

A combination of cold weather and continuing industrial action has resulted in a disappointing use of the wildlife park by school parties during the '85-'86 winter but, nonetheless, several parties have taken useful advantage of the final months of the 'free admission' offer. Schools in West Glamorgan have been particularly fortunate to have the services of Mr Gareth Fitzpatrick as visit organiser and guide to a number of environmentally interesting sites, including Penscynor; he even arranges FREE transport, school to site. Further details of this W. Glam. service from Gareth: tel Seven Sisters 700926 or write c/o Maesmarchog School; Duffryn Ollwen; Neath.

Admission rates for parties wishing to visit after Easter: adults £1.40, children .70p, one adult free per 15 children; rates for next autumn-spring will be decided and announced later in the year.

DEVELOPEMENTS

A guide to the Educational Resources of the Neath Valley is due to be published in the next few weeks and should be distributed to all S. Wales schools in the next few weeks; this project has been made possible by the Neath Development Partnership and West Glam. Environmental Education Dept. and will give invaluable guidance to teachers wishing to visit more than one site whilst in the area.

Within the wildlife park, the most interesting development is the construction of a parrot-exhibit area which incorporates a 50x20ft covered glass-house (very useful if you have 50 children on site in typical summer weather!) and allows a variety of parrots to be compared. As these birds range from pollen eaters to seed crackers this represents a useful opportunity to look at adaptation with young children.

Equally interesting is the development of a small reptile/amphibian house, within the aquarium building; the emphasis here will be on diversity and also the provision of animals suitable for a 'hands on' experience for visitors.

Several of the primate cages have been dramatically enlarged and re-furnished; the resulting enrichment of behavioural patterns- and the greater ease with which these can be observed- makes our behaviour charts even more fun for students of all ages.

Despite our initial reluctance to risk turning a visit here into a 'ticking and colouring' exercise, we are developing work sheets covering a variety of topics. 'Animal behaviour', 'Aquatic animals', 'Shape and colour', 'Families and neighbours' are currently available, price 4p each sheet; we are happy to cover other areas on demand.

PENGUIN CLUB: this club for any wildlife enthusiast aged 8-18 continues to meet on the last Saturday of each month. Activities through the last year have included a visit to the natural history museum, Cardiff, a bird count in Penscynor, the sowing of butterfly-plant seeds as part of a national project, a day exploring marine life on the Gower peninsula, a visit to the Tondu Nature Centre and a tour of The Glamorgan Trust for Nature Conservation trail in Cwm Risca. Details from Paul Phillips at the Park.

The World Wildlife Fund NEATH VALLEY SUPPORTERS GROUP was formed in July '85 and meets monthly in the Education Centre here; guest speakers have included reptile, raptor and bat experts and other evenings have seen the showing of some superb wildlife films as well as members slides. A full programme is planned for the rest of '86 and includes guest speakers from all over Britain. A major fund raising event takes place at Penscynor on March 9th, when a Car Boot Sale will hopefully raise cash for WWF. Details from Philip Arnold, Neath 52557.

BBC SCIENCE TOPICS SOFTWARE have recently published a useful range of biology topic simulations suitable for secondary students: titles... Food and Population; Relationships; Ecology and Conservation. Write BBC Publications (Schools); PO Box 234; London SE1 3TH or 'phone 01 407 5762.

Those of you familiar with the dolphin 'Donald' who has spent so much time recently off the Pembroke coast, may be interested in an appeal for cetacean sightings from Dr PGH Evans; Secretary of Cetacean Group; c/o Edward Grey Institute; Zoology Dept; South Parks Rd; Oxford; OXI 3PS- he would like to hear from anyone who sees a whale or dolphin/porpoise in British waters.

WWF-UK and the POETRY SOCIETY competition closing date is fast approaching- 28th February; Penscynor would be interested to hear from successful schools, perhaps with a view to displaying pupils' work?

Two major conservation appeals are launched for 1986: WWF are introducing their 'Wetlands Campaign' to focus attention on, and provide help for, one of the world's most threatened habitats- excellent 80 slide+ commentary booklet available from ICCE; Greenfield House; Guiting Power; Cheltenham; Glos GL54 5TZ tel. 045 15 549; also an information leaflet 'Wetlands' from WWF-UK Education Dept; II-13 Ockford Rd; Godalming; Surrey. The second major initiative in '86 is the Royal Society for Nature Conservation's 'British Wildlife Appeal'- pack available from RSNC Brit. W. Appeal; 21 Bury St; London EC3A 5AU.

One of the most successful schools conservation award schemes is running again this year with thousands of pounds available to winning group entries from the Kodak Conservation Awards; Hesketh House; 43-45 Portman Sq; London W1H 9FG. This scheme encourages school, and other, groups to undertake practical conservation schemes and should interest anyone reading this newsheet!

A practical course 'Creating wildlife habitats on farms and gardens' is available 21-23 July and might be especially useful to leaders of groups undertaking the sort of project eligible for a Kodak award: apply The Warden; Reaseheath Outdoor Education Centre; Cheshire Coll. of Agriculture; Reaseheath; Nantwich; Cheshire CW5 6DE.