

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group, October 6<sup>th</sup> 2016

Dr Michael Leach: Animals Behaving Badly

Dr Leach treated us to an evening of highly amusing stories of his encounters as a renowned wildlife cameraman and photographer, yet with thought-provoking insights into animal behaviour. As a zoologist with an interest in higher mammals, he worked worldwide as a wildlife cameraman for television and Hollywood. He left us in no doubt about the arduous life – 49 hours in a tiny hide on a mountain to film a golden eagle, months of filming an elusive creature to get a few seconds of usable film – with no weekends off or holidays! He is now a successful writer of wildlife books, illustrated with his own amazing photographs.

His latest book 'Animals Behaving Badly' is, as he says, a misnomer. It is humans that make moral judgements of behaviour, animals are just extending their behaviour, trying things out in order to be more successful. Like humans, higher animals have a range of intelligence within a population, there are 'innovators' and 'copiers'. The most intelligent animals will be inventive and, if successful, others will follow. He illustrated this with a series of unforgettable images and stories – the orangutan in Borneo who created a bridge to retrieve bananas from a canoe, the young ring-tailed lemur in Madagascar who sloped off from the group to get 'high' on narcotic flower petals, and perhaps most strangely, the magpie with a penchant for poking buttercups into holes, including Dr Leach's ear!

The next Indoor Meeting is on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 7.30 pm at the Lyttelton Rooms, Church Street, Malvern. Johnny Birks' talk is 'Can we restore our native mammal predators to Britain?' Members and non-members are welcome.

Christine Seymour

Michael Leach with Japanese Snow Monkeys

