



Cultural Diversity / Attitudes

MARINE ANIMAL ORIENTED ORGANIZATIONS, CULTURAL DIVERSITY, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD MARINE WILDLIFE

Working Paper #7

Unna Lassiter

July 2000

Human interactions with marine animals often have a defining cultural component. In order to clarify how Marine Animal Oriented Organizations (MAOOs), that provide education, recreation, service provision and advocacy services, have positioned themselves vis-à-vis cultural difference, I conducted a series of ten interviews with their staff. For the most part, I found that concern about cultural diversity was not reflected in their own demographic composition and that managers and volunteers were mostly white. Respondents did not have a clear idea about the ethnicity of their public, apart from the mix of public school children. Outreach is mostly directed at this subgroup in the form of programming. MAOO managers identified a number of harmful practices toward marine animals, and most expressed deep concern about some or all of these harmful interactions. Tidepool collecting was the only practice that was linked to ethnicity in some fashion. Instead participants explained most harmful practices as resulting from universals of human experience such as economic desperation, ignorance or neglect. But science-based MAOOs found rising popular concerns for the protection and rescue of animals, such as whales and sea lions, to be problematic. Often rescues go against scientifically defined management practice, yet because political support for animal welfare and animal rights is strong, adherence to such practices can create controversy. And despite their general lack of recognition of culture as a critical component shaping attitudes and practices toward marine animals, MAOO managers linked animal welfare/rights views to urban white or privilege enjoyed by whites.

Keywords: Attitudes toward Marine Animals, Cross-Cultural Attitudes, Interviews

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USC Sea Grant, University of Southern California
University Park, Los Angeles, CA 90089-0373

Phone (213) 740-1961, e-mail: seagrants@usc.edu
FAX: (213) 740-5936
