



# BEHAVING AT THE ZOO:

## The effect of uniform presence on visitor behaviour

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# HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

- The “visitor effect”
  - Negative, positive, neutral (Hosey, 2000)
- Visitor presence (numbers, noise and activity) has been shown to affect:
  - Aggression
  - Stereotypies
  - Cortisol levels
  - Activity levels
  - Self-directed behaviours
  - Vigilance
  - Breeding success

I love koalas! I'll  
How do I feel  
only use recycled  
about this?  
paper!



I don't think I like  
about this?

# HAIs AT THE ZOO

- Zoos now offer more animal encounters than ever before!!!
  - Paid experiences
  - Exhibit design
  - Walkthrough exhibits
  - Animal training
  - Shows and presentations

Cincinnati zoo gorilla shot dead as boy falls into enclosure

**Zoo Guest Crosses Cage Barrier to Take Selfie, Is Promptly Clawed by**

Zoo Visitor Climbs Into Zebra Enclosure "On A Dare"

**Lions maul zoo visitor to death and eat him after he climbed into enclosure**

Man Mauled To Death In Front Of Terrified Zoo Visitors After Jumping Into Lion Enclosure

Indonesian orangutan smokes a cigarette thrown by zoo visitor

Chinese zoo after visitors throw

TWO lions mauled a zoo visitor to death after he climbed into their enclosure at a wildlife centre in India.

**Man jumps over the tiger pen barrier at Oakland Zoo**

Baby rhino bites finger of visitor at Cincinnati Zoo

**Giraffe dies at zoo after visitor tried to give it some food**

Wild dogs kill 2-year-old boy at Pa. zoo exhibit

# BEHAVING AT THE ZOO

- Visitor behaviour
  - How do zoo visitors behave around animals in the zoo?
  - What influences their behaviour?
  - What sort of interactions are visitors trying to create?
  - Why do zoo visitors behave in these ways?
- How do we learn how to act around animals?
  - What do people know about animal behaviour?
  - Do people read the signs at the zoo?

# OBSERVER EFFECT

- What else influences the behaviour of people in public?
  - Other people!
- Reduces naughty behaviour
- BUT...
- People may also be less likely to tell someone off for their behaviour when there are plenty of other people around
  
- Potentially negative behaviours = PNBs

# BEHAVING AT THE ZOO

- Studied 5 exhibits and 1 popular area
  - Tassie devils
  - Meerkats (signage)
  - Macropod walkthrough (signage)
  - Reptile house (3 exhibits)
  - Nocturnal house (3 exhibits; signage)
  - Taronga food market (signage)
- 3 conditions – no uniform (NO), obscure uniform (UO), obvious uniform (UV)
- 4 times of day

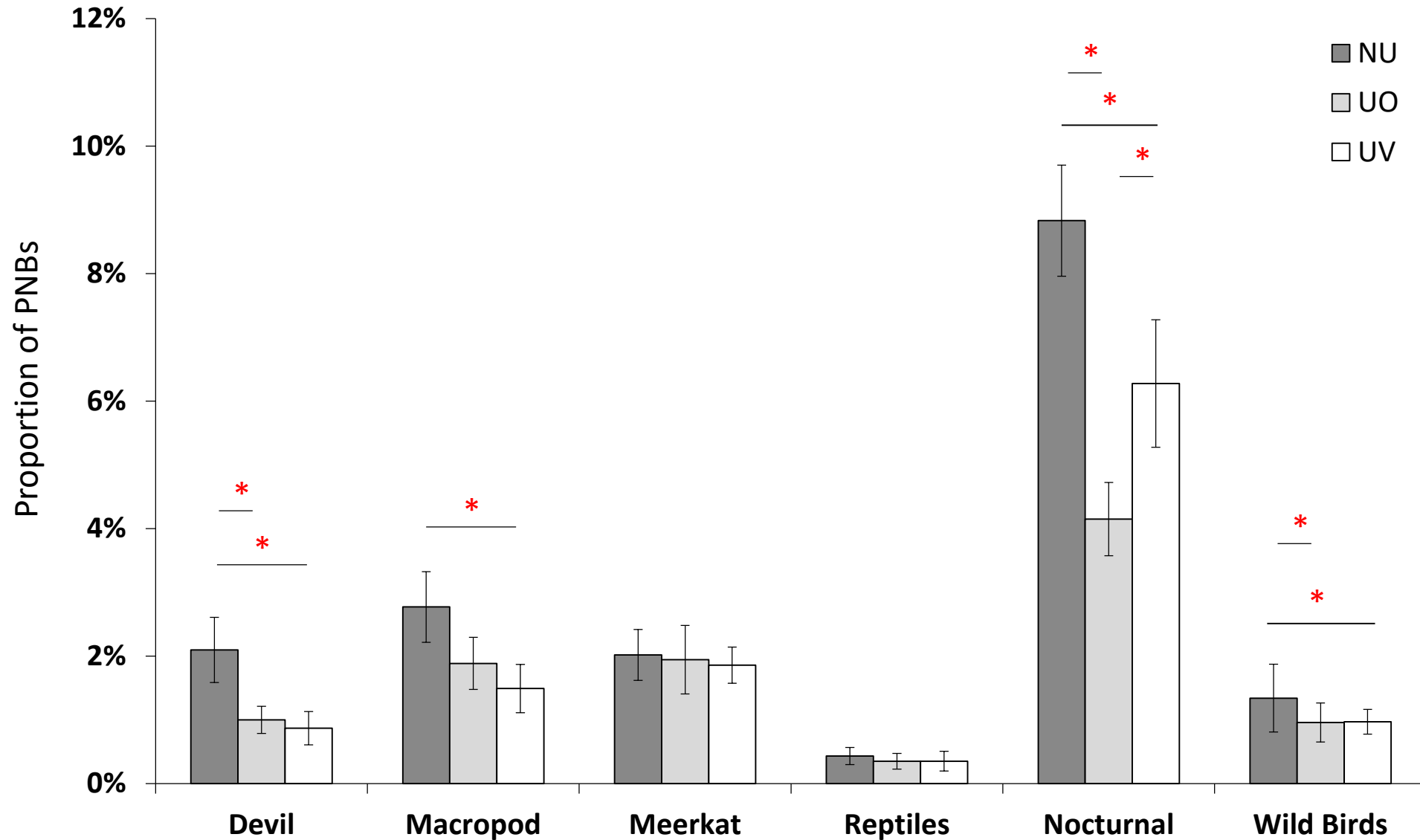
# BEHAVING AT THE ZOO

- Recorded:
  - Behaviour
  - Approx. age group
    - Under 6, 6-18, 19-29, 30-44, 45-59, 60+
  - Sex
  - English speaking?
  - Sound levels every 5 mins

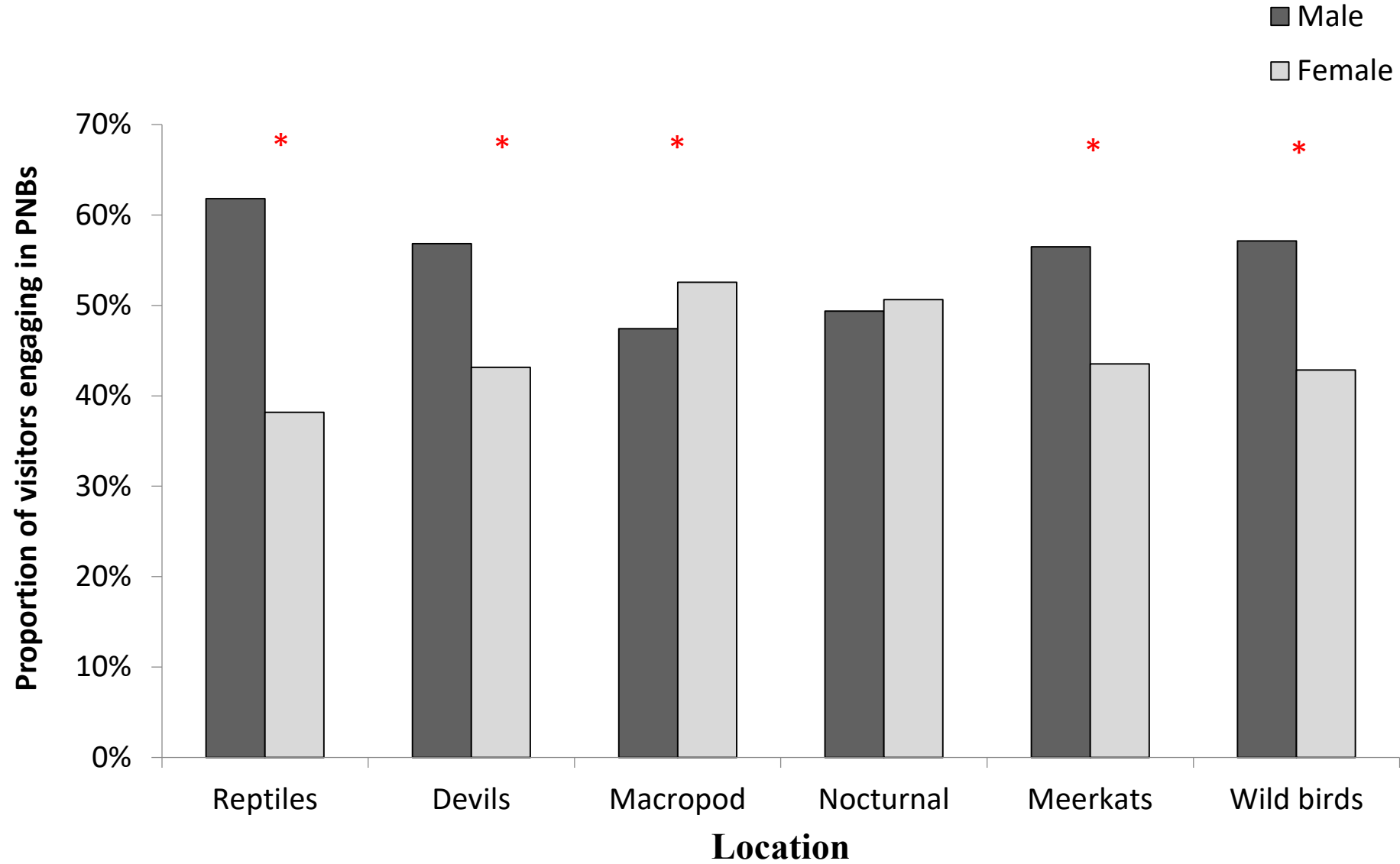
# PNBs

- Tapping on the glass **(49%)**
- Yelling at animals
- Feeding animals
- Trying to get animals to interact
- Kicking and chasing (wild birds)
- Bright lights (nocturnal house)
- Going off the path (macropod walkthrough)
- Putting a baby on a kangaroo
- Playing video of a screaming devil

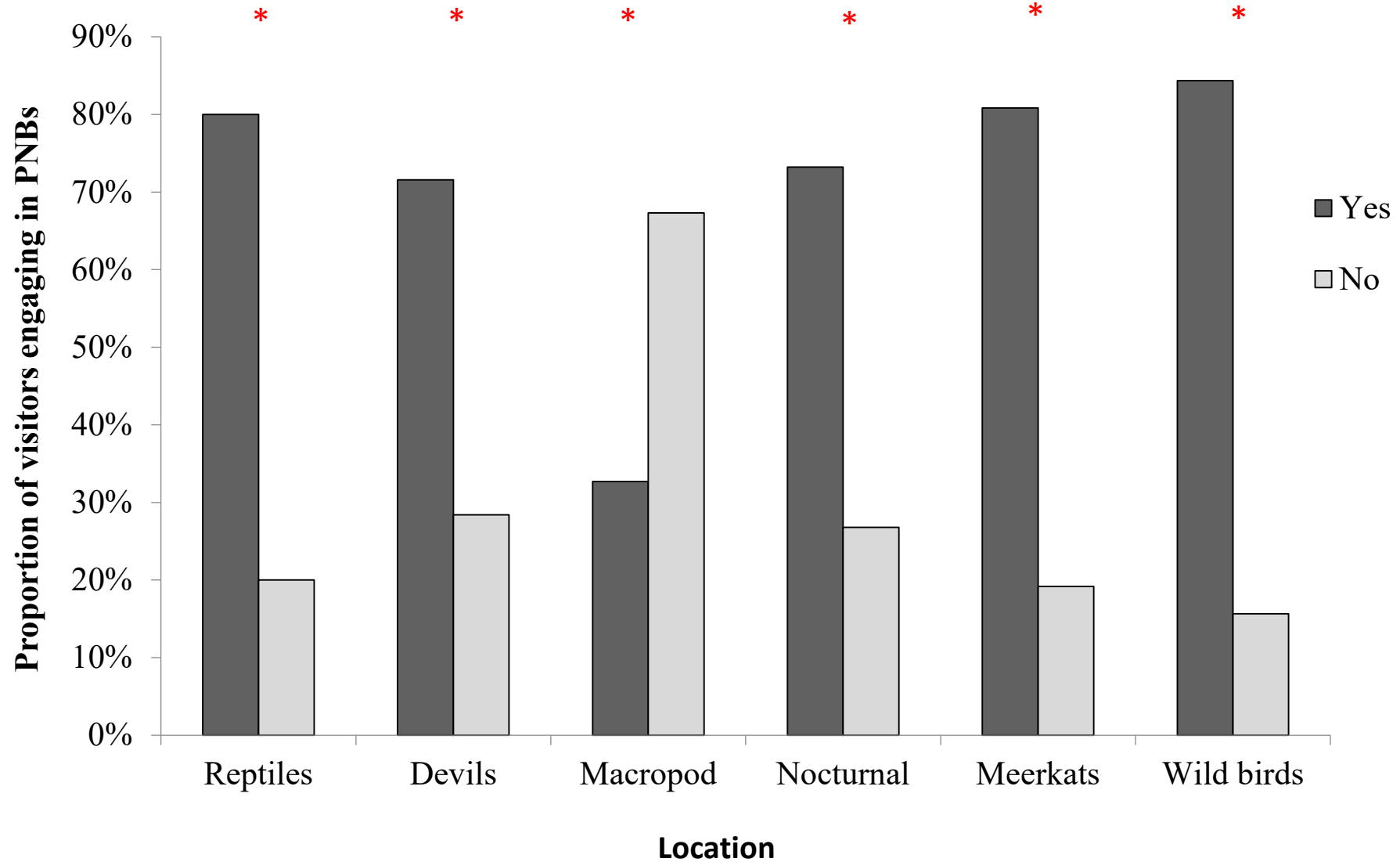
# VISITOR BEHAVIOUR



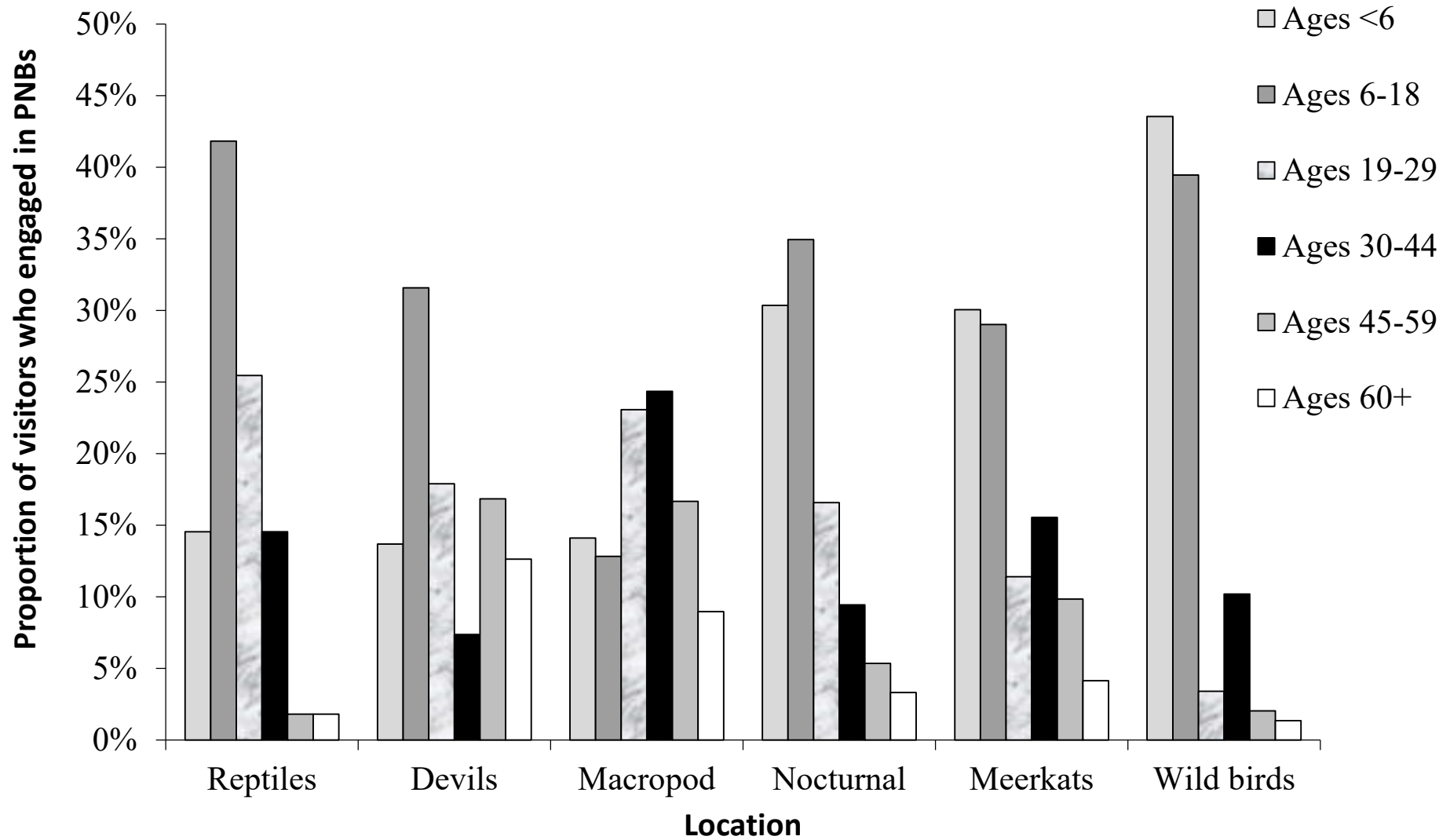
# DEMOGRAPHICS - SEX



# DEMOGRAPHICS – ENGLISH SPEAKING



# DEMOGRAPHICS – AGE



# BEHAVING AT THE ZOO

- PNBs not particularly prevalent in a large Australian zoo
- Uniform presence does work
  - Visitors may be aware that their behaviour is “undesirable”
  - But zoos can’t have a volunteer at every exhibit all the time
  - Strategic placement required
- Signs aren’t enough
- Glass is a problem
- Visitors policing visitors at the nocturnal house

# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Surveyed staff, volunteers, and zoo visitors
- To understand:
  - Which behaviours are considered problematic
  - The motivations behind the behaviours
  - Who should be policing visitor behaviour
  - If the problem is being exaggerated
- What effect do these behaviours have on the animals?

# THANK YOU!

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