

# Emotion and event – two important tools in education and communication work in Riga Zoo

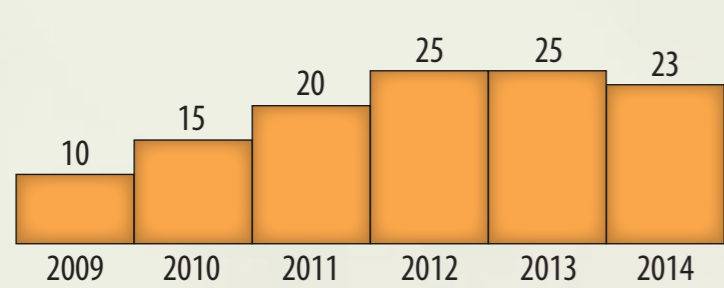
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Riga, Latvia

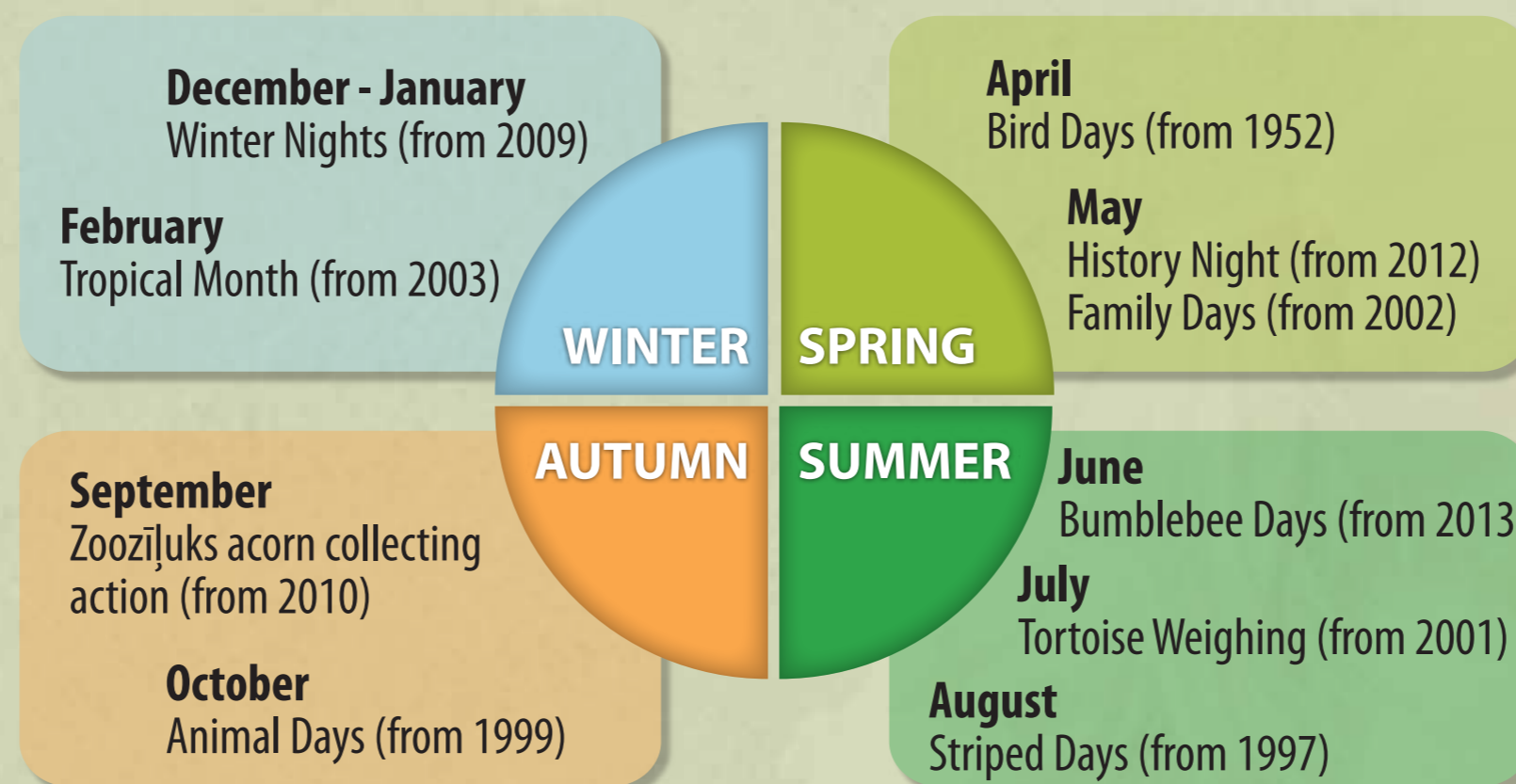
www.rigazoo.lv

One of the main tools of education and communication in Riga Zoo is public events, where people are involved in activities that stimulate different cognitive processes. These events help promote the zoo, maintain continuous public interest and raise the attendance of the zoo, thus, ensuring that more people are involved in different environmental activities.

Number of Events from 2009 to 2014

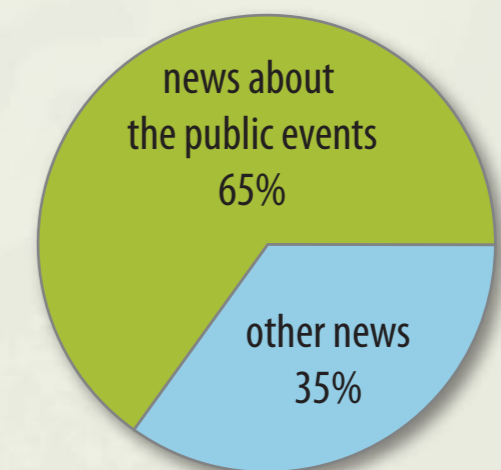


Every year the Riga Zoo organizes a maximum of 25 events. The annual and traditional events are especially important for raising awareness about the environmental issues.



The effectiveness of the events (publicity, the level of awareness, attendance, the level of visitor participation) depends on various factors: how emotionally and socially important, substantially interesting, sustainable and locally recognisable a particular problem is, ticket affordability, weather conditions, etc.

Information about the Riga Zoo in traditional media (TV, print, radio – up to 2000 mentions each year)



The main aim of these events is to evoke emotion and raise awareness about a certain animal, animal group or a certain problem.

## Weighing of the Galapagos Tortoises – a Way to Attract the Attention of the Media and Society to Nature Protection Issues



2004

Each year we have to come up with a new way how to attract the attention of the media. In 2004, the patron of the tortoises – the strongman Raimonds Bergmanis – was carried out on a stretcher by the employees of the zoo.

The annual weighing of the Galapagos tortoises began in the summer of 2001. The event was possible thanks to the former Latvian strongman Raimonds Bergmanis, who has now become a lifelong friend and supporter of the zoo.

The main idea of the event is to attract the attention of the media to this globally threatened tortoise species.



2012

The main target group of this event is the media. The news about tortoise weighing is one of the TOP 5 news stories about the zoo every year.



2005

Weight is an important indicator of an animal's health. Dear visitors, how do you manage to keep a healthy lifestyle?



2012

Creative and informative break. Is it really so that a tortoise cannot leave its "home"?

Over the years, this event has helped to raise the issue of invasive species and exotic pets. Every year the zoo receives tortoises and turtles that for various reasons are not wanted by their owners.



2006

Every year we invite someone new to help weight the tortoises. In 2006, we invited ten participants of the Riga Grand Prix 2006 from 10 different European countries.



2010

Visitor participation – it is one thing to watch and listen, but quite another to do it yourself.



In 2005, a common slider exhibit was established with additional educational information displayed in the exhibit.

In 2010, a Turtle Rescue Centre was established in the zoo, encouraging the turtle owners to surrender their unwanted pets to the zoo, rather than release them into the wild.



2014

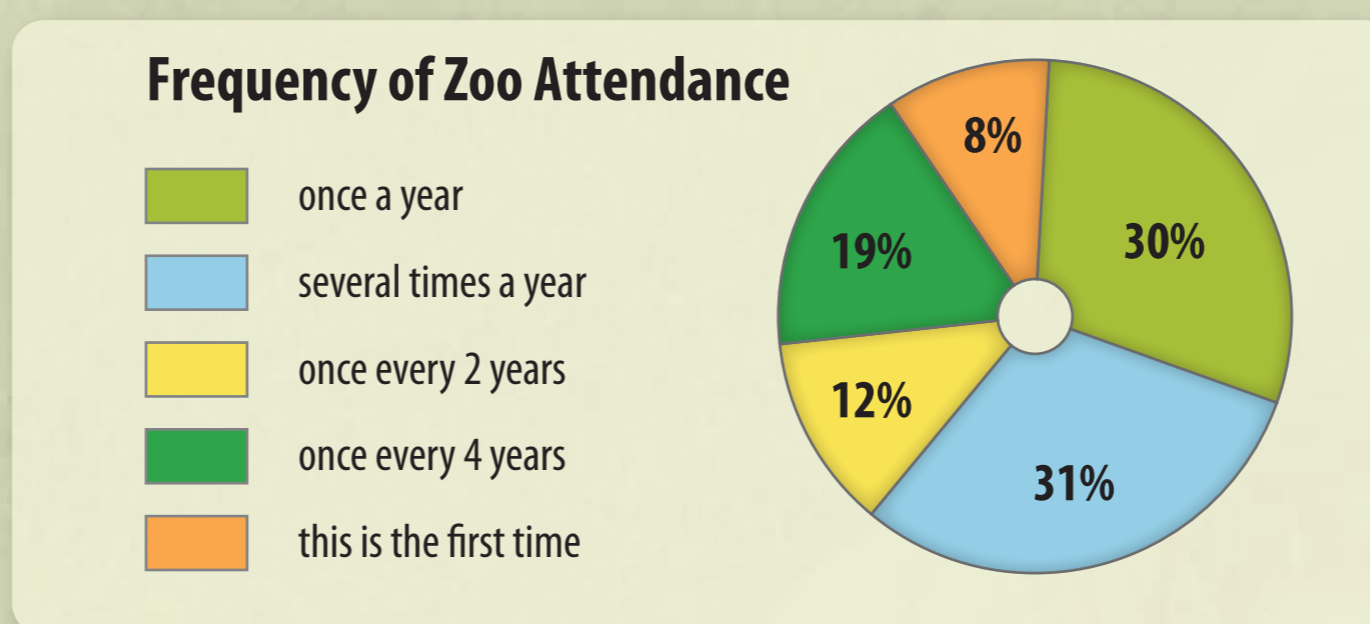
Visitor engagement. A mixed choir conducted by Ints Teterovskis, the chief conductor of several Latvian Song Festivals, performs popular songs and rituals that are supposed to support growth.

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Of course, the success of an event depends on all of these factors; however, information of emotional and personal significance is very important.



Over the last years, it has been noted that visitors prefer personal approach and attitude. Personalized communication makes the visitor emotionally open, he/she takes in the message and is willing to learn.



Approximately 30% of the visitors attend the public events every year and are willing to participate in the environmental activities. This allows to switch from the emotional level to a level of knowledge and attitude formation with the help of different environmental education methods. Moreover, the regular zoo visitors help spread the information about nature protection.

## Bird Days – Half a Century Old Tradition



Every year, to ensure successful organisation of the Bird Days we look for support from both public bodies dealing with environmental issues and non-governmental organisations.



Employees of the Nature Conservation Agency are constructing a nest box for tawny owls.



Indulis Emsis, the Speaker of the Latvian Parliament, with a self-made nest box for common redstarts in 2007.



The Bird Days 2014 were dedicated to the hoopoe. With the help of Viesturs Ķerus, the manager of the Latvian Ornithological Society (LOB) project "Pupuķi" dedicated to hoopoes, 30 nest boxes for hoopoes were made in the Woodpecker's Workshop. With the Minister of Defence Raimonds Vējoniņš' permission, the nest boxes were installed in suitable places in the territory of Ādaži Firing Range.

The Bird Days is an annual event that with several short periods of discontinuity has been organised in the Riga Zoo since 1952. The main idea of this event has remained the same – to show the diversity of artificial nest boxes and demonstrate how to correctly make them.

Since mid-1990s, an important part of the event is the Woodpecker's Workshop, where the visitors of the zoo can learn how to make nest boxes for different cavity nesting birds from materials supplied by the zoo.



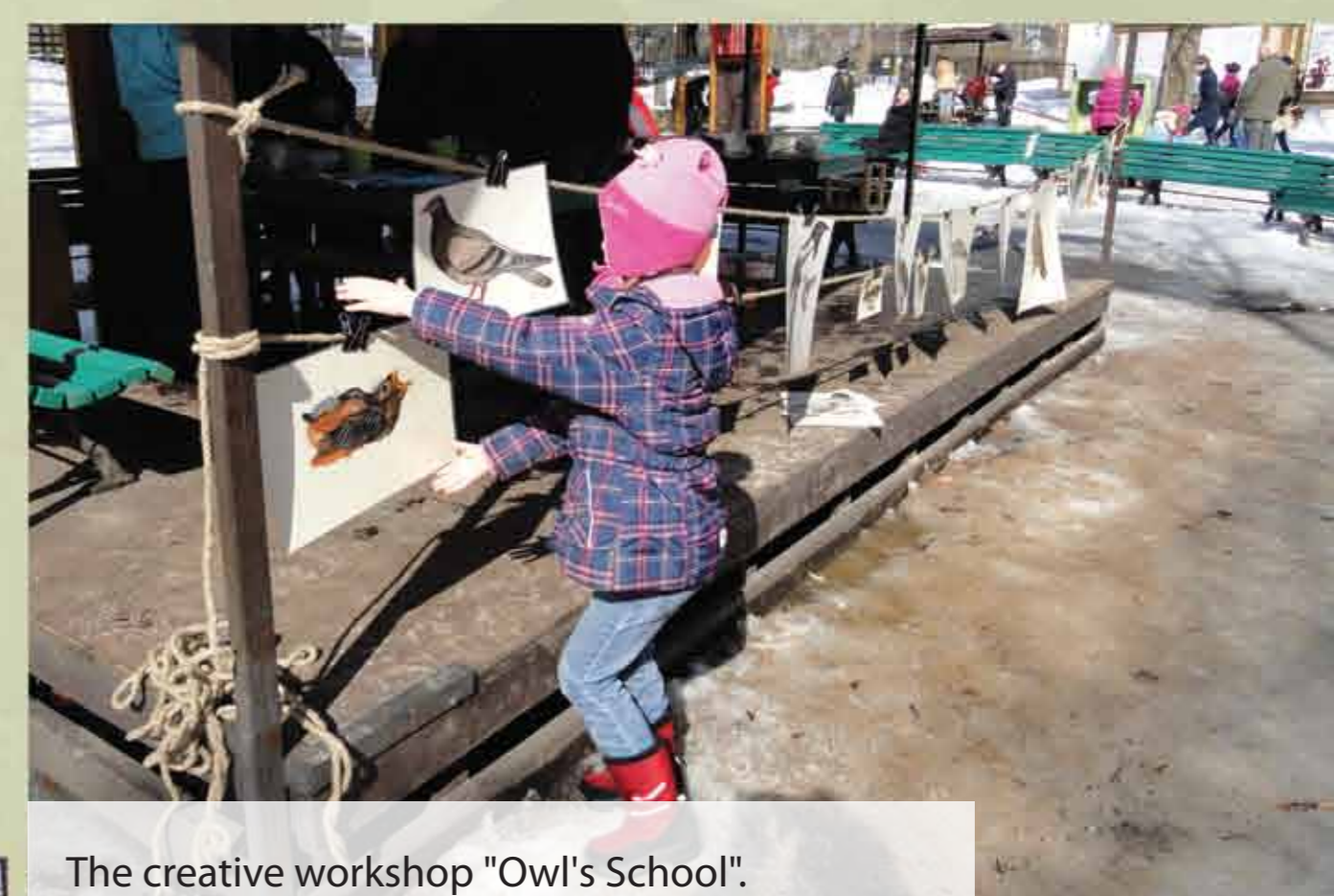
Loyal visitors of the Bird Days. This family has participated in the Bird Days for the last 14 years.

The most common nest boxes made in the zoo are for small cavity nesting birds – sparrows, tits, flycatchers and common starlings. The visitors can keep their self-made birdhouses and take them home or leave them at the zoo.

Each year we choose one bird species native to Latvia and introduce the society to this species' lifestyle and issues regarding the protection of this species. Over the years, with the help of our collaboration partners we have constructed different kinds of nest boxes for ducks, owls, Eurasian kestrels, goldeneyes, common redstarts, hoopoes, bats and dormice.



With the help of our collaboration partners, most of these specialized nest boxes are installed in nature parks and protected natural areas in Latvia.



The creative workshop "Owl's School". How to recognise and find the parents?



In the creative workshop "Owl's School", the visitors are learning about the 13 owl species native to Latvia, their lifestyles and habits.



The most important thing is to let people do things themselves.

