

Shooting skinks for good: Producing a movie improves attitudes towards a threatened species

Carlos A. Fonseca¹, Xana Sá-Pinto², Herculano A. Dinis³, Raquel Vasconcelos⁴

Biodiversity loss is one of today's most important sustainable development (SD) problems. Among other factors, biodiversity loss is influenced by humans' attitudes (feelings, actions, and perceptions) towards species. Species such as reptiles are often feared and persecuted by human populations, despite the important ecosystem services they provide. Changing attitudes towards these species is fundamental to ensure its conservation. In this study we show how engaging local communities in the development of conservation products and strategies contribute to improving their attitudes towards threatened species. Following a Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach we engaged Cabo Verdean high school students in the development of a conservation movie about the threatened endemic reptile species *Chioninia vaillanti* and analyzed how this affected their attitudes towards reptiles in general and the target species in particular. More specifically, students were asked to write a script, shoot and produce a short film aimed at changing the

attitudes of their community towards *C. vaillanti*. A public event was organized to present the movie to the community. Students' attitudes towards the species was evaluated before and after this activity, through a questionnaire and students' learning outcomes were studied through interviews and the content analysis of the movie. Our results show that this activity resulted in a significant increase of students': i) positive feelings towards reptiles; ii) increased perception of reptiles' importance; iii) positive actions towards the focal species; iv) knowledge about the biology of *C. vaillanti*, as well as about the threats and reasons to conserve it. The results also show that the reason that the students most often used to support the species conservation was its endemism. These results further support the potential of PBL approaches that explore local contexts and issues for promoting education for SD.

1 – University of Coimbra
2 – Department of Education and Psychology & CIDTFF, University of Aveiro
3 – Associação Projecto Vitó, Cape Verde
4 – CIBIO, InBio, University of Porto

FIGURE 1

A scene from the movie recorded by the students that was presented to the community (see more in: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Up6nSp5gUc&ab_channel=RaquelVasconcelos).

FIGURE 2

Frequency of the different categories of answers of students in the pre-test (in yellow) and post-test (in green).

