



Case Study

Technology brings visitors closer to nature at Marwell Zoo



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Wide Sky Design provides specialist production, development and installation of interactive digital exhibits, AV systems, mobile and web apps for the museums and heritage sector.

Challenge: Marwell Zoo wanted to create a new immersive experience of three endangered species that it is actively involved in conserving: the white rhino, Grevy's zebra, and scimitar-horned oryx.

Solution: Wide Sky Design installed a range of technology within the Wild Explorers indoor AV zone that uses the sights and sounds of the three species to set the scene, tell their stories and guide the interpretative journey.

Results: Wild Explorers is Marwell Zoo's biggest exhibit to date. Chris Parker of Wide Sky Design said: "The combination of large format projections, soundscapes, live video and a moving head gobo light to create a dappled lighting effect, gives visitors a truly immersive experience of the natural habitat of these special animals."

Challenge

Marwell Zoo wanted to give its visitors a new immersive experience with views of three endangered species it is actively involved in conserving: the white rhino, Grevy's zebra, and scimitar-horned oryx.

Displaying these large grazing animals is a particular challenge because they can appear inactive and are often seen at distance in their large open paddocks. During the busiest periods they are more likely to be found grazing and may be remote to the exhibit hub.

The new exhibit, Wild Explorers, was intended to provide a focus for these three iconic species, being symbolically located at the heart of the zoo and representing long term commitments to the zoo's conservation programmes in North, East and Southern Africa.

The £3.6m exhibit needed to guarantee visitors experienced the animals regardless of their location or activity. It also needed to provide participative learning activities and opportunities for physical play and imagination.



Solution

Wide Sky Design installed a range of technology to enhance the immersive experience of the exhibit.

The gateway to Wild Explorers is low key and hidden from the main exhibit, creating a sense of entering a new and unknown environment ready to be discovered. Five zones then take visitors on a journey of exploration.

The indoor AV zone uses the sights and sounds of the three species to set the scene, tell their stories and guide the interpretative journey.

This 5,200-lumen projector with WXGA resolution and powerful image blending tools delivers spectacular image quality and outstanding brightness. It features DLP® technology, pioneered by Texas Instruments. The dust-sealed, filter free design prevents dust and dirt from affecting the system ensuring optimal image quality with minimal maintenance and ultimate reliability.



Equipment list:

2x W505, short throw lenses

Two Optoma W505 projectors with short throw lenses were installed in the experience, along with large format graphics and a moving head gobo light to create the feeling of being out in the animals' natural habitat with daylight and dappled lighting effects. A soundscape of the savannah adds to the atmosphere.

W505 projectors display pre-recorded footage of the three species, edited to create sequences that run across two large screens, each 3.5 metres wide, to give the experience of being amongst the roaming animals.

CCTV was installed in the paddocks and live footage from these cameras, along with pre-recorded videos, is displayed around the exhibit so visitors would not miss an exciting moment with the animals.

Outside, the Nature Detective area reveals the habitat, hinting at the arid areas from which these species originate, and offering clues (tracks and signs) that help visitors to find animals in their vast natural environments.

With unrestricted views and 'spy in the grass' cameras, a raised Observation Boardwalk encourages guests not just to look, but to really see the animals, near and far.

Stepping off the boardwalk, visitors enter the Discovery zone. Complete with a safari vehicle resting by the water hole, this area encourages discovery and learning through a range of novel activities. This space hosts regular presentations, held either inside or outside, subject to the weather.

The journey through Wild Explorers concludes with the chance for children to let off steam and allow their imaginations to run wild in the Field Station play area.



The Results

Marwell Zoo's Wild Explorers exhibit opened on 23 July 2015 - its biggest exhibit to date.

Tim Woodfine, Marwell's Director of Conservation said: "Not only does Wild Explorers provide fantastic views of the animals from its boardwalk and spy in the grass cameras, it also reveals how Marwell's Conservation Biologists study and conserve these incredible species in the African wilderness."



Andrea Mullins, Marwell's Marketing Director said: "It is proving to be a showstopper for visitors. One small girl ran back into the AV Zone, kissed a projected image of a rhino and said "I love you - certain proof that the 'up close and personal' experience is a real success."

Chris Parker of Wide Sky Design said: "The combination of large format projections, soundscapes, live video and a moving head gobo light to create a dappled lighting effect, gives visitors a truly immersive experience of the natural habitat of these special animals."

Marwell Zoo is home to a wide range of charismatic and endangered species across its 140-acres of parkland near Winchester. It is owned and run by the registered charity Marwell Wildlife which runs a range of educational and conservation activities, with a particular focus on Africa.





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