IAATO Education, Outreach and Ambassadorship

IAATO Education, Outreach and Ambassadorship

Summary

Education and outreach have been a cornerstone of IAATO since its inception in 1991, both through targeted learning and training opportunities for field staff, and in the communication of Antarctic Treaty System and IAATO information to would-be Antarctic visitors.

IAATO formed an Education & Outreach Working Group in 2015, consisting of IAATO Operators and Associate members, with a remit to develop the Antarctic Ambassador concept. At the 2023 IAATO Annual Meeting (April 25-27), members unanimously voted for this working group to become the Antarctic Ambassadorship Committee.

While Antarctic Ambassadorship has existed as a concept within IAATO since the beginning, it was in 2016 as IAATO marked the 25th Anniversary of the Environment Protocol as well as celebrating its own 25th birthday, that the Antarctic Ambassador concept formally came into being, with the launch of the distinctive three-gentoo penguin logo.

This paper gives an overview of IAATO’s education and outreach efforts and developments to its Antarctic Ambassadorship Program.

Background to Education, Outreach and Ambassadorship

The Education & Outreach Working Group was formed to assist the IAATO Secretariat in an advisory capacity in developing the Antarctic Ambassador concept and, based on outcomes of other Working Groups and Committees, assess whether certain issues (e.g., non-native species) require specific communication internal and/or external campaigns.

Project work of the Education & Outreach Working Group has included:

* IAATO guidelines for marketing and PR teams – created for members to make their marketing, sales and PR teams aware of the importance of aligning their efforts with the values of the ATCM and the requirements of IAATO for safe, environmentally responsible travel to Antarctica;
* Educational resources to mark the 25th anniversaries of IAATO and the signing of the Environment Protocol in 1991;
* Educational resources to mark 200 years since the first recorded discovery of Antarctica;
* World Albatross Day – supporting The Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels ([ACAP](https://www.acap.aq/)) with highlighting the importance of albatross conservation;
* Polar Guide Week – an annual five-day event of webinars, video tutorials and downloadable resources including a new pre-season checklist to enhance our support of guides preparing for their expedition season;
* An Avian Influenza Resource Centre to help communicate updated biosecurity guidance to polar guides as well as support them with communicating Avian Influenza protocols to guests.

In 2020–2021, IAATO used the pause in tourism operations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic to develop an Antarctic Ambassadorship package to support educational programs; including resources for field staff, returning guests and Antarctic enthusiasts. In May 2021, IAATO formalised its definition of an Antarctic Ambassador to be someone who:

* **L**oves and respects the region;
* **E**ducates others by sharing their Antarctic experiences;
* **A**dvocates for Antarctica when opportunities arise, and;
* **P**rotects Antarctica by making positive changes at home.

The concept behind the LEAP acronym is to empower everyone to leap into action as ambassadors, using their knowledge and passion in support of Antarctica. Tools developed to support LEAP include (Antarctic) Ambassadorship Challenge, Antarctic Ambassadorship World Map, and Antarctic Ambassadors Beach Clean-up Bingo.

The [Ambassadorship Challenge](https://iaato.org/iaato-launches-monthly-challenge-to-inspire-antarctic-ambassadorship/) is a 24-task downloadable card designed to inspire polar enthusiasts to be Antarctic Ambassadors. Ambassadorship activities have included presentations to community groups on the Antarctic Treaty and taking part in citizen science opportunities such as the [NASA Globe Cloud Observation](https://observer.globe.gov/). In addition, these tasks help educate individuals about the lifestyle changes they can make in their daily life to support the environment.

The [Antarctic Ambassadorship World Map](https://iaato.org/antarctic-ambassadors/ambassadorship-world-map/) was launched for the first international [Antarctic Ambassadorship Day](https://iaato.org/https-iaato-org-annualmeetingopens/) in 2022 to showcase Antarctic Ambassadors from around the world - including polar scientists, researchers, guides, travellers and enthusiasts - and what they have done in the name of Antarctic Ambassadorship. The map was designed as a tool to inspire would-be ambassadors by drawing examples from their peers. Entries on the map highlight where they are from and what changes they have made to their life in support of ambassadorship.

Antarctic Ambassadors [Beach Clean-up Bingo](https://iaato.org/iaato-launches-beach-clean-up-bingo-card-on-world-ocean-day/) was launched as part of the joint Clean Seas work with the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators ([AECO](https://www.aeco.no/)) on World Oceans Day 2022 (June 8). The card identifies some of the most common trash items to be found on beaches and encourages the user to pick up this trash by turning the activity into the popular game. Any trash posing a potential danger were excluded from the card. Guidance was provided to help users take part safely and responsibly as well as to make the game appropriate and accessible for youth.

At the IAATO 2023 Annual Meeting, held in Hamburg, Germany in April, IAATO’s members unanimously approved the Education & Outreach Working Group becoming the Antarctic Ambassadorship Committee. During the upcoming year, the committee will be developing further tools for individuals to understand the responsibility of ambassadorship, and educational materials to enhance the individual’s journey.