

The Snake

Set up

Karen took a short soft rope and decorated it with shiny paper to look like a colourful snake. It looked really good – and definitely like a snake! Karen took it up to the live animal area, and initially was positioned kneeling down by the entrance to the upper gallery of Living worlds. Initially she was moving the snake around and asking children if they wanted to "play with the snake." She then left the snake in position and stepped back and see what children and adults did with it.

Observations – over a 10 minute period

Child, around 2 years, saw snake on floor, stopped dead, took breath, looked and picked it up. Then said "it's hungry" – and took it to show a case (looking for another snake?). The child looked for parents and took snake to show it to them.

Child, around 4 years, picked up and showed everyone around him that "I'd found a snake"

One boy, aged 6 ish, stopped then kicked the rope

Girl sees snake, stops in tracks, then jumps over snake

Girl with mum, mum says "ooh, be careful there's a snake on the floor" (playful, smiling) and hops/shuffles past "lets sneak past the snake" so as not to touch it, holding girls hand, then moves off into gallery

Boy – "A snake" takes rope off out of sight into room

The snake then went missing out of sight for quite a while.... I wonder what happened next, was it found, where did it go?!

Observation of Gallery staff

Karen was really enthusiastic and pretty brave getting involved with something new and different – and she did this all on her own steam without us prompting. More seemed to happen when she took step back, and after having some initial desire to explain it and encourage interaction, she started to see that things started to happen on their own. We talked about having more snakes, and that kids – especially the younger ones – seemed to really be taken in with it. We talked about maybe thinking about where it might go, would it stay in the initial vicinity – would it matter if it got lost – what else it could be made of etc.

This idea went really well - would like to know more about what happened – this links to possible ideas about having bugs or spiders situated around the building. And also to thinking around transient or cheaply made resources that would not matter if were lost/moved around – but could last for the day or the intervention.