

OMCA GALLERY OF CALIFORNIA NATURAL SCIENCES

Implications for habitat case labels

These responses are taken from a series of visitor interviews about the habitat cases. They helped inform label writing.

Front-end / Formative research 2010-12

General top questions / comments about habitat cases

- Are these animals / plants “real”?
- Are they alive?
- Did you kill them?
- How did they die?
- What’s going to happen here?
- What is the story of this scene?
- Where is this?
- It would be good to have some ‘hands-on’ here for the kids.
- The predator / prey story is a hard but necessary one for children.
- What does it mean ‘habitat is lost’?
- Where do the animals go?
- (Visitors’ term for what we refer to as ‘habitat’ is nearly always “environment.”)

1. BORDERLINE



Front-end/Formative research 2010-12

- Is this really in Oakland?
- Don’t believe it’s in Oakland.
- Are these plants native?
- Look at the birds!
- I feel sorry for the bunny.
- Oh – Look it’s a fox.
- What’s going to happen?

Front-end research 2003

Other than critter/plant ID, location was the most popular question. Other questions included:

- Fox/rabbit relationship & plant/animal ecology
- Animal activity
- Animal traits
- Moisture level/water source
- Big idea/purpose

2. BURN CASES



Front-end/Formative research 2010-12

- Visitors see this “environment” as “desert.”
- Visitors express desire to see what it looks like immediately after the fire.
- Visitors sometimes express a desire to see fire inside the case (video).
- Visitors describe case with poppies (6 mos after fire?) as “beautiful.” Would like to smell plants.
- Visitors who notice the rock and the hole in the ground in both first and second case (#33 and #34) as consistent from one case to another recognize this conveys same-place-different-time.
- Visitors have more difficulty seeing third case (#35 - “5 years after the fire”) as same-place-different-time.
- Visitors would like to understand more about differences between “controlled fire” and “natural fire” effects on this “environment.”
- Visitors would like to understand how does each type “affects the animals.”
- Visitors want more information to understand the “benefits” of fire.
- Visitors understand the 3 cases adjacent one to another (touching corners) represent *a place*.
- Visitors do not know “where the exhibit begins” (i.e., which case is first, second, third) if signage is all on the side opposite to that approached first.

Front-end research 2003

None found

3. CONFRONTATION



Front-end/Formative research 2010-12

- What's going to happen?
- Who will win?
- Who will get the 'rabbit' (i.e., marmot)?
- Is that a wolf? (coyote)
- Is that a badger? (wolverine)
- It's amazing to be able to stand so close to this scene. Would not be able to in real nature.

Front-end research 2003

- Animal ID 94% (15)
- Habitat? 19% (3)
- Why/what are they fighting over? 19% (3)
- Who's going to win? 19% (3)
- Other questions by 2 visitor groups (13%) only:
 - Is small critter related to wolverine?
 - What's happening between the coyote and the wolverine?
 - Diet/how much food is available?
- Other questions by 1 visitor group (6%) only:
 - What family is the marmot in?
 - Is small critter food?
 - Plant ID?
 - Why are plants so small?
 - What's PDB bottle for?
 - Why no insects?
 - What is the noise [could hear desert (?) noises in background]?
 - Ecological cause & effect?
 - Do they have rabies?
 - Who killed the marmot?

4. FOXES



Front-end/Formative research 2010-12

- Visitors notice footprints and are curious.
- Predator / prey tension implied is often understood.
- Visitors want to see the pika in the cave.

Front-end research 2003

None found

5. HAUL OUT



Front-end/Formative research 2010-12

- Why is the seal crying?
- What is the orange stuff – string?
- Why is the seal on land?
- What season is this?

Front-end research 2003

- Why is the seal here? (71%)
- What is the orange stuff/why is it here? (50%)
 - What does orange twine represent? (7%)
 - Why is orange nest there? (7%)
 - Is orange stuff pollution? (7%)
 - Is this to teach an environmental lesson about the relationship between fishing line, birds and the seal? (7%)
 - Is orange stuff a grass? (7%)
- How does the seal move on the grass? (29%)
- Who's nest/where is the owner of the nest? (29%)
- Is the seal real or stuffed? (21%)

6. MARSH MOUSE



Front-end/Formative research 2010-12

- Visitors enjoy searching for the mate to the Salt Marsh Mouse inside the Haul Out case as illustration of separation due to habitat fragmentation.

Front-end research 2003

None found

7. PATHCHINESS



Front-end / Formative research 2010-12

- What's going to happen?
- Will the bird catch the mouse?
- Are these grasses native?
- Flowers are beautiful
- Beautiful scene
- Parents say the predator / prey lesson is a hard but necessary one.

Front-end research 2003

What did you notice first?

- The bird (76%) and flowers (32%) were noticed first by most visitors.

What else stands out for you?

- For 92% of visitors, the flowers were the next thing that stood out.
- Other things that especially stood out included: vole/mice (64%), brush/plants (44%), and the fact that the bird is preying on the rodent (36%).

What questions come to mind after looking at the exhibit?

- 48% wanted to know where they could see this in California and an additional 24% wanted to know what kind of environment this is.
- Other questions included, who's habitat? (28%), what are the various animals doing or what's going to happen next (24%), and the time of year/day/season (24%).

8. REDWOOD PLATFORM



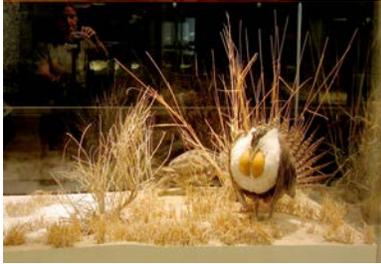
Front-end / Formative research 2010-12

- Why is that tree burned?
- Didn't know there were Redwoods in Oakland.
- Yes, I see Redwoods in the Oakland hills.

Front-end research 2003

- How fast do redwoods grow/how old are these/how long do they live? 45% (9)
- Location 30% (6)
- What happened to that tree—how/why did it burn? 30% (6)
- Critter ID 20% (4)
- Plant ID 20% (4)
- How long does it take log/burnt tree to decompose 20% (4)
- Inter-relationships 20% (4)
- What kind of plant [salal]? 10% (2)
- What's the story/message? 10% (2)
- Life cycle of plants 10% (2)
- Is it real: burnt tree, animals, redwood tree? 10% (2)
- How can we preserve the forest? 10% (2)
- Season 5% (1)
- Are these redwoods? 5% (1)
- Is this proper habitat for: bleeding heart, hawk? 5% (1)
- Native or introduced 5% (1)
- What animals live here? 5% (1)
- What's making the sound? 5% (1)
- Do birds live in these trees or are they visiting? 5% (1)
- How long do redwood branches grow? 5% (1)
- How and why do redwoods grow so big? 5% (1)
- Are animals stuffed? 5% (1)
- Why does bark remain when rest burnt away? 5% (1)
- How redwoods withstand fire 5% (1)
- Why tree fell down 5% (1)
- Why trees are still standing 5% (1)
- How is it different here than elsewhere? 5% (1)
- Effect of fog 5% (1)
- How extensive forest used to be 5% (1)

9. SAGE GROUSE



Front-end / Formative research 2010-12

- Visitors express concern for this “unique species” being in danger of extinction.
- Visitors express curiosity about the “food web” (i.e., what this bird is dependent upon in its “environment”).
- Visitors express desire for before-and-after pictures of this “environment”—development that impacts the sage grouse.
- Video of animated sage grouse received enthusiastic approval at ‘science fair’ (i.e., staff feedback).
- Visitors sometimes ask “Are human habitats/environments more or less important than this?”
- Visitors express desire to understand “What is *special* about this bird?” (i.e., Why especially worth saving?)
- Visitors express desire to understand what is the utility of the animal in contrast to development (e.g., Do you want these birds or In-N-Out Burger?).

Front-end research 2003

None found