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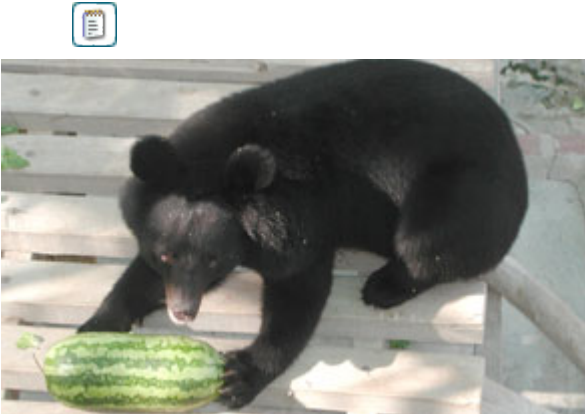
**Bear necessities**  
**By Peter Townson**

Students from the American School of Doha (ASD) visited Doha Zoo yesterday to present a new toy to Bhalou, the bear who was left in Qatar when his circus troupe returned to Europe last year.

Bhalou has been at the zoo since he was found in a supermarket carpark, and despite offers of

assistance from organisations such as the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), he has been kept in Doha at the zoo. Being a bear that was used to constant interaction and stimulation from humans, the students from 'Roots and Shoots' at the ASD decided to provide Bhalou with some entertainment, and presented the bear with a bobbin and a watermelon during their visit yesterday. Jenny Wilson, who co-ordinates the children's enrichment activities at the zoo, explained that the bobbin which was donated by a company in the US, had already been a big hit and Bhalou was still playing with his new toy two hours after he found it. "The whole watermelon was a new addition to his daily diet and it took him a while to figure out how to get into it and then gently proceeded to demolish it bit by bit with what can only be described as glee," she said, adding "it is amazing when such simple things can make such a big difference." Wilson explained that the zoo has continued to be supportive in adding enrichment for the chimpanzees, bear and elephant as part of the students' programme.

"The children from ASD and The Learning Center School have also bought two feeding nets for the elephant which will be hung in her cage to greatly increase feeding time as she tries to reach to get the hay from the net, a bit at a time, she claimed, adding "this is much more interesting than merely feeding from a pile on the ground." One ASD student at the zoo said: "At first Bhalou didn't know what that bobbin was and he was very curious." "First, he was sniffing it, rolling it around and then he even tried to pick it up with his teeth," she said, adding "he was so playful and I think it made him feel happy." "That bobbin toy will give him something to play with and keep him busy for a long time," she added.



Bhalou trying to figure it out before eating the watermelon

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Another student said: "When he saw the watermelon for the first time he didn't know what it was. Then he sniffed it and began nibbling on it and found out it was food and started to bite into it."  
"We put apples in the water and Bhalou had fun sticking his arms in the water to get that fruit just like a bear in the wild might do," he said, adding "I think all the animals would be happier with things to play with."  
"We would like to get toys for all the large cats from the same company, although those will be large balls that have holes to put in bits of dry food inside," added Wilson.

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