Hi_Tech Wild_Trek

Newsletter

December 2008

Working with you to explore local biodiversity

Hi-Tech Wild-Trek experienced it's busiest season ever in 2008. New venues were visited and regular activities maintained. As always, we very much enjoyed working with so many different people across the South of England and also from Sweden. This autumn, our website - www.5kingdoms.co.uk - has been re-designed and will attempt to provide much more information about the sites that we have visited. There is also a page showing an up to date version of our bookings diary - Venues 2009 - so if you are planning an event that you would like HTWT to attend please check this page as soon as possible and contact Richard who can "pencil you in" if you need time to confirm arrangements.

If you do not wish to receive this monthly communication direct to your inbox, please e-mail Richard and you will be removed from the mailing list. The newsletter will also appear on the 5kingdoms.co.uk website.

On the Road in 2008

One of the great pleasures of being on the road with the Hi-Tech Wild-Trek trailer is the variety of sites that we get to see. In 2008 we covered the Solent Shore, a Devon canal, Hampshire chalk streams, the Sussex Ouse, the River Kennet, heathland, marsh, town parks, Hillier's Arboretum, and more besides. New venues bring the prospect of different animals - every year has its firsts - and returning to previous locations also has its benefits as it is possible to reflect on changes that might be occurring. For example, we now have data covering 6 years for the Test Valley Borough Council reserves used by local schools. The new website will gradually become populated with information about the sites that we have visited. There is a table showing all visits that have been made over the past 5 years and eventually this will provide links to descriptions of the visit. This is no small task as there is a large mass of archive material and sites that have been visited recently will be prioritised.

We have no way of telling how many people stand in front of the Hi-Tech Wild-Trek trailer each summer, but it is obviously in the thousands. We know from our conversations that many people are experiencing facets of the living world that are totally new to them. We meet children with fantastic enthusiasm and we hope that they will go on to develop that into a thorough understanding of ecology. We also meet adults who are keen to extend their knowledge and understanding and we meet the countryside staff and the volunteers who make it all possible. What a great way to spend the summer!

Enjoy the Christmas celebrations and have a splendid New Year.

Displaying Ragworm at Weston Shore

Large Sea Spider at Pennington

Marlborough Summer School

Schools Review

2008 saw an increase in the number of school visits for Hi-Tech Wild-Trek., and with so much emphasis currently being placed on the outdoor classroom, we hope that we can be involved with even more schools in 2009. I'm sure that many of the schools we visited did not need any encouragement to make use of their grounds for learning: Halterworth, Hook-with-Warsash and Wherwell have been making excellent developments in their outdoor facilities for some time. I am aware that the use of the school grounds is very often dependent upon the enthusiasm of a particular member of staff and can stop if that staff member moves on. As we are now seeing much more training of new teachers to work outside the classroom, there should be a more enduring approach to these activities. Let's hope so. The support of parents is very important too, both in giving their backing to the teachers and to providing some practical help with habitat creation and management.

For schools such as Hitingbury Junior, Ringwood School and Crestwood College in Eastleigh there is plenty of biodiversity on site. For the Harbour School in Portsmouth we were able to sample from the foreshore of Portsmouth Harbour and at Goodworth Clatford we were looking at an excellent variety of animals that live in the River Anton. Our visit to Hankham School near Eastbourne was blessed with a little too much biodiversity as the school pond turned out to be the home of Great Crested Newts and our activities had to avoid disturbance of this protected species. A different style of visit was made to Droxford School in the Meon Valley: we spent 2 days working with small groups of children who were preparing resource material for the other pupils to use when they study the river next year.

On the Road in 2009

In the coming season we will be using our new data-logging equipment to monitor aquatic environments and keeping our batteries topped up by deploying a solar panel (weather permitting!).

2009 is filling steadily - if you are thinking of booking the trailer, please get in touch early and ask for a date to be pencilled in with no obligation.

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