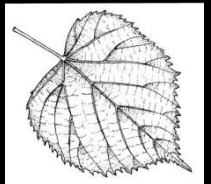


Botanic Gardens at Night

Felicity Plent & Bronwen Richards



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY
Botanic
Garden

What we're doing in this session

A clear plastic cup with a black lid, partially filled with a light-colored liquid, set against a dark background. The cup is positioned in the center of the frame, and the liquid inside is visible through the transparent plastic. The background is dark and textured, possibly a table or floor.

Welcome and getting to know you
Presentation on our after dark activities
Fun ideas for after dark events?
Group work on tailoring your activities to your audience
Feedback from group work
Review and discussion



- Twilight
- BioBlitz & Bat walks
- Young Carers camp

Botanic Gardens at Night

Twilight at the Museums



Our Twilight event in 2015

The pollinators are coming....



Planning and running the event

Free Entry. Restricted area of the Garden.

4.30pm – 8.30pm. February half term

Mostly families attending

Interpretation for a broad audience

Different mix of pollinators on each sheet

Pollinator Bingo!

Find these animals in the glasshouses and win a pollinator badge.



Sunbird

Bat



Wasp



Honey Possum



Butterfly

The Pollinators are coming for... an energy fix



Banksia plants are pollinated by tiny animals called Honey Possums that live in Australia.

Honey Possums have an extremely high metabolic rate which means they need to eat almost non-stop to fuel their tiny bodies.

Honey Possums get a lot of their food from the flowers of the Banksia plant using their specially adapted brush-tipped tongues. The flowers provide both sugar-rich nectar and protein-packed pollen.

When Honey Possums don't get quite enough food they curl up into a ball and fall into a special kind of sleep called a torpor. This helps them to save energy when they can't find enough nectar and pollen.

Right: Image of a Honey Possum sitting on a Banksia flower.



Left: A Honey Possum with a typical long-pointed snout.

To watch a short clip of a Honey Possum visiting a Banksia flower scan this QR code with your smartphone.



One way route through the Range

Volunteers at each pollinator point

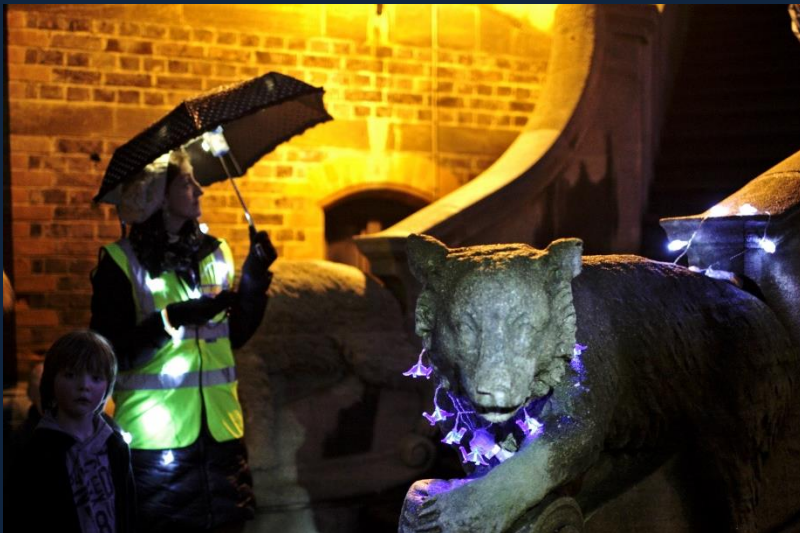
Badges as reward for completion

1500 visitors. 17 volunteers. 10 staff.

Costs around £1000 to deliver.

Evaluation

Visitor numbers
Formal Questionnaires
Observations of staff and volunteers
Images
Social media
News coverage
Accompanied visits



‘Do we get to dig here? ... no, no
you’re not meant to!’

‘Ohhhhhh a bug, cockroach on a plant
everyone!’

‘Mum, Mum!!! this is a bamboo,
trust me I felt it!’

BioBlitz



Bat walks
Amphibian surveys
Moth trapping
Badger watching
Dawn chorus.

Why is a BioBlitz worthwhile?

Our plant collections provide homes to a huge range of species.

BioBlitz helps us to increase public understanding of the role plants play and their interactions with animals

Opportunity to work with Zoology colleagues and huge range of wildlife organisations

Enriches our education programme, introduces new audiences and new experiences



BioBlitz

Batwalks – a follow up to BioBlitz

Talks led by Bat expert from NHM (Formally a PHD student here at Cambridge)

Event format 20 (Children accompanied by parents) Billed as a 'Family Bat Walk' and promoted through 'Summer at the Museums' programme. School summer holidays. August. 8pm – 10pm.

Planning Recce to decide the route we would take and find the most likely locations for seeing and hearing bats and provide safe after dark routes and assess any hazards.

Equipment Bat detectors, Torches

Results Oversubscribed. Amazing feedback.

'We loved being in the garden in the dark, the bats were just an added bonus!'



Camp-out with Young Carers



Not quite a sleepover..



Why does visiting a Garden at Night make a difference?

What happens when you use a torch to navigate?

Using torches made the Twilight experience 'child-led' because they were in control of the light source rather than their parents.

Evaluation comments...

'We thought the torchlight aspect to the evening would make it an exciting evening, and it did'

'It sounded exciting to the children, it is tough to interest them... so if shining a torch makes them look closer I'm willing to take part'

'Time and again, I come across a visitor using their torch to illuminate a [plant] and in doing so looking closer, longer and more deeply– truly seeing it in a new light. '

Why does visiting a Garden at Night make a difference?

Good for working with hard to reach audiences:

Small groups, BIG impact!

What do these sorts of audiences think about Botanic Gardens?

'What is a Botanic Garden anyway?'

'That isn't a place I'd ever think of going'

'Aren't they for people at the University?'

'Why does what they do have any relevance to me?'

Why does visiting a Garden at Night make a difference?

It changes behaviour:

Stops being just about what you see. Also about what you smell, hear and feel. People whisper, squeal and some even get completely spooked.

Evaluation comments..

'Instead of just pointing at the plants the group touches [them] and excitedly tells the group about their discoveries'

'I never knew walking on gravel was so noisy, no wonder the bats are hiding'

'Wow that smell is amazing, what is it? I want to get that plant for my garden'

What we learnt?

Some planning dos and don'ts

Always plan night time routes in the dark as well as in the day. Amazing how disorientating a pitch black 40 acre site can be even when you know it well!

Limit numbers to what you can safely manage and focus on the experience - not the numbers

Don't just think about lost children – grannies and dads get lost too

Signage, Lighting (or not?), Torches.

Volunteers. More than usual.

Glow in the dark items, you can never have too many....

What next?

- Sleepovers
- Botanical cocktails (Museums at Night)
- More nature spotting

Activity session

