improve our education programs at the San Juan de Aragón Zoo. Examples of how our Zoo has applied the lessons I learned at the AZA professional training course include:

- We improved the raptor free flight exhibition that our education department started in 2005 (The AZA



MIGUEL VIEYRA

course taught me the theory, policies and practices used when working with program animals).

- We carried out a redesign of the educational signage used for species exhibited at San Juan de Aragón Zoo.
- Our Education Department staff now uses visitor demographics to help plan our programming and update our Master Plan.
- The Zoo's program for the Metropolitan Bird Festival, which

is celebrated in October, was integrated with programs from 20 local partners, including non-profit organizations and agencies of the Mexico City government.

Participating in the Conservation Education: Effective Program Design professional training course was one of the most enriching experiences of my career, and networking with and learning from experienced instructors has been extremely valuable to both me and the San Juan de Aragon Zoo.

By providing capacity building and training opportunities to Latin-American zoo and aquarium professionals, ZCOG and its AZA partners are helping the zoological community in the America's to raise the standards in the profession and improve the conservation education programming that my colleagues and I are able to deliver within our communities.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

Sandra Gómez

HEAD OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT THE SANTACRUZ ZOOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Scholarship Recipient, Conservation Education: Effective Program Design course

The Santacruz Zoological Foundation institution was founded 38 years ago but only started their educational activities in 2001. Over the last decade, the educational programs on offer have evolved from strictly zoo-based programs into community outreach programs with local schools.

Located in the Andean Forest, the Zoo is interested in educating the local community about the need to conserve the fauna and flora in the region. Being able to attend AZA's Professional Development course Effective Program Design has been an important way for me to gain new skills that I will be able to use to enhance my institution's education and conservation activities.

Learning about basic tools, evaluating courses and measuring results will have a dramatic effect on how we design our programs. Another very real benefit was the opportunity to network with other zoo educators – the exchange of ideas was of real value.

Here are some of the steps I will be taking on my return to the Santacruz Zoological Foundation:

- Education staff will receive conservation education training – this will be done in conjunction with the education secretary in our city.
- We will define evaluation strategies for the Zoo education programs, and also for our community programs, using the techniques learned during the course.
- Staff will design new interpretation areas for the new amphibian exhibit.
- I will incorporate what I have learned into our community outreach efforts in rural areas where many of the endangered species in our collection live.
- We will develop new strategies with three distinctive populations within our home city to better understand the environmental challenges they face and see if there are sustainable solutions that can be developed.

Attending the course has led to a deepening of my own commit-



SANDRA GÓMEZ

ment to conservation and communicating the important role our zoo has to play within our own community and region.

Translation and editing contributions by Daniel Hilliard, PhD

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