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Collaborating on Antarctic Education and Outreach

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Information Paper Submitted by ASOC and IAATO

Summary

The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) report on education and outreach activities that they collaborated on during the 2016-2017 intersessional period including #AntarcticaProtected, the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) social media campaign to raise awareness about the 25th Anniversary of the Environment Protocol. It is suggested that coordinated, collaborative projects and media campaigns are effective at highlighting key messages and engaging with a wider audience. ASOC and IAATO encourage more shared efforts with Antarctic Treaty Parties, ATCM Observers and Experts to raise the profile of the Antarctic Treaty System.

Introduction

In this paper, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) report on joint education and outreach activities during the 2016-2017 intersessional period.

The activities, discussed further below, included a poster presentation during the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress, held in Hawaii 1 to 10 September, 2016, contributions to the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) social media campaign to raise awareness about the 25th Anniversary of the Environment Protocol, and a social media education campaign during Valentine's week 2017.

Promoting Conservation in Antarctica Through Collaboration and Active Citizenship

ASOC, IAATO and WWF also teamed up to produce a poster for the 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress, held in Hawaii 1 to 10 September, 2016.¹ The title of the poster was “Promoting conservation in Antarctica through collaboration and active citizenship” and detailed the efforts of each organization. The poster was [available in an electronic format](#). It provided brief information on why conservation is needed in Antarctica before detailing the efforts to enhance the effectiveness of citizen science projects in and about Antarctica, to increase Antarctic tourists’ understanding of environmental issues, to educate the public about the importance of Antarctic conservation, and to mobilize the public to demonstrate support for Antarctic environmental protection. Some of these initiatives have been done in coordination between ASOC, IAATO and WWF, while some are individual efforts. Together, they represent a significant effort to support the environmental protection work of the Antarctic Treaty System and to ensure that the public is supportive of that work. We hope that the poster will demonstrate the need for collaboration between different groups and sectors. Because Antarctica is not always at the forefront of people’s minds, combining forces is likely to magnify the effectiveness of any education and outreach program. .

As many ATCPs support research programs that include citizen science or other collaborative outreach events, conducted in Antarctica or virtually, further collaborative communication about such opportunities would help spread the word for people seeking to engage with Antarctic science.

#AntarcticaProtected – the 25th Anniversary of the Environmental Protocol

ASOC and IAATO joined the Antarctic Treaty System community in celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Environmental Protocol on 4 October 2016 using the hashtag, #AntarcticaProtected. A series of tweets and posts were drafted in advance of the anniversary and shared with our respective member organizations/companies to encourage participation on the day. Members aside, the IAATO Secretariat

¹ A PDF version of this poster is included as an attachment to this paper.

promoted the event on their Twitter (8376 impressions, 1208 engagements) and Facebook (8.8K reach, 603 engagements) accounts as well as the Antarctic Ambassador networks on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. ASOC also posted under the hashtag on Facebook (6492 reach, 178 engagements) and Twitter (3329 impressions, 76 engagements). News about the CEP's 25th anniversary publication was also shared.

The 25th anniversary of the Protocol was a good example of how Treaty Parties, Experts and Observers can work together to amplify key messages. Perhaps this group could identify dates each year when the community is encouraged to collaborate, perhaps continuing to use the hashtag #AntarcticaProtected.

#LoveAntarcticInvertebrates: A Social Media Education Campaign

In February 2017, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) collaborated on a social media campaign designed to broaden awareness of lesser-known Antarctic species, specifically invertebrates. Although they make up over 90% of all species in the Antarctic, Antarctica's invertebrate species are often ignored in favour of penguins, seals and whales. IAATO and ASOC saw an opportunity to educate the public about these fascinating species via our social media networks. We planned to have a series of posts for each weekday of Valentine's week (February 13-19, 2017). We chose Valentine's Day to highlight the idea that Antarctic invertebrates need some extra "love" compared to more well-known, charismatic Antarctic wildlife. February is also an ideal time for our organizations to engage our social media followers because it is typically a quieter public relations month for us.

We were fortunate to draw on existing resources to develop the text and images for the campaign. ASOC supplied Valentine's e-cards featuring invertebrates that had previously been shared on social media, along with some images and facts from previous publications. IAATO supplied many underwater images and videos, most of which were taken by IAATO Operations Manager Lisa Kelley, an expert on Antarctic diving and an author of a guide to dive sites in Antarctica. Together, we chose the species to feature and wrote text for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter posts and scheduled posts for each day. Each organization has multiple accounts; ASOC has a general Twitter and Facebook page for the organization as a whole, as well as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for its Antarctic Ocean Alliance project, which focuses on marine protected areas. IAATO likewise has general Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as Facebook and Twitter and Instagram channels for its Antarctic Ambassador network.

The campaign was successful for both organizations. ASOC's Twitter accounts saw a significant increase in impressions (the number of times a user is served a tweet in their timeline), with our ASOC account seeing a 90% increase in impressions and our Antarctic Ocean Alliance account seeing its engagement with followers triple. Individual posts and tweets often proved disproportionately popular. For example, an ASOC Facebook post on bone-eating worms had a bigger audience than all the other posts for that week combined. Overall, the campaign was more popular on ASOC Twitter accounts than on Facebook or on Instagram, and more popular on ASOC's general accounts than on its MPA-focused one. IAATO's experience was similar, with a 58% increase in impressions on Twitter compared to the previous month and a 48% increase in reach (the number of unique people who saw the content) on Facebook. The subjects of the most popular posts and tweets varied across all networks, which demonstrated the value of collaborating on diverse content to deliver key messages to a wider audience.

Lessons learned from the campaign were that a multi-day, fact-based series of posts and images seems to be more popular on Twitter than on Facebook, although the campaign increased engagement on both platforms. Overall, we learned that our respective audiences appreciate a coordinated campaign and are interested in learning new facts about Antarctica. We believe that the increased engagement demonstrates that social media campaigns are therefore an effective way to reach out to our followers (as well as gain new ones) and can be used to increase public understanding about Antarctic issues. Working together was also effective as it greatly expanded the amount of content (text, photos and video) available to both organisations, and helped divide up the work of creating posts. IAATO and ASOC plan to coordinate on similar campaigns in the future.

In summary, social media platforms are an effective way to reach out to the public and provide scientific information on Antarctica. ASOC and IAATO welcome collaboration with other ATCPs, Observers and Experts on future campaigns.

Conclusions

- Coordinated, collaborative efforts are effective at highlighting key messages, engaging with a wide audience and raising the profile of specific issues;
- Specific targeted media campaigns with a defined timeline and shared messages and/or hashtags are very effective at increasing public interest, including an increase of social media indicators such as impressions and reach;
- IAATO and ASOC will aim to continue this form of outreach collaboration in the future and would welcome future collaborations with Antarctic Treaty Parties, Experts and Observers;
- The Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach is a valuable platform for exchanging ideas and expertise as well as for identifying collaborations and events that would raise awareness about the Antarctic Treaty System.