

Discovery Group 9th April visit to Shaldon Zoo.

Zak, who is the boss came to give us a talk, in Paignton, about this Zoo a couple of months ago , and as a follow on from that we arranged to visit the Zoo.

It specialises in rare and endangered animals from the forests of South America, Madagascar, Vietnam and Java and they breed and exchange primates from these areas with other similar Zoos throughout the world.

The animals are generally small and tree climbing which you would not usually see in big Zoos.

One of the mums had just given birth and if you looked closely you could see the baby clinging to her back, and the mum is about the size of a small domestic cat and it can shoot up a branch with the baby holding on for dear life.

The animals include meerkats, loris, civets and rarer animals such as margay and bettongs. There are also tortoises, tree frogs, and a nocturnal house with a snake, which I left to braver members to see.

The cages are well built and all have excellent notices explaining the reasons for the rarity such as being hunted for fur or food.

Zak gave us an introductory talk and we followed the well built footpath round the enclosures. It is wheelchair friendly for the first half but they have not yet upgraded it all the way round so you would need to return back to the start as the second half has a lot of steps.

They are visitor friendly and the staff of 5, and the volunteers are happy to stop and help. As a charity they encourage parents and grandparents to buy experiences such as keeper for a day.

On May 22nd you can spend an evening with their poet in residence!

John Buckman

The website is www.shaldonwildlifetrust.org.uk and their phone is 01626 872234