

## Project Update: January 2013

### Research workshop – Oceanarium staff – 16 January 2013

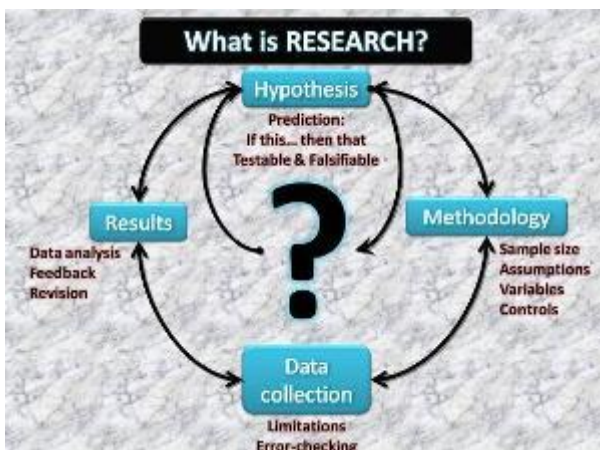


The proposed feasibility study will utilise the opportunity afforded by *ex situ* populations of African penguins – such as at the Bayworld Oceanarium – to investigate various research questions. This project showcases the immense scientific value of captive animals, while drawing on the often overlooked expertise of animal keepers and trainers. However, what is often lacking is a close collaboration between researchers and those involved in the day-to-day husbandry of the animals. In particular, animal keepers may not realise that the data they routinely record may prove valuable for

research, provided that such data is accurate and recorded consistently.



Michelle Bradshaw held a workshop at Bayworld for all Oceanarium staff – including curators, general assistants and interns – outlining the value of captive animals in their contribution to conservation-related research, and the importance of collecting accurate data on each individual animal. Throughout the workshop, the African penguin was used as a working example, given that this Endangered species is the focus of the research in which the Oceanarium staff will participate.



The importance of captive populations was discussed, with a slideshow highlighting the differences and similarities between *ex-situ* and *in-situ* populations. A flow diagram as well as a cartoon was used to illustrate the process of research, from formulating a hypothesis to eventually accepting or rejecting the hypothesis. Participants were given the opportunity to design their own research project, outlining how they would go about collecting data to answer specific research questions. Data that had been collected over 8 months was reviewed, problems highlighted

and solutions discussed.

The workshop was well received and it was decided to have bi-monthly feedback sessions during similar workshops. This will enable further training of interested staff members, while improving the standard of data collection and research contribution, providing ongoing input from both the researcher and the animal keepers' perspectives. The closer link between the research and live animal departments within Bayworld will result in improved standards of record keeping and data

collection, as well as enabling the Oceanarium staff to provide feedback to the public during their daily presentations.

