

VISITING THE -ZOO-- PART OF THE EDUCATION

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Copenhagen Zoo opened its gates to the public for the first time on the 20th September 1859, and is thus one of the world's oldest zoos.

For many years Copenhagen Zoo kept a very large stock of animals - large anyway in relation to the very small area it took up. However, in common with go-ahead zoos in other countries, the zoo has gradually adopted a policy of showing fewer species of animals, and endeavouring to keep them in conditions which are more akin to their natural surroundings. It has become obvious that a zoo's value does not necessarily lie in having a vast selection of different animals on show, but more in the "experience" of animal life as such, that it can offer to its public.

It seems more and more obvious that zoos play a vital role in society as a means of recreation, as well as being a source of educational and scientific knowledge. Just like other zoos, Copenhagen Zoo has clear aims and ideals:

- To exhibit characteristic types of animals which are suited to living under local conditions, and can be housed properly in accordance with the latest developments in zoological research and display techniques.
- To be a cultural institution with public tasks of recreational, educational and scientific nature.
- To increase the interest and understanding of the animal world.
- To take part in the international efforts to save animal species in danger of becoming extinct.

All these activities must be based on zoological research so that the zoo is the intermediary of the knowledge of nature.

Thus the zoo has reached a milestone in its history. From being an odd menagerie it has changed into an educational institution. Therefore, in 1972 the experimental department of the Copenhagen Education Authorities and the zoo initiated close collaboration in order to establish an education service for schools in the zoo.

The ZOO Education Service for Schools

In a modern industrial society like ours most children have little or no contact with nature. Many people think that the ability to react to nature is blocked if a child does not at an early age receive a stimulating milieu, i.e. gets a chance to deal with living animals and plants.

In the zoo, the children have the possibility to work with those parts of biology which are primarily necessary in that connection, viz. ecology and ethology (behavioural biology).

For this purpose the ZOO education service for schools has worked out various educational options ranging from assignments for kindergarten children to assignments for children in the 8th - 9th class. The work sheets give each individual pupil the possibility to concentrate on one specific biological problem, and to work with this subject at his own pace. The assignments help the children think in a biological manner.

Each assignment can be solved separately, but by far the majority of them are intended to be part of a greater whole, or as a chain of separate assignments which when combined cover a certain subject. In the work sheets we have tried to avoid questions which cannot immediately be answered through observations in the zoo or logical reasoning based on former observations. The assignments being based on observations of the living animals means that they can only be solved in the zoo.

All the educational material is distributed free of charge at the information office of the education service, which is near the elephant house.

The ZOO education service is available for enquiries every school day between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. for information and advice about the arrangement of teaching sequences.

If you inquire at the ZOO education centre at least two weeks before your visit you will receive a written draft with suggestions as how to arrange the teaching sequence, and references to literature, films, slides, and any other material suitable for the preparation of the visit to the Zoo.

According to previous arrangement with the teacher the staff of the education service for schools will receive the children, instruct them briefly, and give them the material relevant to the central problems in the present education system.

While the children work on their own in the zoo, the staff of the ZOO education service and the teacher discuss the assignment problems, and if he so wishes the teacher gets some material which he can use when the subjects are later discussed in the classroom.

Biological Education Service for Schools

The education services of the Zoological Garden, the Zoological Museum, and the Aquarium have initiated close co-operation about a co-ordination of the education material. This opens the possibility of studying thoroughly one specific biological subject in one or more of the institutions; so that each institution contributes to the general educational theme within the specific area in which each individual institution has its special strength.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to print copies of the delightful and stimulating worksheets sent with this paper for which the editor apologizes.

CALGARY ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Mark Hamill, Education Co-ordinator, Calgary Zoo

During the last couple of- year the Calgary Zoological Park has made a number of improvements in its services to the visiting public and school groups. Ours is a small department - numbering exactly one and we have concentrated on providing services that can be used by a large portion of our visitors.