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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: The Educational Role of Live Exhibits

Author(s): Not Listed.

Source: Not Listed. (1992). The Educational Role of Live Exhibits. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 5 No 10, 113 - 115.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1029>

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'The Educational Role of Live Exhibits'

25 October 1991 at Towneley Hall Art Gallery & Museums, Burnley

There were seven papers on the educational role of live exhibits.

The opening paper was given by Peter Garner, Education Adviser of Biology for Lancashire County Council Education Department. His talk emphasised the need for children to have the opportunity to visit live collections, which should include plants and animals.

The rest of the morning session included the following papers:

'Fishy Tails'

Live Exhibits and the New Curriculum. Mike Graham and David Anderson, Towneley Hall Natural History Centre.

The talk concerned the development and design of an aquarium to meet the needs of two objectives of the National Curriculum:

- (1) To show the diversity of life
- (2) To demonstrate their inter-relationships

'Of Shoals and Schools'

Living Displays and the National Curriculum. Dr Ian Wallace (standing in for Denis Murphy who unfortunately was suddenly taken ill) National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

Ian's presentation highlighted the philosophy behind the Mersey Watch Aquarium which is an annual interactive temporary display telling the story of the regeneration of the South Docks. The aquarium is based at the Maritime Museum in Albert Dock.

'Living Waters'

A New Style Aquarium Educating for the Future. Dr Gordon McGregor Reid, Keeper of Natural History, Horniman Museum.

Gordon's talk concerned the development and important educational role of the first public aquarium to be devoted solely to conservation issues and captive breeding. He also discussed the design and execution of the displays from an educational perspective.

The morning session finished with a tour 'behind the scenes' of the Natural History Centre Aquarium with Dave Anderson and Mike Graham.

After recovering from a surfeit of food and drink, the delegates reassembled in the Regency Room of Towneley Hall for the papers from the rest of the speakers, including:

'The Educational Use of a Zoo'

Brenda M Norgain, Head of Education Division, Chester Zoo.

Brenda gave a brief look at the ways in which school parties of any age range can make a zoo visit an effective, integral part of study in a wide range of subject areas in the school curriculum.

'Learning Through Birds'

Dr Mike Cotton, Education Adviser, Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve.

Mike's talk highlighted aspects of the school education programme developed by the RSPB using the birds and habitats of Leighton Moss to work towards relevant attainment targets of the National Curriculum. He used a multi-media approach utilising every piece of equipment we provided to present a very lively enthusiastic lecture.

'Education and Conservation'

Rod C Haynes, Displays Manager, The Sea Life Centre Limited, Blackpool.

Rod gave a very enlightened insight into the philosophy of the Sea Life Centre Limited's approach to education, in his own words, this is where big business meets conservation. It was a very contentious issue and he put his case across with great aplomb and conviction. The education programme at Sea Life Centre is three pronged with public talks and demonstrations, school education programmes and newly launched 'Sea Watch Programme'.

Rod's talk was deliberately left until the final session to provide the meat for a very lively discussion.

The knives were out and cynical purists amongst the delegates felt that the approach of the Sea Life Centre left a lot to be desired, especially their monetary donations and affiliation to Marine Conservation Society. Nevertheless, they do get

their message across to several million paying visitors per year.

The overall response to the seminar seemed to be enthusiastic with about 40 delegates taking part. There was a roughly even split between museum and non-museum organisations, including zoos, Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, RSPB and private aquaria, with delegates from all over the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland.

We hope to produce some, if not all, of the papers in an edition of the Journal.

Diary Dates

September 4-6

National Bat Conference, Stirling. Details from Bat Conservation Trust.

September 14-18

Museums Association Conference Plymouth, 'A sense of place, museums in the landscape.' Who can say more? Watch out for the BCG stand. Details from the MA.

September 17-20

BCG / BOU / SHNH Conference on the history of ornithology (flyer enclosed). Lat bookings accepted until August 31.

September 21

NFBR Annual Conference, Nottingham, 'Environmental Recording: Who Pays the Piper?' Booking forms from Graham Walley, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham NG8 2AE.

October 5

Problems in storage - a one day meeting organised by Glasgow Museums and including a contribution from Frank Howie on pest management. Registration fee £45. Details from Glasgow Museums, Kelvingrove, Glasgow G3 8AG.

November 19 - 20

Scottish Museums Council / Museums Association Conference, 'The Greening of Museums', Edinburgh. Yes the title is familiar isn't it? Registration fee for both days £90. Further details from SMC or the MA. Included in the programme is a paper from Giles Clarke on the "most ambitious gallery in the United Kingdom dealing with an environmental subject". Yes, its the NHM's Ecology Gallery.

BCG Spring Meeting 1993

Travelling Natural History Exhibitions - a one day meeting in Shropshire. Further details to come.

BCG AGM 1993

Inverness Museum 28 - 29 May - further details to come.

Information Wanted

John Rocke (fl. 1840-1881) of Clungunford House, Shropshire. Would anyone with information on the whereabouts of Rocke's collection of mounted birds which was removed from the house during one of the World Wars, please contact Mr Jonathan Roberts, Clungunford House, near Craven Arms, Shropshire SY7 0QL. Mr Roberts has a manuscript catalogue of the collection.

Do you recognise the following numbers written in black ink at the top of the data labels of Common Blue butterflies: 14592, 16853, 20588, 20591, 41432, 41435, 41445, 41448, 41508, 41752, 41767, 41775, 41776? Associated names are Druit and J.P. Curtis and localities include Cornwall and Ireland. If so please contact Colin Plant at the Passmore Edwards Museum.

Dr Carlos Urdiales would be interested to hear of any skins, eggs, skeletons etc. of the following species collected in Spain; Bittern, Squacco Heron, Glossy Ibis and Andalusian Hemipode. Please contact Dr Urdiales at Parcela 58-B, 21760 Matalascanas, (Huelva), Spain.