

Feeding time at the zoo...

I WAS invited by First News to go to Colchester Zoo to celebrate world animal day, I took with me my sister, Alice, and my mum.

by Harriet Willmott

We had the most amazing time. We arrived in the morning to look around the zoo before being shown the reptiles and bugs in the afternoon.

Glen met us to show us around. He is in charge of reptiles and fish in the top part of the zoo. Our first job was to feed the Rhino and Iguanas. They were huge and beautifully camouflaged in their enclosure, which was made to look almost like a rocky desert and was very hot and humid. They eat weeds, greens and fruit, dusted with calcium powder to help with their diet.

Glen then took us into another very hot room which had lots of clear tanks with a huge variety of baby reptiles and bugs. Our favourite reptile in this room was the Pancake tortoise. We also met a hinge back tortoise and a beautiful Royal python called Floyd.

In the discovery part of the zoo we were able to hold Hissing cockroaches from Madagascar, I never thought that I would want to hold the cockroaches or the giant spinney stick insects but we did and I really enjoyed it, but Mum didn't.

We then met Matt who is in charge of the reptiles, giant tortoises and leaf cutter ants in the bottom part of the Zoo. The giant African spurred tortoises were so strong and large that they move around like tanks, pushing anything or anyone out of their way. They live anything from 50 to 100 years. These tortoises are the largest reptiles at Colchester.

After a short walk to prune a privet hedge we headed off to see the leaf cutter ants who have the most amazing colony at the zoo. We watched them cut the leaves that we fed them and then they carried the cut leaf with a smaller minior ant sitting on top all the way to the nest where they leave it by the entrance. Another worker ant will carry the leaf into the nest to mulch it up and, eventually, those leaves produce a fungus that the ants then eat. This fungus is only found in leaf cutter ant colonies.

Thank you to Colchester Zoo - it was fantastic!



National Geographic Reptiles goes in search of three very different members of the reptile family in this two disc DVD set out now.



Winning writer...



EARLIER this year, my grandad came round to tell me about a competition in a national newspaper. It was to help Anthony Browne write a new book, about a bear and his magic pencil. All proceeds go to a charity for children in hospital. I entered the competition by finishing the line that was given to us in the newspaper.

by Olivia Allen-Hall

I then wrote a page of the story. My story was about bear walking in the forest when suddenly a bee landed on his nose. To solve the problem bear drew some flowers to distract the bees, while he ate their mouth watering honey. Then I sent it off and had to wait a couple of months to get the results.

There were thousands of entries and ten winners which I was one of. It was very exciting. It was judged by Theo Walcott, Anthony Browne and Julia Donaldson (writer of The Gruffalo) and BAFTA-winning children's TV writer Sarah Ball.

After the phone call a photographer came to my house to take the photos for the newspaper. A few weeks later I received my Waterstones vouchers to the value of £100. I gave some to my school and kept the rest.

Then, on 2 August, I received my invite to the book launch and party. We had to travel to London on the train and went to the publisher HarperCollins. Once we got there we went inside to the reception. We were taken to a room that was set out for a party. There were sandwiches and a cake made to look like our new book. Then Anthony Browne read the story to us and he made the book come to life. It was great.

We enjoyed the party and had good fun. Anthony signed a book for us and we all received a goody bag. In it we got a bear, a signed photo from Theo Walcott and some writing materials to write our own book. What a brilliant day!



Star dance lesson!

LAST week I went to Soho Gym in London to meet Flawless and interview them about being in StreetDance 3D the movie. I was so nervous but very excited at the same time.

by Alex Lacey

They were all really nice boys when I walked in. I gave them a high five then a low five, which I thought was quite cool. They said they would teach me a new dance move which I can't wait to show off at school.

I already learn street dance at my dance school, Dancebites, so I was happy that I picked up the moves really quickly. The one move I was really happy about learning was the robot arms as I have been trying to do this for a long time and enjoyed being a member of Flawless.

They were really patient with me. I hope they didn't notice my knees were shaking a bit because I was nervous! I even took along my red hat on the day so we all looked the same while we danced. At the end of the day they all signed it for me. It's so cool!

After dancing we got down to the interview. My first question was: "How did you all become a group. Were you all friends before?" They said they have all known each other for a long time, most of them met through education, which I guess means at school!

My next question was: "Have any of you got a secret talent other than dancing?" Most of them have another talent in a sport like basketball and football. I was really curious to know how they decide what dance moves to use in each dance. They told me that it is a group effort and they all put something in. The group do a dance in StreetDance 3D and they told me that they put that dance together too.

Some of Flawless can even tap dance and do ballet as well as street dance. Finally I asked them "how it felt to be in a movie?" They were all so excited about the film and said: "Wow it was really good fun. None of us ever thought we would ever be in a movie!"

The film is great. I saw it at the cinema and Flawless were lovely and great dance teachers. I had a brilliant day!



StreetDance 3D is out now on DVD.

Check out some clips of Alex dancing with Flawless online at www.firstnews.co.uk

