



WILDLY SEEN ADVENTURES

EXPLORING ZOOS, ANIMAL RESCUES AND WILD PLACES

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

How Wildly Seen Adventures Is Rewiring Wildlife Tourism

WSA Podcast | Full Episode Transcript | 13:49



Full Episode Transcript

[Speaker 1] (0:00 - 0:07)

Welcome, everyone. We're so excited to have you here today for this, um, totally custom-tailored exploration.

[Speaker 2] (0:07 - 0:09)

Yeah, we've got a really great one for you today.

[Speaker 1] (0:09 - 0:21)

We really do. You know, if you're a parent like me, or honestly just someone who loves animals, you've probably felt that, that little bit of anxiety when you're planning a weekend trip to a zoo or a sanctuary.

[Speaker 2] (0:21 - 0:26)

Oh, absolutely. That, uh, that feeling of, am I actually supporting a good place?

[Speaker 1] (0:26 - 0:35)

Exactly. You're walking through the gates with your kids, pushing a stroller, and you just sort of assume, like, well, the grass is green, the water's clear, so the animals must be happy, right?

[Speaker 2] (0:35 - 0:45)

Right. But, as someone who used to work behind the scenes as a zookeeper, I can tell you, um, the reality of animal welfare is so much more complicated than just a fresh coat of paint.

[Speaker 1] (0:46 - 0:57)

Which is exactly why we're talking about this incredible platform today. It's completely rewiring how we like everyday families and tourists pick our wildlife experiences. It's called Wildly Seen Adventures.

[Speaker 2] (0:58 - 0:59)

It's such a game changer.

[Speaker 1] (0:59 - 1:07)

It really is. And you can find it at WildlySeenAdventures.com. They also have a super fun YouTube channel under the same name.

[Speaker 2] (1:08 - 1:09)

Which is definitely worth checking out.

[Speaker 1] (1:09 - 1:20)

Oh, totally. But, uh, our whole mission today is to unpack how this site actually works, right? How it empowers you to make really informed choices about where you take your family.

[Speaker 2] (1:20 - 1:30)

Yeah, because the difference between, you know, a world-class rescue facility and just some unregulated roadside attraction, it's staggering.

[Speaker 1] (1:30 - 1:30)

It's huge.

[Speaker 2] (1:31 - 1:38)

But to the untrained eye, they can look surprisingly similar. And we're kind of past the point where seeing animals is just this passive thing, right?

[Speaker 1] (1:38 - 1:40)

Right, like just pointing at a cage and moving on.



[Speaker 2] (1:40 - 1:48)

Exactly. We need a way to figure out which places are actually helping animals and doing real conservation and which ones are just, well, putting them on display to make a quick buck.

[Speaker 1] (1:48 - 1:57)

Yeah, and that's where WildlySeen Adventures is so brilliant. Because they don't just give a place, like, a generic thumbs up or a five-star rating and call it a day.

[Speaker 2] (1:57 - 1:58)

No, they have a whole system.

[Speaker 1] (1:59 - 2:10)

They do. They use this thing called the WSA Scorecard. And it breaks down every single review into three distinct categories, which are care, purpose, and experience.

[Speaker 2] (2:10 - 2:13)

And each of those gets a score from one to five, right?

[Speaker 1] (2:13 - 2:25)

Yep, one to five. And then they average it out for the overall rating. But, okay, let me ask you this, because you've got the zoology background. Why break it into three buckets? Like, if an animal is well cared for, isn't that kind of all that matters?

[Speaker 2] (2:26 - 2:35)

I mean, you'd think so, right? But separating those metrics is actually the most important part of the whole system. Let's look at that first category, care.

[Speaker 1] (2:35 - 2:36)

Okay, care.

[Speaker 2] (2:36 - 2:47)

When a professional is evaluating care, they aren't just looking to see if the enclosure is swept clean. Because, you know, a sterile concrete box can be perfectly clean, but it's terrible for the animal.

[Speaker 1] (2:47 - 2:48)

Oh, wow. Right. That makes sense.

[Speaker 2] (2:49 - 2:58)

Yeah, they're looking at things like, does the enclosure have spatial complexity? Can the animal actually forage for its food naturally? Are they showing signs of stress, like pacing back and forth?

[Speaker 1] (2:59 - 3:01)

Pacing's a big one. You see that sometimes, and it's just heartbreaking.

[Speaker 2] (3:02 - 3:08)

Exactly. So care is all about the immediate day-to-day physical and mental health of that specific animal.

[Speaker 1] (3:08 - 3:20)

But then, and this is what's wild to me, a place could build this beautiful, amazing habitat, treat the animal incredibly well, and still score horribly in the second category, which is purpose.

[Speaker 2] (3:21 - 3:26)

Yes. Because purpose asks the bigger question, why is this animal even here?

[Speaker 1] (3:27 - 3:28)

Right. Like, what's the point?



[Speaker 2] (3:28 - 3:37)

Right. A for-profit place might take decent care of a tiger, but if their only goal is to sell tickets so people can gawk at it, they aren't helping the species.

[Speaker 1] (3:37 - 3:38)

They're just an attraction.

[Speaker 2] (3:38 - 3:50)

Exactly. A high-purpose score means they're doing real work. Are they rehabilitating local wildlife? Are they funding conservation in the wild? It measures their actual impact outside their own front gates.

[Speaker 1] (3:50 - 3:56)

Which is so cool, because it forces you to realize the difference between a real conservation hub and, like, a glorified petting zoo.

[Speaker 2] (3:57 - 3:57)

Exactly.

[Speaker 1] (3:58 - 4:00)

And then there's the third bucket, which honestly, as a parent, is my favorite.

[Speaker 2] (4:00 - 4:01)

Experience.

[Speaker 1] (4:01 - 4:06)

Yes, experience. Look, I have dragged a double stroller through more wildlife parks than I can count.

[Speaker 2] (4:06 - 4:08)

I can only imagine.

[Speaker 1] (4:08 - 4:21)

It is a workout, and a zoo can do incredible rescue work, but if the pathways are dirt and gravel, the bathrooms are a mile apart, and you can't read the signs, it's a miserable outing for a family.

[Speaker 2] (4:21 - 4:26)

And you can't discount that, because think about it, public education relies on the place being accessible.

[Speaker 1] (4:26 - 4:27)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (4:27 - 4:35)

If kids can't even see over the fence, or if it's just overwhelmingly crowded and noisy, the educational value just completely evaporates.

[Speaker 1] (4:35 - 4:47)

This is why averaging all three is so smart. You could have a place with an A plus in animal care, but a C minus in family accessibility, or, you know, great food stands and smooth paths, but a failing grade in conservation.

[Speaker 2] (4:47 - 4:50)

It gives you the full, honest picture.

[Speaker 1] (4:50 - 4:58)

It really does. But here's the kicker, and this is where it gets really fun. Wildly Seen Adventures doesn't just rely on their own official review.

[Speaker 2] (4:58 - 4:59)

Right. They have the community aspect.



[Speaker 1] (5:00 - 5:10)

Yes. They have these things called trailblazer reviews. So literally anyone like you listening to this right now can go to a zoo, use that exact same three category scorecard, and submit your own ratings.

[Speaker 2] (5:11 - 5:13)

Which is such a brilliant way to involve the public.

[Speaker 1] (5:13 - 5:23)

It feeds right into a community leaderboard that ranks all the locations. So the rankings literally get better and more accurate over time as more people weigh in.

[Speaker 2] (5:24 - 5:35)

And that volume of data is so important, because an expert visit is great. It gives you a scientific baseline, but an expert only sees the place on, like, a random Tuesday morning in the spring.

[Speaker 1] (5:36 - 5:51)

Right. The expert sets the baseline, but the crowd tests the reality. But wait, let me push back for a second. If we're relying on, like, a family of four to rate the care category, aren't they just going to give it five stars? Because I got to see a bear up close, and the weather was nice.

[Speaker 2] (5:51 - 6:01)

It's a fair question. But that's the beauty of averaging things out. One person might rate on emotion, but when you have hundreds of trailblazer reviews, it smooths out those anomalies.

[Speaker 1] (6:01 - 6:03)

Well, that makes sense. The wisdom of the crowd.

[Speaker 2] (6:03 - 6:14)

Yeah. And more importantly, the site educates you on what to look for before you rate. So you stop just passively looking at the animals, and you start noticing things like, hey, are the water troughs empty at 3 p.m. on a hot Saturday?

[Speaker 1] (6:14 - 6:14)

Oh, well.

[Speaker 2] (6:15 - 6:20)

Right. The crowd catches the operational stress tests that an official inspector might totally miss.

[Speaker 1] (6:21 - 6:29)

And what's so great is that the whole site is completely mobile friendly. You don't have to, like, go home, open up your laptop, and try to remember if the primate enclosure looked OK.

[Speaker 2] (6:29 - 6:30)

No, you can do it right there.

[Speaker 1] (6:30 - 6:39)

You literally pull it up on your phone while you're standing in front of the glass, you check the scores, and you can submit your own trailblazer review right on the spot.

[Speaker 2] (6:39 - 6:42)

Which creates this continuous loop of accountability.

[Speaker 1] (6:42 - 6:48)

Yeah. It turns a passive afternoon stroll into this active, fun, on-the-ground mission for your family.



[Speaker 2] (6:48 - 6:56)

And the facility operators know this. They know that anyone walking through the gates could be a trailblazer, so they can't just put on a good show once a year for an inspector.

[Speaker 1] (6:57 - 7:03)

It totally raises the bar. Now, I want to actually look at a real example of this scorecard in action, because I was geeking out over this one.

[Speaker 2] (7:03 - 7:04)

Let's do it.

[Speaker 1] (7:04 - 7:07)

Let's talk about the Go Local Manatee Tours in Crystal River, Florida.

[Speaker 2] (7:08 - 7:09)

Oh, this is a fascinating one.

[Speaker 1] (7:10 - 7:17)

It's so cool, because this isn't a zoo at all. It's a wild encounter. But the WSA scorecard still applies.

[Speaker 2] (7:17 - 7:22)

Right, but you have to look at care in a totally different way when the animal isn't in an enclosure.

[Speaker 1] (7:24 - 7:37)

So for this manatee tour, they cap the boats at just six people. They give you wetsuits, snorkeling gear. They even take underwater photos for you. But on the care side, they have strictly enforced, roped-off resting areas for the manatees.

[Speaker 2] (7:37 - 7:40)

Which is so crucial for wild encounters.

[Speaker 1] (7:40 - 7:51)

Yeah. And the staff aren't just random seasonal hires. They're Crystal River locals who grew up around these waterways. So they know exactly how to read the animals. Overall, they landed at a 4.33 out of 5.

[Speaker 2] (7:52 - 7:59)

And that 4.33 is such a great nuance score. Because with a wild encounter, care is all about minimizing human interference.

[Speaker 1] (7:59 - 8:00)

Right, staying the other way.

[Speaker 2] (8:00 - 8:10)

Yeah, capping the tour at six people reduces noise and stress on the animals. And those roped-off zones prove that the tour company cares more about the manatee's safety than letting tourists get a close-up selfie.

[Speaker 1] (8:11 - 8:13)

If the manatee wants to sleep, it sleeps.

[Speaker 2] (8:13 - 8:18)

Exactly. Measuring that ethical boundary is exactly what the scorecard does so well.

[Speaker 1] (8:19 - 8:26)

Okay, now let's contrast that Florida River tour with another place they reviewed. The Big Bear Alpine Zoo in the mountains of California.

[Speaker 2] (8:27 - 8:28)

Totally different environment.



[Speaker 1] (8:28 - 8:39)

Completely. This one is a strict rescue facility. Every single animal there is injured or orphaned local wildlife that can't be released back into the wild.

[Speaker 2] (8:39 - 8:41)

And this is where the purpose category really shines.

[Speaker 1] (8:42 - 8:47)

Yes. They scored a 4.5 out of 5 overall, but they got a perfect 5 in the purpose category.

[Speaker 2] (8:47 - 8:48)

Wow, a perfect 5.

[Speaker 1] (8:49 - 8:56)

A perfect 5. And the data proves it. In 2025 alone, they released 22 birds and 18 mammals back into the wild.

[Speaker 2] (8:57 - 9:02)

See, achieving a perfect 5 in purpose for a rescue means they have incredible operational discipline.

[Speaker 1] (9:02 - 9:03)

What do you mean by that?

[Speaker 2] (9:03 - 9:14)

Well, when you're rehabbing an animal for release, the biggest danger is habituation. They absolutely cannot let those animals associate humans with food or their chances of surviving in the wild drop to zero.

[Speaker 1] (9:14 - 9:16)

Oh, so they have to keep them totally isolated.

[Speaker 2] (9:16 - 9:28)

Right. They have specialized flight pins and recovery zones that the public never even gets to see. So releasing 40 animals in one year proves their main goal is helping nature, not just entertaining tourists.

[Speaker 1] (9:28 - 9:36)

It's just brilliant how the exact same scorecard works for a manatee pontoon boat and a mountain wildlife hospital.

[Speaker 2] (9:36 - 9:38)

It's a universal language for animal welfare.

[Speaker 1] (9:38 - 9:44)

It really is. But, okay, understanding the facility is just one piece of the puzzle.

[Speaker 2] (9:44 - 9:44)

Yeah.

[Speaker 1] (9:45 - 9:49)

To really get the most out of your visit, you kind of need to understand the animals themselves.

[Speaker 2] (9:49 - 9:50)

Absolutely.

[Speaker 1] (9:50 - 9:58)

And that's where the Platform's Animal Field Guide comes in. It's this search tool right on the site where you can look up any animal and get a quick fact sheet.

[Speaker 2] (9:58 - 10:02)

It gives you the scientific context you need to actually use the scorecard well.



[Speaker 1] (10:02 - 10:10)

Yes. You get the scientific name, their natural habitat, their diet, and their conservation status. Like, think about how handy this is for a parent.

[Speaker 2] (10:11 - 10:12)

Oh, I bet it's a lifesaver.

[Speaker 1] (10:12 - 10:31)

It is. Let's say your kid sees a red panda and is like, what does it eat? Where does it live? Instead of hunting for some faded plaque, you just pull up the field guide on your phone. You find out they eat bamboo, they live at high altitudes, and they're endangered. Do you think having that info right there actually changes how a person experiences the visit?

[Speaker 2] (10:32 - 10:40)

I think it changes it entirely. Because without that info, you might look at a red panda sleeping in a tree and think, oh, it's boring. It's not doing anything.

[Speaker 1] (10:40 - 10:41)

Entertain me.

[Speaker 2] (10:41 - 10:53)

Exactly. But when the field guide tells you that red pandas are most active at dawn and dusk, and that sleeping high up in a tree is how they stay safe in the wild, your expectations shift.

[Speaker 1] (10:53 - 10:56)

You stop wanting a show, and you start appreciating the biology.

[Speaker 2] (10:56 - 11:01)

Yes. It turns a passive walk into a real active learning experience.

[Speaker 1] (11:01 - 11:08)

You know, it's like having a pocket zoologist with you. And speaking of being active, I have to mention the scouted locations on the site.

[Speaker 2] (11:08 - 11:09)

Oh, those are so cool.

[Speaker 1] (11:09 - 11:16)

They are. These are places, zoos, rescues, whatever, that are on Wildly Seen Adventures radar, but the official team just hasn't made it out there yet to visit.

[Speaker 2] (11:17 - 11:18)

So they invite the community to go do it?

[Speaker 1] (11:18 - 11:25)

Yes. They set up a page, and it's basically an open invitation. Be the first to go there, check it out, and submit a trailblazer review.

[Speaker 2] (11:26 - 11:30)

It's such a smart way to grow the site while also, you know, deputizing everyday people.

[Speaker 1] (11:30 - 11:32)

It totally gamifies the whole experience.

[Speaker 2] (11:32 - 11:42)

It really does. It gives people a reason to go explore new places. But with a mission, you're not just going for a walk. You're going as a citizen inspector to document their standards.



[Speaker 1] (11:43 - 11:53)

It makes the weekend family outings so much more meaningful. You know, we started this whole chat talking about that anxiety we feel, worrying if our ticket money is funding something bad.

[Speaker 2] (11:54 - 11:54)

Right.

[Speaker 1] (11:54 - 12:06)

This platform just completely solves that problem. Between the care, purpose, and experience scores, and those thousands of trailblazer reviews, it just makes the whole industry so transparent.

[Speaker 2] (12:06 - 12:15)

And by showing us that places like the Go Local Manatee Tours and Big Bear Alpine Zoo exist, they prove that ethical, fun wildlife encounters are totally possible.

[Speaker 1] (12:16 - 12:16)

And measurable.

[Speaker 2] (12:17 - 12:25)

Yes, measurable. And when you, as a visitor, show up armed with this data, these facilities are forced to step up their game to meet the public standards.

[Speaker 1] (12:25 - 12:41)

It completely flips the power dynamic. It puts the power back in our hands. So before you plan your next family trip or weekend excursion, you absolutely have to check this out. I'm going to spell it out one more time so you can pull it up right now. That's wildlyseenadventures.com.

[Speaker 2] (12:41 - 12:44)

And definitely look up Wildly Seen Adventures on YouTube as well.

[Speaker 1] (12:45 - 12:58)

Yes. Go look up a place near you, check out their scorecard, and submit your own rating next time you visit. It is hands down the easiest way to make sure you're supporting places that are doing right by the animals.

[Speaker 2] (12:58 - 13:02)

Because every single review added to that leaderboard just makes the whole system stronger.

[Speaker 1] (13:02 - 13:11)

It really does. Well, thank you all so much for hanging out with us today. We really hope this gives you a fun, new way to plan your next wildlife adventure.

[Speaker 2] (13:11 - 13:11)

It's been a blast.

[Speaker 1] (13:12 - 13:16)

But you know, before we go, I want to leave you with one final thought to mull over.

[Speaker 2] (13:16 - 13:17)

Oh, here we go.

[Speaker 1] (13:17 - 13:22)

We've been talking about how these community ratings help families pick a good zoo, right?

[Speaker 2] (13:23 - 13:25)

But think bigger.



[Speaker 1] (13:25 - 13:49)

What if every single visitor acted like a trailblazer? What if your rating didn't just warn other tourists but actually started affecting a facility's funding or their insurance rates or even their legal standing? If crowdsourced real-time data becomes the ultimate regulatory force, how quickly would the entire wildlife tourism industry be forced to evolve or risk going completely obsolete? Think about it. See you next time.



Subscribe to Wildly Seen Adventures on YouTube

for more zoo reviews, wildlife sanctuary visits, and wildly memorable adventures.

Wildly Seen Adventures visits zoos, aquariums, rescue facilities, and wild encounter destinations across the United States. Every location is reviewed using the WSA Scorecard -- a three-category framework scoring Care, Purpose, and Experience on a 1-to-5 scale.

Trailblazer Reviews let any visitor submit their own scorecard ratings, feeding a live community leaderboard that grows more accurate over time. The Animal Field Guide lets families look up species by common or scientific name before or during their visit.

Scouted Locations are destinations on WSA's radar awaiting a first community review -- an open invitation to be the first trailblazer at a new spot.

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