

## **Dens and skeleton parts - Animal Playful Day**

By Andy Wilsdon, Visitor Team Assistant

We set up lots of prompts around the Museum - all with an animal theme. The prompts were stuck up on the gallery walls, and we helped to explain and support them. These are some of the things that happened.

### **Can you make a den for one of our animals?**

Today, visitors seem to need to be reassured that it is okay to play. There are lots of kids involved creating dens for animals and themselves. The parents started kids off making dens then let them get on with it themselves, and children take on the role of being the animal they build the den for; *"I'm an otter, I'm an otter"* comes from a child inside a cardboard box.

By the end of the day a triangular den was made for bats, a large box is for a bear, a box with egg box on is for chickens and the frog bin is for frogs to live in.

A child wearing an explorer hat arrived from the vivarium. He started making a den, and I encouraged them to take apart dens made by other kids as it seems some kids are a little cautious about taking apart dens that others have made.

### **Feed our whale**

The 'Feed our whale' prompt is a little unclear. Maybe 'make something for our whale to eat' is better as it is clear that you can make something. Apparently a visitor saw a child throwing a squid trying to get it into the whales belly, the visitor asked if that was the idea. We could make a whale mouth that you put the newspaper food into.

### **Lily pads**

This always encourages jumping. Our flat small Lily pads encourage children to jump like a frog. The Lily pads seem to help draw attention and add

interest to jumping. Children arrange lily pads to make jumping route/game.

A boy threw off backpack and shouted "I wanna play, I wanna play!" Then he said "what if this was water?" and played on lily pads like a frog.

### **Bring Maharajah the elephant to life/ What's our elephant missing?**

Parents were a little confused by the original sign but we get lots of animal parts made out of newspaper and sellotape for the elephant. I explain the playful/happy museum to interested parents. I think we need to use masking tape more as it's so much easier to tear when we don't have scissors. The prompt we put out and our questions encourage more looking and engagement with the skeleton. Parents were happy with masking tape, one said it was her daughters favourite activity in the museum today.

Some children leave parts for the elephant to use. One girl checked to see if her tail fitted. The grandmother was impressed with her granddaughter's skill at seeing something through and thought it was a good skill to have.