

A Grand Day out

During three weeks towards the end of the school year the children at schools supported by La Esperanza got a special treat – excursions which included a trip to the zoo. It was a first for many of the youngsters aged between nine and fourteen years old – and a very big occasion.



Sandwich-making ahead of the grand day out

They were joined by as many as 17 volunteers and eight ayudantes or school assistants so there were plenty of adults on hand to keep an eye on those excitable children who might be tempted to stray once in a while.

It was an early start as a group of volunteers and ayudantes was needed to put together the packed lunches made up of sandwiches, fruit, biscuits and drinks for the post-excursion picnic. There were as many as 90 children on each trip so there was a lot of sandwich-making going on before the day kicked off.

The visit was been funded through a grant from the Body Shop Foundation for projects relating to the environment. The trip to the zoo was the final part of project aimed at bringing awareness to the children of the importance of protecting the habitat of native species. \$1,780 was put towards the costs of the trip and 500 students benefited from the experience.

Many of the children had never been to the zoo so it is the first time they got to see many of the zoo's inhabitants up close.

"I really liked the monkeys, the lions and the tigers," said one nine-year-old girl, "but doesn't it smell!" She exclaimed holding her nose.

The children were awestruck and it was difficult to coax them away from some creatures – particularly the reptiles such as snakes and lizards.

"Did you see the lizards fighting?" Asked one little boy who wanted to stay for round two of the stand-off between two males over a rather enticing branch.

Volunteers gave the children free rein with their cameras and the children clicked away capturing moments and fragments of their



Photo by one of the school children

favourite creatures including this python on the right.



A schoolgirl meets the parrots

But it wasn't just the reptiles and animals of the furry kind that captured their attention – there were also feathered friends to look out for – one child's roaming fingers were quickly moved away from the on-coming beak of the cheeky emu. Afterwards they needed a little encouragement to approach the parrots.

Then it was on to watch a film about the life cycle of butterflies and afterwards a chance to see them in situ in the butterfly sanctuary.



The children were dumbstruck and could barely tear themselves away from the butterflies. Some tried to take pictures of the flitting creatures, others jumped when the butterflies flew close to them.

“Our favourite part was seeing all the butterflies,” said one group of girls and boys. This view was echoed by many children on each of the outings to the zoo.

Others spoke of the importance of looking after the animals and their habitats.

Time to sit back, relax and enjoy a spot of lunch

The time flew by and then it was time to eat and the loud babble of children was silent but grinning from ear-to-ear as they chomped away on their lunch.

