

## **Meet some of Woodland Park Zoo's ambassador animals! *Programs at zoo's new stage are underway***

SEATTLE- Woodland Park Zoo is excited to present its new Ambassador Animal program which takes place at the zoo's new outdoor stage, Alvord Broadleaf Theater, located behind Zoomazium. The new program is offered daily at 1:00 p.m. through September 30.



The program features a new cast of superstars also known as ambassador animals. "The role of an ambassador animal includes handling and/or training by staff or volunteers for interaction with the public and support of institutional education and conservation goals," said Rachel Salant, collection manager at Woodland Park Zoo. "Our current ambassador animal collection is a separate group of animals that are housed off exhibit and are trained and used for education programs either on grounds or off grounds. Our collection includes a raccoon, a porcupine, an opossum, guinea pigs, snakes, lizards, the raptors featured in our flight program and more."

"We have a range of animals in training which involves positive reinforcement to move around a stage and showcase voluntary, natural behaviors," said Janel Kempf, program presenter at Woodland Park Zoo. "Our animals aren't going through the training alone—their human trainers are also learning a whole new way of working with animals and engaging with visitors."

The training process is a major focus of this summer's program. "The program we're doing this summer emphasizes the shared journey of the animals and staff in building this program from the ground up," said Kempf. "We [the animals and staff] have been learning about each other, learning about the space, and now are going to be learning and growing along with the audience, who are themselves a vital part of the program just by being there in the seats!"

There are currently 17 ambassador animals featured in the program, though they will not all be seen every day. "All of the animals get days off, just like people," said Salant. The daily program runs 15-20 minutes and features up to five ambassador animals. Visitors are encouraged to attend the program throughout the summer to meet all of the animals.

Here is a sneak peek at several of the stars in the 2016 Ambassador Animal program lineup:

### **Skyáana the porcupine, female**

**Age:** 2 years old

**History:** Skyáana was born at Woodland Park Zoo; her mother is currently on exhibit at Northern Trail. She is a North American porcupine, the second largest rodent in North America behind the beaver. Skyáana is curious and strong willed, and loves exploring new places. Her favorite treats tend to vary, but generally include yam,



corn, leafeater biscuits and peanuts.

**Talent:** In the program, Skyáana showcases her climbing abilities to demonstrate how good porcupines are at climbing trees (where they go to rest).

**Fun fact:** Skyáana weighs approximately 20 pounds!



### **Flick the kookaburra, male**

**Age:** 12 years old

**History:** Flick was born at the National Aquarium in Maryland; he moved to Woodland Park Zoo in October 2015. His favorite treats tend to vary, but generally include mice, silversides (small fish), crickets and meal worms. Flick is a lone ranger; he does not like the company of other birds, but he loves the company of people which makes him a perfect bird to be an ambassador animal. Plus, he loves to participate in training sessions with his keepers!

**Talent:** In the program, Flick showcases his flying abilities and demonstrates his hunting strategies. He is trained to fly towards the sound of a referee whistle to land on someone's hand as well as land on different objects. He can catch food reinforcement from his trainers out of the air.

**Fun fact:** Kookaburras hunt as much as other kingfishers do, by perching on a convenient branch or wire and waiting patiently for prey to pass by. Their prey range in size from mice and similar-sized small mammals to venomous snakes, much longer than their bodies!



### **Lucy the raccoon, female**

**Age:** 1 year old

**History:** Lucy was wild born in northern California. She was surrendered to a rehab facility after she was found abandoned, as a baby, by someone who tried to raise her as a pet. She was too imprinted on humans to return to the wild and the rehab facility could not continue to house her so Woodland Park Zoo offered her a new home; she arrived at the zoo in December 2015. Lucy is still very young, energetic, and eager to learn and participate in training sessions. She is very curious and loves to explore every nook and cranny of her enclosure and exercise yard. Her favorite treats vary from dog kibble and raw chicken, to grapes and peanut butter.

**Talent:** Lucy will help put a personality to the raccoon, and hopefully inspire people to live alongside these beautiful and misunderstood animals. Since she arrived just a few months ago, Lucy is still in training; the goal is to incorporate her into the program by mid-summer. Currently, her favorite behavior is a "retrieve," where she picks up an object and brings it to a location with her hands. She loves to show how dexterous she is.

**Fun fact:** Lucy LOVES water; when she is not doing a training session, she can often be seen splashing in her tub or in the hose.



## **Blueberry the knobbed hornbill, female**

**Age:** 19 years old

**History:** Blueberry was born at Woodland Park Zoo. Keeper Eric Kowalczyk has been working and caring for Blueberry her entire life; she is very bonded to him. When she is not participating in programs, she lives on exhibit under Eric's care at Conservation Aviary. Her favorite treats are blueberries (naturally), blackberries, figs and other miscellaneous fruit.

**Talent:** Blueberry is a diva and absolutely loves to hang out with people. She loves to be held and have her head scratched.

**Fun fact:** A hornbill is often confused with toucans, but hornbills are not toucans. Toucans are native to South America whereas Blueberry (a knobbed hornbill) is native to Indonesia - specifically Sulawesi. They are primarily fruit eaters.

Meet a few more members of the all-star cast in this [video](#).

The Ambassador Animal program takes place every day at 1:00 p.m. through September 30 at the Alvord Broadleaf Theater behind Zoomazium. Hours through September 30: 9:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. daily. Admission fees through September 30: Adult (13-64) \$19.95; Child (3-12) \$12.25; Free for children 2 and under year round. Active, retired, and veteran U.S. military and their families, seniors and people with disabilities are eligible to receive a discount and zoo members receive free zoo admission year round. Parking: \$6.

Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, award-winning Woodland Park Zoo is famed for pioneering naturalistic exhibits and setting international standards for zoos in animal care, conservation and education programs. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet's future. For more information, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org).

###