



Cotswold Wildlife Park opens its doors for a night to remember.

Cotswold Wildlife Park quietly opened its doors for a very special evening on Friday 3rd June. For the third time, the Park hosted “Dreamnight At The Zoo” - an invitation-only event for chronically ill and disabled children and their families to exclusively enjoy the wildlife park after hours. Cotswold Wildlife Park joined over two hundred zoos and aquariums, from eleven different countries, for the global event that makes dreams come true for some truly deserving guests.

Fifty-three families were welcomed from Oxfordshire charity Helen & Douglas House, ROSY (Respite Nursing for Oxfordshire’s Sick Youngsters), SCWAD (Swindon Children Without A Diagnosis), WellChild and SpecialEffect. As well as the rare opportunity to see the animals at night (when the Park is normally closed to visitors), keepers and staff volunteered to make the evening one to remember with some unforgettable animal encounters, including Lemur, Giraffe and Penguin feeds. Their night of activities continued with train rides on the Park’s narrow-gauge railway, refreshments, face painting, herb planting with the Park’s gardeners and the chance to meet beautiful birds of prey from Cotswold Falconry Centre.

“Dreamnight At The Zoo” was the brainchild of zoo keeper Peter van der Wulp. Back in 1996, Peter went to the Director of Rotterdam Zoo with a special request. His dream was to organise a free evening out at the zoo exclusively for children with cancer. Peter wanted it to be a joyous night for the whole family to enjoy and relax, without the worry of being treated differently. “Dreamnight At The Zoo” has since become an annual worldwide event which Cotswold Wildlife Park is thrilled to be part of.



Alison Hilborne, Support Carer at SpecialEffect, said: *“For the third year running, we’ve been lucky enough to enable some of our SpecialEffect families to join this specially organised evening. It’s hard to put into words just what it means to us and to those families that are able to attend. Our aim is to enable severely disabled people to get the most out of life, and this is exactly what Cotswold Wildlife Park are doing with “Dreamnight at the Zoo” – it really is a very special evening, a unique experience creating the most wonderful, lasting memories for everyone involved. Thanks so much to Cotswold Wildlife Park for all their time, hard work and generosity in making “Dreamnight” happen - it’s hugely appreciated.”*

Event organiser, Hayley Mullaney, said: *“Our third “Dreamnight” was a huge success with lovely weather and lots of smiling faces. It gives us all at Cotswold Wildlife Park a buzz to host this special evening for lots of incredible children and their families. We love the fact that we can all come together and have fun and see parents and children relaxed and enjoying the animals encounters and entertainment. It wouldn’t be possible without the generosity of the Cotswold Wildlife Park team and other volunteers, such as Cotswold Falconry Centre for bringing their stunning birds and Fey Faces for their beautiful face painting. I can’t thank everyone enough for their help and support in hosting this event. Special thanks must go to the charity co-ordinators for helping with the guest list organisation and supporting the families they work with.”*

Additional information

- ROSY provides respite nursing for Oxfordshire’s sick youngsters. Visit <http://www.rosy.org.uk/> for more information.
- Helen & Douglas House provides hospice care for children and young adults. Their website is <http://www.helenanddouglas.org.uk/>.
- SpecialEffect is a small Oxfordshire-based charity dedicated to enabling people with disabilities to operate computers for communication and play, giving the precious gift of inclusion. Read more about the charity at <http://www.specialeffect.org.uk/>.
- SCWAD is a Swindon-based support group for parents and carers of children who have rare chromosomal or metabolic disorders or who remain undiagnosed. Find out more about their work at <http://www.scwad.org.uk/>.
- WellChild is a charity helping seriously ill children and their families across the UK. Their website is <http://www.wellchild.org.uk/>.
- Cotswold Wildlife Park would like to thank the generosity of: Lynn Spears and Fey Face, Mark Dalton and Cotswold Falconry Centre and Cotswold Wildlife Park staff volunteers who all made the event possible.

Cotswold Wildlife Park opens its doors at 10am every day[†], with last admission at 4.30pm^{††} - ENDS – For further information, please contact Debbie Ryan, Press Officer, Cotswold Wildlife Park on 07787 133837 or email ryan.debbie@gmail.com. [†]Except Christmas Day ^{††}3.30pm during winter months.

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