



West Midland Safari and Leisure Park

Teachers' Notes

SeaQuarium – Foundation Stage

Seahorses

The children are invited to look at three animals which hold their young inside them. The Seahorse may come as a surprise, hopefully triggering interest.

The concept of camouflage is introduced and can be used to lead to a search in the Seaquarium for other camouflaged animals. The closely related Seadragons have fins amazingly like Seaweeds and there are many other strange 'hidden' animals on show to focus the children's attention.

The children could compose a story about the young Seahorses in the pictures. In some Seahorse species the young return to the pouch whenever danger threatens.

On a scientific note Seahorse pairs remain faithful to each other for the duration of the breeding season and possibly for longer. They perform complex greeting and courtship dances and, after several day's courtship, the female lays eggs by twining around the male and depositing them in the pouch on the male's belly. The male fertilises the eggs and in many species the pouch then seals up to protect the eggs. These eggs hatch in the pouch after a few days to several weeks, depending on the species, and the young are pumped out of a hole at the top of the pouch, looking like miniature adults.

Many Seahorses are collected from the wild for domestic aquaria and inevitably die because they are so difficult to keep in captivity. More are collected and sold as dried curios and for medicines. This is seriously affecting wild populations so children can be discouraged from buying these and also coral and shell collections as these can include endangered species and encourages indiscriminate collecting of live animals. There are many substitute models and pictures in various forms now available.

SeaQuarium staff are always delighted to see and display children's work!