

MYTHBUSTING COMMON CONCERNS



Avoiding human-wildlife interaction in social media and marketing

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Conservation agencies and researchers have been marketing a certain way for a long time, and change is hard. This guide highlights some common concerns that have been raised when asked to consider adopting wildlife-conscious imagery. Each concern is followed by research-based solutions to provide insights into how you can keep marketing for the benefit of conservation goals and practices while keeping wildlife's best interests at heart.

“PEOPLE RESPOND TO OUR IMAGES OF WILDLIFE WITH HUMANS”

Research shows that people respond with conservation-friendly comments when they see images of wildlife alone, rather than when they see images of wildlife interacting with humans. Indeed, posting images of human-wildlife interactions can actually make your organisation appear unethical to viewers, and can make the animal you're posting seem like it is less in need of help, reducing donations.

“WE HAVEN'T HAD ANY PROBLEMS SO FAR”

It's often really hard to see the direct impacts of your own social media posts, and how they actually influence what people think and do. Research has found that when well-meaning conservationists show images of themselves handling or posing with wildlife, this encourages others to try to engage themselves. This can lead to people approaching animals in the wild, which is a health and safety risk to both them, and the animals. These posts can even lead to individuals engaging in illegal tourism practices, such as holding newborn cubs, and participating in the illegal exotic pet trade.

“WE HAVE A LOT OF SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS WE'D NEED TO CHANGE”

Change starts with one post - by avoiding human-wildlife interaction in future posts, you're already making a big difference. From there, going back to previous posts can happen over time. Bringing awareness to the shift in imagery you use can also help garner support from your audience. Recognizing the importance of using wildlife-conscious images can inspire others to do the same, shifting the norms around what is acceptable to post.



“THIS IS MY PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA”

Personal social media can be just as powerful as professional social media, particularly if you are a researcher or conservation practitioner. You may see your own social media as casual, but others will still recognise you as an expert in your field, and see your actions as best practice. Making this change shows you're willing to lead by example, and can even inspire a bottom-up movement towards more responsible social media practices.

BENEFITS TO CHANGING

- More responses encouraging donations and conservation action and positive perceptions by viewers
- Discourages audience from participating in illegal pet trade, unsafe wild approaches, and unethical tourism activities.
- Leading by example and demonstrating to other conservationists and researchers that using wildlife-conscious imagery is important.

COMING SOON

Look out for our social media guidelines, coming later this year!