

## Indigenous Wildlife Interpretation at Australian Zoos and Wildlife Parks

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### **Abstract:**

This article evaluates indigenous wildlife interpretation at captive wildlife attractions in Australia. The sites included 13 wildlife parks/sanctuaries or zoos, one aquarium, and three indigenous-owned emu or crocodile farms. Telephone interviews were conducted with 35 managers (9 indigenous) and 26 indigenous staff at wildlife attractions that included verbal or written indigenous interpretation of wildlife. The indigenous guides verbally presented both traditional uses and personal stories about Australian wildlife followed by Aboriginal "Dreaming" or creation stories about totemic animal species. Nonindigenous staff explained traditional indigenous uses of wildlife followed by biological facts and species information. According to staff, tourists benefit from the inclusion of indigenous content at captive wildlife attractions by giving additional value or worth to the experience, broadening their mind, dispelling myths, learning/education about indigenous cultures, novelty and excitement for visitors, increasing cultural awareness, and developing more positive attitudes towards indigenous people. Managers and staff support the employment of indigenous guides to provide interpretive tours and talks at captive wildlife attractions. Key issues for wildlife parks and zoos to develop and present indigenous cultural knowledge through wildlife interpretation are identified.

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