

Jackie Ogden, PhD — Experimental Psychologist

THE HAPPIEST HABITAT ON EARTH

At Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, it's psychologist Jackie Ogden's job to ensure that young visitors' experiences with animals are as magical as the rest of their Disney experience.

As vice president for animals, science and environment, Ogden ensures that all creatures and their respective habitats are properly cared for, including 7,000 live animals representing 400 species.

It's also her goal to inspire visitors to care more deeply about animals and the environment when they leave the park, which is an important part of the Disney legacy.

"We are trying to understand how to better leverage what we know about [human] behavior to change how people think about the environment and take care of the planet," says Ogden. "Walt Disney cared very much about animals and the environment."

BATTING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Ogden uses her experimental psychology background to work with her team to analyze and measure ways that Disney's environmental exhibits and programs — which often feature live animals — effectively educate audiences about conservation and wildlife.

In the "Conservation Station" at Disney's Animal Kingdom, for example, Ogden's team created an exhibit with educational materials that teaches how bats are "special, not spooky" and help keep the crop-damaging insect population at bay for farmers. For example, the program hosted a "Bat Day" and encouraged visitors to build and hang a bat house in their backyard to help preserve the population.

Their evaluation efforts reveal that interactive exhibits — and particularly those with action-based messaging — can motivate young people to take part in wildlife preservation activities at home.

A GREEN FOCUS

Ogden always aims to educate, entertain and inspire patrons of Disney's live entertainment offerings, such as Disney's Animal Kingdom "Flights of Wonder" bird show and "Finding Nemo — The Musical."

"We have a great entertainment team that is responsible for putting on the shows," Ogden says. "We make sure they have the right animal content and conservation messaging, and they work with us to develop fun ways to engage our guests with animals."

Whether she's advocating the use of energy-saving LED lighting, promoting the parks via online channels instead of printed ones or overseeing environmental efforts throughout Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Ogden always has conservation in mind.



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EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Experimental psychologists use empirical research methods to better understand behavior. They study a wide range of behavioral topics among humans and animals, including sensation, perception, attention, memory, cognition, emotion and more.

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