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Exhibition Event

its ability to respond to environmental changes, and so make the situation worse. Try to be aware of what current practice is, and what materials are currently preferred. In fact, if you must do something, get someone else to do (and then blame them?).

Olly Crimmen gave a talk on preparing fish skeletons, something that most of us might not give any thought to, and if we did would walk away from rapidly. He pointed out that hard information on many of the traditional conservation problems is hard to come by when it comes to fish. Very little preparation of fish skeletons is now carried out, and the traditional methods often destroy much of the valuable information by less traditional methods, X-ray examination and clearing and staining for small specimens. (The pictures were very pretty, though I don't suppose the animals themselves were too chuffed.) He also mentioned a method for preparing large specimens in the field, which allowed the return of even pretty large specimens, though it did involve having a freezer available!

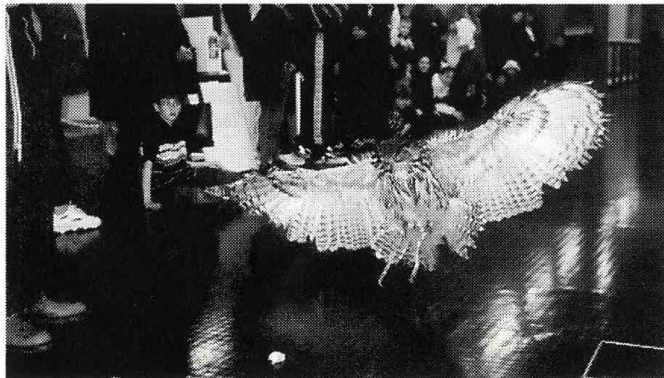
The final talk was from a firm of specialist removal experts, who had been brought in by the NHM to move some extremely large specimens, to wit, a pair of giraffes and a sperm whale, amongst others. It is difficult to describe this without the pictures, suffice to say it was a remarkable exercise, and not one for those of a nervous disposition, (unless, of course, you happen to have a dislike for giraffes!)

The afternoon was given over to tours of the various facilities at the NHM, including the fish collections and the conservation labs. Actually, the NHM does not have a conservation department, so I can only suppose that the large lab, filled with impressive looking high tech equipment, was actually a computer simulation. (I have it! The NHM has a holodeck).

Steve Thompson
Scunthorpe Museum

Live Animals in Natural History Galleries

Having just had a successful launch to Hull and East Riding museums of the new Birds of Prey temporary exhibition with live birds flying in the gallery I was wondering what similar live events other people have had in



their museums. For us the event was a terrific success, bringing in hundreds of visitors and packing out the gallery – I'm sure that live animals in museums could open many a can of worms, but has anyone else had any interesting experiences at such similar events?

To start the ball rolling our event involved seven birds in the gallery with flights every hour and a half or so. Of the birds the undoubted star was the massive Eagle owl who flew without hesitation many times up and down the gallery. Potential problems we considered were anti-hunting/animal liberationists, from birds getting bored and deciding to roost up in the beams of the museum, and the hazards of museum soundtracks with dogs barking. The gallery itself has no skylights or windows that the birds could fly into, and is about 30 metres long, although the birds could have probably flown in a 2 metre long space had they so desired.

The event itself attracted good media coverage with a considerable number of attendees reporting that they had heard about it on the local radio station Radio Humberside. Following the events success four more events for the 22nd of May, 26th June, 10th July and the 28th August were arranged. The only possible near incident was that a child had a cuddly toy that resembled all too closely a potential bird's dinner – however the bird handler noticed it before any incident could occur.

Should anyone be interested in either the exhibition on birds of prey it will be available from September as a touring exhibition, and the live birds came from the Park Rose Pottery, Bridlington.

Matt Stephens
Assistant Keeper of Natural History
Hull and East Riding Museum

