

Case Study: Beetle Boy



Outline

Beetle Boy was an event designed to engage primary schools with the Museum's entomology collections through art and children's fiction. It focused on our temporary exhibition *Microsculpture* and the children's book *Beetle Boy* by M.J. Leonard.

Background

During 2016, the Museum launched an extremely popular temporary exhibition of insect photographs taken by Levon Biss. The amazing images seemed a great opportunity to engage children with the science of entomology and link with the KS2 curriculum. After discussions with children's author M. J. Leonard it became clear that we could also link this with the Literacy curriculum.

Audiences

The project was aimed at KS2 children and teachers. It offered a resource that reflected the cross-curricular style of learning now prevalent in primary schools. The event was programmed to fall inside National Insect Week, when many other



organisations also hold events and offer activities to support entomology learning in schools. This helped us gain publicity for the event and attracted a well-known author.

Aims

We aimed to engage children with our insect collections and the science of entomology through activities based around insects as well as introducing teachers to a possible cross curricular model for doing so. At the same time we wanted to raise the profile of the *Microsculpture*

exhibition and present the Museum as an attractive and relevant place to visit, particularly to those from schools who rarely visit.

Delivery

65 pupils took part in a morning of activities based around the *Microsculpture* exhibition and the entomology collections. They were all from years 5 and 6 at two schools who visited the Museum very infrequently. The morning began with an audience with M. J. Leonard who talked about how insects had



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inspired her best-selling children's book *Beetle Boy*.

Following this the children rotated around a carousel of activities led by Education staff at the Museum. At the *Microsculpture* exhibition the children were taught about insect anatomy and encouraged to use their new knowledge to help them draw the giant insects. A separate activity involved handling live insects and learning how arthropods are classified.

A third activity explored the importance of insect ecosystem services such as pollination and nutrient recycling, which was led by an education officer in a dung beetle costume. The final activity was a teacher led trail that allowed children some free exploration of the entomology gallery to explore insect diversity.

Outcomes

The children fully engaged with, and were fascinated by the activities. Having the exhibition and involvement of the well-known author allowed us to facilitate many different avenues into teaching and learning that proved very attractive and inspirational to both children and



teachers. We have had more frequent visits from the two schools in the period since the project.

Reflection

The cross-curricular nature of the activities and links to the exhibition proved a great draw for teachers and an inspirational provocation to children's learning. It gave us food for thought for how we can encourage greater interaction with temporary exhibitions, as well as permanent collections.

“ The workshops were fantastic and the children were completely engaged...the adults, too! The children have returned with real enthusiasm, bug hunting in every area and making some incredible artwork inspired by the *Microsculpture* exhibition.
Year 6 teacher, Botley School

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