



BARBADOS' CELEBRATION OF

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY 2012



ACTIVITY

The International Day for Biological Diversity was observed on May 22, 2012 with the theme Marine Biodiversity being the focus. The Ministry of Environment and Drainage hosted a field trip to the Folkestone Marine Park for Wesley Hall Infants School Environmental Club.

Twenty-nine students of the Environmental Club, ranging from 4 – 7 years of age, along with 4 teachers were collected from the Wesley Hall Infant School and transported to the Folkestone Marine Park, where they would begin their tour. Prior to the tour, Environmental Officer (Biodiversity), Kim Downes Agard, explained to the students the reason for the tour. She informed those who were unaware that it was International Day for Biological Diversity, and she informed them of the theme for the year. She then went on to educate the students on the meaning of 'biodiversity' and helped them to identify with the concept through the use of every-day examples. Once the members of the environmental club were made to understand the purpose of the field trip, the tour could begin.

The students, teachers and staff from the Ministry of Environment and Drainage were ushered into the Presentation Room, where they were allowed to view a video detailing the history and current function of the Folkestone Marine Park. The role of the marine park was explained and the children were given an overview of the unique regulations that governed the protected area to preserve its biological diversity.

Students then had the opportunity to view six craft-projects produced by the participants in the 2011 Folkestone Summer Camp. The tour facilitator explained the concept behind each of the projects on display, and explained to the students how each of the displays was designed to raise awareness about environmental issues unique to the Marine Park and other coastal areas.



Figure 1: Students Observing the Projects Created by Participants in 2011 Summer Camp

Two of these projects were designed by the participants in the summer camp to raise awareness of issues such as the effects sedimentary run-off and pollution of the marine eco-systems, while others showcased fishing, terrestrial and aquatic tours as well as the connection between caves and the watershed. Students of the school were encouraged to get involved in similar projects in the future and help raise awareness about the issues affecting marine ecosystems, and as a result, Marine Biodiversity.

The tour of the facilities at the Marine Park continued in the museum area, where the members of the Environmental Club were exposed to the skeletons of a number of common marine species. The students were fascinated by brain coral and fire coral, before being introduced to numerous other varieties of these plant-like

animals. They were then treated to a display of a wide variety of shells produced by numerous marine species from littoral snails to bivalves. The showcase would continue, with the creatures on display becoming less familiar to the students; exposing them to the remains of organisms such as the West Indian 'sea biscuit', sea urchins, crabs and lobsters. The tour facilitator made a special effort to explain the ecological roles of these organisms in an effort to raise the awareness of the students. Before proceeding to the next area, members of the environmental club were treated to the sight of the jaws of a shark and the rib of a whale.



Figure 2: The jaws of a shark

The students were then educated on the role of marine biodiversity, and the ecosystems that support it, throughout the history of Barbados. They were given a photographic tour of the history of Barbados in the museum area of the marine park, before being shown how humans have been utilising biodiversity through fisheries. A number of fishing methods were described, and the instruments utilised were explained before the children were educated on zones where fishing was permitted and others where it was prohibited.



Figure 3: One of the numerous aquariums on display at the marine park

After this, the students were given the opportunity to observe some examples of marine biodiversity first hand through a number of the aquariums housed within the museum area of the marine park. Common species such as jacks and sergeant majors and familiar ones like the 'sea cat' were on display, along with less familiar sights such as the moray eel, arrowhead crab and scorpion fish.

Once this was done, the children were treated to lunch and allowed to enjoy the facilities of the marine park in their own way, under the supervision of their teachers and the staff of the Ministry of Environment.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Activity was also covered by the Barbados Advocate and the article can be viewed at:

<http://www.barbadosadvocate.com/newsitem.asp?more=local&NewsID=24869>