

# Panda Education as a tool for teaching children about the importance of biodiversity

## Thesis topic related to an in-depth research study

### Supervisor(s):

Prof. Arjen Wals, dr. Rebekah L. Tauritz,  
and/or dr. Judith Gulikers

### Description:

Biodiversity loss, both locally and worldwide, forms one of the most urgent and accelerating sustainability challenges humanity is presently facing. Zoos generally consider it their educational duty to teach about conservation efforts to protect endangered species and help visitors form connections to the natural world. The emotional power of encountering (endangered) animals close-up is seen as a stimulus to persuade people to live more sustainably. The Giant Pandas in Ouwehands zoo, with their attractive and iconic appearance, have the potential to form a stepping stone for teaching children about the importance of biodiversity. During the first phase of this 3-year research project we will design a part classroom-based, part zoo-based environmental education project for the upper elementary years. During the second phase we will assess the learning outcomes. We will also repeat some of the measurements six months after the project to assess the impact our project has had over a longer period of time.



The overall objective of the thesis project is to create an overview of biodiversity education programs of zoos worldwide that employ their Giant Panda exhibit as a starting point for discussing the importance of biodiversity. In addition, we want to investigate the design principles these programs are based on and find out what is known about the effectiveness of these designs in achieving the program's learning objectives. The research includes conducting desk research (examining the literature, studying zoo websites and analysing educational materials) and conducting in-depth (online) interviews with zoo educators of zoos worldwide who have giant pandas on exhibit.

### MSc and ECTS:

Students doing a MSc Environmental Sciences (MES), Animal Sciences (MAS), or Organic Agriculture (MOA) can apply for this thesis as part of their educational track (See Study Handbook for requirements). Students from other programmes are invited to conduct the project under shared supervision with another chair group. This should be a chair group listed by your study programme as optional chair group for doing a thesis. Please contact your study advisor to inquire about the possibilities. This thesis project can be 24 or 36 ECTS in consultation with the supervisors and depending on your availability.

### Location

Wageningen

### Planning

In consultation with supervisors

### Contact

For more information send an e-mail to [Rebekah.Tauritz@wur.nl](mailto:Rebekah.Tauritz@wur.nl)