

Tourist wildlife feeding for pleasure at the University of Ibadan Zoological Garden, Nigeria.

A.F. Akinyemi

Department of Wildlife and Ecotourism Management,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Tel.: +234 – 805- 467-5472
E-mail: abiodun.akinyemi@hotmail.com

Abstract

Handling tourism encompasses an understanding of the various requirements of wild species and the restrictions that tourists have to be cognisant of in their quest for a pleasurable wildlife encounter in the zoological garden. The impacts of feeding wild animals by visitors in *ex-situ* conservation and measures to minimize such practices are discussed from a demographical perspective in this survey. Visitors respond to different motives on why they feed wildlife such as interaction with wildlife (55%), for personal pleasure (30%) and because other people were doing it (15%). Also, visitor's responded on choice of animals to feed from three categories: primates, birds and ungulates, based on their features, habits and friendliness. Encouragingly, 82% of those visitors who specifically came to the Zoological garden to feed wildlife specified that they would be prepared to stop this practice if they knew it was detrimental to their health. Caution should be taken especially when visitors feed animals that pose harmful risks to people, because there are few cases of aggression and attacks on visitors who fail to be cautious and act irresponsibly.

Keywords: Feeding wildlife, tourists, ex-situ conservation, recreation



Source: http://ibpulse.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/20140814_155212.jpg

Introduction

Wildlife tourism is a growing industry that provides visitors non-consumptive interactions with wild animals. Feeding can support tourism by making the animals predictably and reliably viewable. The feeding or 'provisioning' of free-living wildlife is used occasionally in scientific studies. Natural or novel foods are provided directly (by hand) or indirectly (at feeding stations), sometimes in an attempt to tame or habituate the animals, so that they can be observed and studied more closely. The feeding of native wildlife is a complex and often contentious issue. However, many people seek the positive experiences that can be gained from the direct interaction with wildlife (Rogers 1996). Consequently, wildlife feeding is an established practice at many tourist centres and fauna parks.

Wildlife tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism worldwide. Intentional feeding of wildlife is necessary in captive environments where wild animals depend completely upon human husbandry (such as in wildlife rehabilitation). However, it also occurs across a spectrum of semi-captive and wild environments (Orams, 1996), the most widespread and socially accepted example being backyard bird feeding. The impacts caused by this activity have not been controlled or managed to any great extent in the past. In general, protected area management agencies discourage wildlife feeding while commercial enterprises, zoological gardens and some private landholders encourage it. As a result, polarized views have developed, raising concerns as to the best method to deal with the resultant issues. While a distinction needs to be drawn between the feeding of wildlife that are considered 'friendly' (eg. many kinds of parrots etc.), wildlife that are considered 'aggressive' (eg. kookaburra's, currawongs, etc.), and wildlife that are considered 'dangerous' (eg. cassowaries, dingoes, goannas, etc), the reality is, the

supplementary feeding of wildlife is a long standing, wide-spread practice, undertaken by well-meaning people (Stanley 1995). A general perception is that feeding wildlife recreationally does not conflict with conservation goals and, in some situations, may appear to contribute towards them; however, little research has focused on assessing these beliefs. Feeding wild animals can affect both individuals and populations, as animals may experience food-based aggression and social stress (Lott, 1996). Studies have also documented population-level changes in abundance (Clua, et al 2010), behaviour and distribution (Corcoran, et al 2013), as well as behavioural changes in inter-connected species (Milazzo, et al 2006) and overall ecosystem concerns (Turner and Ruhl, 2007). Many wildlife feeding activities lead to problems of public safety, conservation and animal welfare. By considering these types of effects in combination, managers and policy-makers may be able to identify acceptable and unacceptable forms of wildlife feeding as a basis for regulations, public education and enforcement (Dubois and Fraser, 2013).

This study will investigate visitor's views, on the issue of wildlife feeding and the underlying motivations. It will also review secondary data on record of incidents regarding tourist feeding the animals.

Methodology

Study Area

The University of Ibadan Zoological Garden was found in 1948 with the Department of Zoology. It was first a menagerie, where few animals were kept until it was upgraded to a full fledge zoological garden in 1974. As a major point of attraction for tourist to the University, the zoo has received millions of tourists from its time of creation with a wide

array of exotic species from different ecological zones of Nigeria and beyond. It lies between latitude $07^{\circ}26'57.6''N$ and longitude $00^{\circ}25'36.997''E$. It covers a 3.5km^2 land area with vegetation mostly of trees and some grasses on a flat terrain. There is a stream which runs through the zoo creating a natural drainage. The soil type determines the site location for the species of animal in the zoo. For example, the *Panthera leo* is located in a bit rocky side of the zoo while that of the herbivores are sited close to the stream. The topography of University of Ibadan zoological garden ranges from 220m to 240m. Some species of animals present at the University of Ibadan zoological garden includes *inter alia* mangabey monkeys, patas monkeys, white nosed monkeys, crocodiles, garden vipers, lions, horses, camels, giraffe, crown crane, peacocks, ostriches, jackals and hyenas. The dominant tree species within the University of Ibadan zoological garden includes; *Musa sapientum*, *Terminalia catappa*, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, *Cassia siamea*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Elaeis* spp, and *Bambusa vulgaris*.

A sample population of visitors to the Zoological were surveyed by questionnaire. The questionnaire sought visitor's views, amongst other things, on the issue of wildlife feeding. Secondary data on the record of incidents involving tourists feeding the animals will be reviewed.

Results and Discussion

The demography ratings (Table 1) of tourists that visited the University of Ibadan

zoological garden showed their willingness to participate in the study. The survey

provides insight about the tourist sex, age group, marital status, occupation, nationality and the educational Level. It shows that 54% of the tourist that participated in the study was female while the remaining 46% of them were male. This implies that more female tourist participated in the study than male. In addition, tourist below 25years old represent 50% of the total tourist involved in the survey, which is 2% more than those within 25-40years, thus indicating that the percentage of tourist is above the age of 40years.

Furthermore, the proportion of tourist involved in the survey that were married represent 14% of the total tourist covered in the survey, while tourist that are single formed the majority with 86%. This implies that single tourist participated more in this survey than married tourist.

In terms of the occupation of the tourist that were involved in the survey, table 1 shows that more student tourist participated in the survey than tourist with other occupation, student tourist represents 60% of the total tourist involved in the study. While tourist that are civil servants and self-employed constitute 18% and 16% respectively of the tourist involved in the survey. This implies that majority of the tourist are students, this is because the zoological garden is located within an educational institution.

Considering the nationality of the tourists, all of them are Nigerians; and their educational level revealed that 80% of the tourist has tertiary education level which was followed by secondary school level of education with 16%, and 4% of the tourist not revealing their educational level.

Table 1: demographic ratings of tourists in the University of Ibadan Zoological Garden

Variables	Frequency	Percent(%)
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	46	46.0
Female	54	54.0
Total	100	100.0
<u>Age group</u>		
Below 25 years	50	50.0
25-40 years	48	48.0
40 years and above	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0
<u>Marital status</u>		
Married	14	14.0
Single	86	86.0
Total	100	100.0
<u>Occupation</u>		
Civil servant	18	18.0
Self employed	16	16.0
Student	60	60.0
No response	6	6.0
Total	100	100.0
<u>Nationality</u>		
Nigerian	92	92.0
No response	8	8.0
Total	100	100.0
<u>Educational level</u>		
Secondary school	16	16.0
Tertiary school	80	80.0
No response	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

The feeding of wildlife (particularly birds) at the zoological garden is an activity that is firmly rooted in visitors practice and consciousness. 40% of respondents ($n = 100$) said they specifically came to the Zoological garden to feed wildlife. Many factors influence the feeding of wildlife by people: culture, education, up-bringing, attitude and perception. However, there is

one motivator that remains central to the reasons why people feed wildlife - the experience of doing it (Rogers 1996). There are three main reasons why people fed wildlife at the Zoological garden: to interact with wildlife (55%), for personal pleasure (30%) and because other people were doing it (15%) (Figure 1).



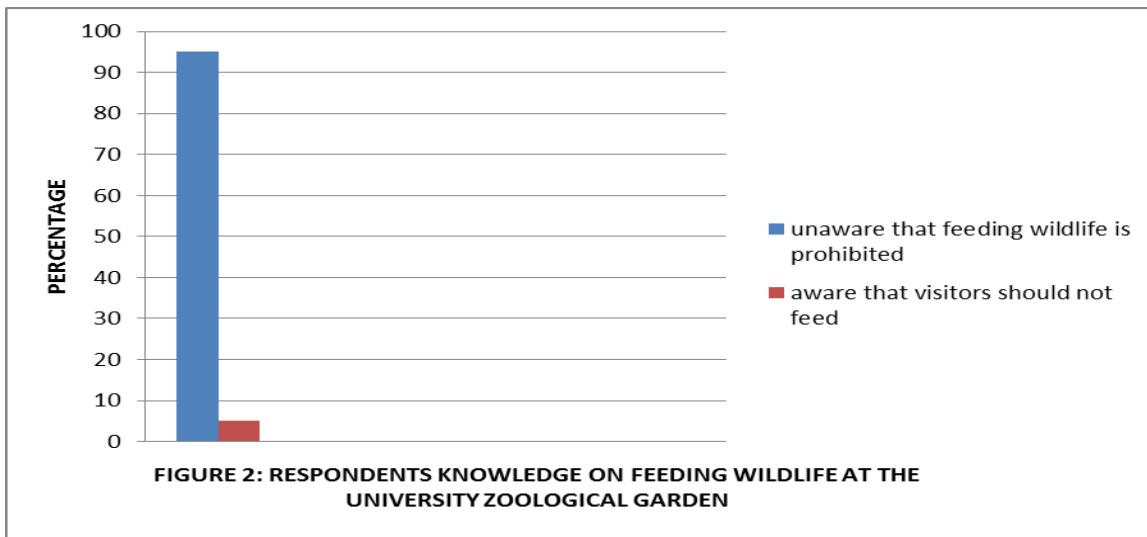
These reasons are quantifiable and part of the human psychic/physique, people have a desire to be able to touch, help and enjoy wildlife (Knight & Temple 1995, Rogers 1997). Bernstein et al (1991) also claim that as individuals, humans are also predictable in that if they perceive that other people are receiving benefit from some activity then they also want to be "part of the action". This behavioural trait provides substance to the earlier assumption that people who did not come to the Zoological garden specifically to feed wildlife may also take part in this activity during their visit. Many visitors to the zoo actually bring their own

birdseed and other food stuffs with them to facilitate a unswerving interaction with wildlife. A total of 62% respondents who specifically came to the Zoological garden to feed wildlife purchased birdseed from the kiosk while the other 38% brought seed with them. Nearly all survey respondents (95%) were unaware that the feeding of wildlife is strongly discouraged in the Zoological garden (Figure 2). staff during their rounds do not enforce "do not feed" when they encounter people feeding wildlife on the park.



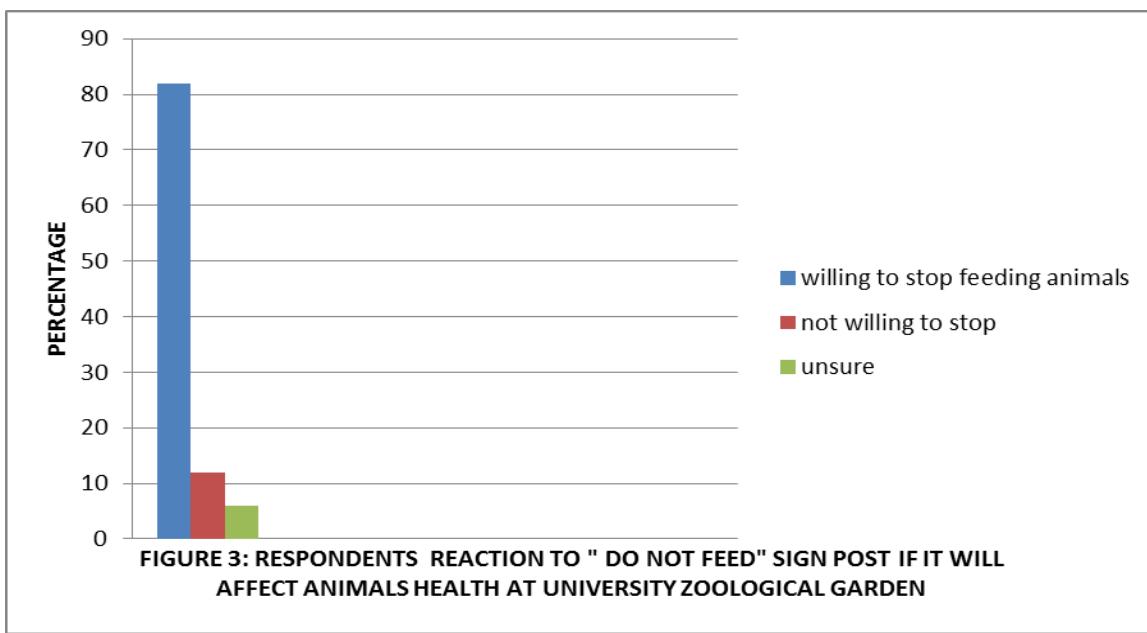
A Patas monkey

Source:http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4a/Patas_Monkey_Jr.jpg



Confidently, 82% of those visitors who specifically came to the Zoological garden to feed wildlife indicated that they would be willing to stop this practice if they knew it was detrimental to their health (Figure 3).

Regardless of any evidence that feeding is detrimental to the health of the wildlife, 12% of these respondents said they would not stop feeding wildlife, while the remaining 6% were unsure.

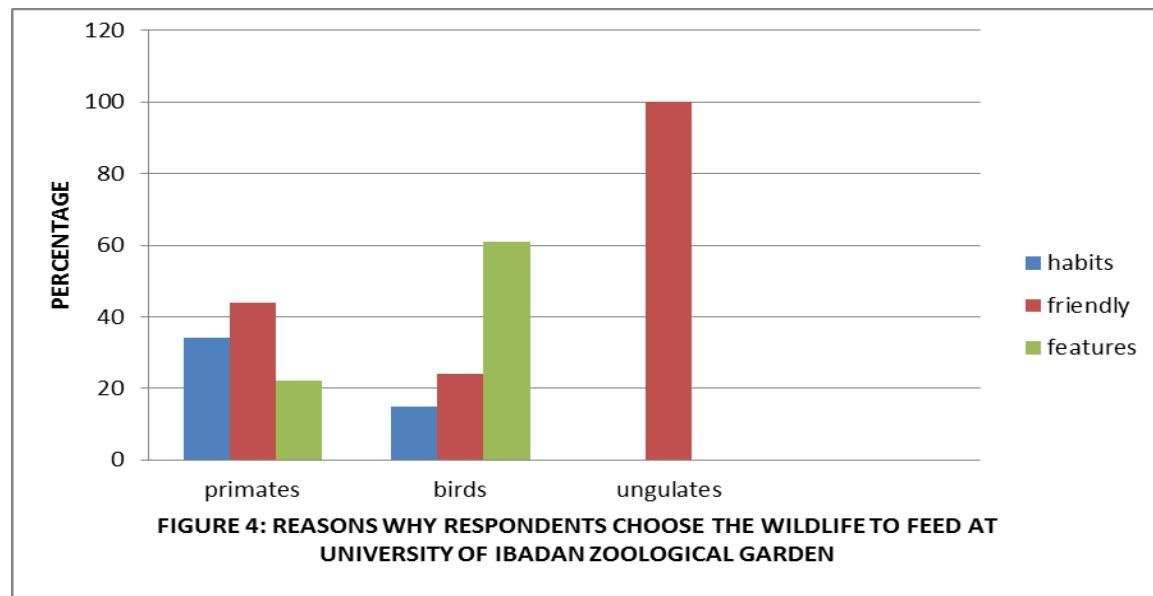


The tourist's response on what informed their decision on the animal to feed was surveyed based on the habits, friendliness

of the animals and their features. Result (figure 4) shows that Primates are fed by tourists because they are friendly (44%), habits (34%) and features (22%). Birds are

fed by tourists based on features (61%), friendliness (24%) and habits (15%) while

all the tourists (100%) admitted that ungulates are fed because they are friendly.



Facts from secondary data revealed that on record tourists have been attacked by animals while feeding them. It further confirms that in every 3 months, a case is reported but the injury is not always fatal. Wild animals that are prone to attack tourists from record are chimpanzee and monkey. Here, tourist freely let go their attentiveness at the animal cages and be carried away by the different acrobatic display of these animals.

Conclusion

The majority of visitors who come to the Zoological garden to feed wildlife do so because they have a desire to interact with wildlife for their own personal pleasure irrespective of the visible sign post that warn visitors not feed wild animals. It is therefore, reasonable to assume that this practice will continue against all attempts by staff to discourage visitors from this activity. The sale of snacks and fruits at the entrance of the Zoological garden does not

help the staff in addressing this issue. Nor does, the marketing of Zoological Garden as a place to come "face-to-face" with nature. The feeding of wildlife by tourists at the Zoological Garden is a well-established practice. However, no hard proof exists to absolutely support the conjecture that feeding wildlife at this location has contributed to animal ill-health in any way, or that it has affected the animal's ecological integrity.

References

Bernstein, D. A., Roy, E. J., Srull, T. K. and Wickers, C. D. (1991): Psychology, 2nd Ed. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, USA.

Clua, E.; Buray, N.; Legendre, P.; Mourier, J.; Planes, S. (2010): Effects of provisioning on shark behaviour: Reply to Brunnenschweiler & McKenzie (2010). Mar. Ecol-Prog. Ser. 2010, 420, 285–288.

Corcoran, M.J.; Wetherbee, B.M.; Shivji, M.S.; Potenski, M.D.; Chapman, D.D.; Harvey, G.M. Supplemental feeding for ecotourism reverses diel activity and alters movement patterns and spatial distribution of the southern stingray, *Dasyatis americana*. PLoS ONE 2013, 8, doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0059235.

Dubois, S. and Fraser, D. (2013): A Framework to Evaluate Wildlife Feeding in Research Wildlife Management, Tourism and Recreation, *Animals* 2013, 3, 978-994; doi:10.3390/ani3040978.

Knight, R. L. and Temple, S. A. (1995): Origin of wildlife responses to recreationists, in *Wildlife and Recreationists: Coexistence through management and research*, Ed. Knight, R.L. and Gutzwiller, K. J., Island Press, Washington D.C., USA.

Lott, D. F. (1996): Feeding wild animals: The urge, the interaction and the consequences. *Anthrozoös* 1996, 1, 255–257.

Milazzo, M.; Anastasi, I.; Willis, T. J. (2006): Recreational fish feeding affects coastal fish behavior and increases frequency of predation on damselfish *Chromis chromis* nests. *Mar. Ecol-Prog. Ser.* 2006, 310, 165–172.

Orams, M. B. (1996): A conceptual model of tourist-wildlife interaction: The case for education as a management strategy. *Aust. Geog.* 1996, 27, 39–51.

Rogers, L. (1996): Why do we need to learn about animals?, Proceedings of the Animals in Education: Values, Responsibility, and Questions Conference, Canberra, 27-28 Oct. 1995, ANZCCART, Ed. Brennan, A. and Einstein, R.

Stanley, J. (1995): A plan to reduce the impacts of wildlife feeding by visitors in protected areas, unpublished report, QMA24 - Visitor Management, University of Queensland Gatton College, Q4345.

Turner, A. M.; Ruhl, N. (2007): Phosphorus loadings associated with a park tourist attraction: Limnological consequences of feeding the fish. *Environ. Manage.* 2007, 39, 526C–33.