

Pumpkin Challenge Launches Edinburgh Zoo's Hallowe'en Programme



You may not associate them with ghosts and spirits but Edinburgh Zoo is challenging families across the country to celebrate Hallowe'en by carving creepy-crawly pumpkins as part of a spook-tacular Hallowe'en programme and exclusive family promotion.

From scuttling spiders to slithering snails and swarms of cockroaches, families who bring animal-themed carved pumpkins to the Zoo will get a free child ticket (15 years and under) with every full paying adult from Friday 27 to Monday 30 October.

A selection of the best pumpkin designs brought in by visitors will be displayed in the Zoo entrance until Hallowe'en when all pumpkins received will be composted and used by the RZSS Edinburgh Zoo Gardens team to help fertilise plants in the park in future months.

The pumpkin challenge coincides with RZSS Edinburgh Zoo being invaded by Scotland's most skin-crawling collection of insects until Sunday 29 October. Visitors can explore the limited-edition 'Creepy Crawlies Exhibition' featuring giant millipedes, crickets, beetles, stick insects, spiders, cockroaches, giant snails, spiders and a host of other weird and wonderful bugs.

The interactive exhibition will run daily from 11am – 3pm in the Budongo Trail Lecture Theatre throughout the October school holidays and is free with Zoo admission. There will be insect handling sessions throughout the day for brave

youngsters and creative craft activities.

For grown-ups who aren't keen on eight-legged friends, Edinburgh Zoo is hosting a 'Spiders: Fight Your Phobia' workshop with top clinical hypnotherapist Morag Torrance on Sunday 5 November. In the afternoon workshop, attendees will face their fears through hypnosis and the chance to meet the Zoo's most friendly spiders.

Visitors to the Zoo can also explore its newest permanent exhibition, Wee Beasties. Featuring reptiles, amphibians and exotic insects, it explores the importance and diversity of our smallest animals and the important role they play in the natural world. Favourites include the iconic Natal dwarf chameleon; blue poison arrow frog and the Zoo's Chilean rose tarantula.

Bruce Ritchie, Head of Business Operations and Visitor Experience at RZSS Edinburgh Zoo, said: *"This year we're presenting a skin-crawling Hallowe'en programme with the chance for visitors to meet Edinburgh Zoo's most weird and wonderful animals. We're challenging families to create carved pumpkins for access to our exclusive family offer."*