Frequently Asked Questions About Zookeeping

1. How much would a starting zookeeper make at a zoo like Woodland Park Zoo?

In some metropolitan areas, such as Seattle, zookeepers can make $35,000 to $40,000 a year. A starting zookeeper might make between $26,000 and $30,000 a year. These salary ranges, however, vary throughout the United States depending on the size of the zoo and how the zoo is supported. Most zookeeping positions do not follow a regular Monday through Friday workweek – working days usually include weekends. At Woodland Park Zoo, zookeeping positions offer competitive benefits such as sick leave, holidays, vacation time, pension plans and medical, dental and optical plans.

2. What kind of education and/or background does a zookeeper need?

For zookeeping positions, a high school diploma is required. More zoos are now hiring zookeepers with a college degree in a natural science (biology, zoology, wildlife management, animal behavior, marine biology, exotic animal management/zookeeping). While not always required, a college degree is advantageous in the competitive field of zookeeping. However, in the zookeeping field, experience is valuable – you will find it difficult or impossible to get hired as a zookeeper without experience. Some ways to gain zookeeping experience include volunteering, doing internships or taking on seasonal or intermittent/temporary zookeeping positions. At Woodland Park Zoo, in order to be eligible for a zookeeper position, you must have two years (approximately 4,000 hours) of paid experience in an AZA (Association of Zoos & Aquariums) -accredited facility. This paid experience may include hours earned as an intermittent/temporary keeper.

Although zookeeping is not a high-paying career, nor is there as much room for advancement as there might be in a corporation, there is stiff competition for zookeeping positions. Most zookeepers have put in many years of volunteer or low-wage work before obtaining full-time, permanent zookeeper positions.

3. What is the danger of attack from animals? What do keepers do to protect themselves and prevent injuries?

It is important to remember that zoo animals, while they live in captivity, are not tame and could cause serious injury. Some zoo animals, depending on how they were raised, may be accustomed to humans. Unlike a wild animal that might flee from a person, a captive animal accustomed to humans might approach a person and could easily cause injury.

Due to safety issues, in many zoos, including Woodland Park Zoo, close contact between zoo animals and zookeepers is very limited and is strictly managed. Even with young animals, zookeepers try to avoid handraising the young, preferring to allow the parents to raise their offspring as naturally as possible. When young are raised by their parents they learn important social interactions and communication appropriate for their species. Also, parent-raised young retain a more cautious attitude towards humans, creating a safer situation for the zookeepers who work with the animals when they become adults.

Zookeepers must be constantly aware of the safety hazards of their job. They must use all of their senses to know what is going on around them at all times. Zookeepers must be very attuned to the behavior of the animals in their care and must be very observant in order to notice any physical or behavioral changes in the animals. They must also be creative, patient and have sound common sense and good problem-solving abilities. Good zookeepers are extremely dependable and responsible.
Zookeepers and other zoo staff have emergency training and are well-rehearsed in what to do in case of emergency. Some areas of zoos have emergency buttons that can be pushed if a keeper is injured or bitten by a venomous animal. It is important for keepers to be conscientious about locking locks and double-checking them.

4. **What are useful subjects to take in high school?**

As many biology and other science courses as possible would provide a good foundation. Spend some of your free time reading or using other media to learn about animals, plants and the natural world.

5. **What do zookeepers like best about their jobs?**

The personal and professional satisfaction zookeepers find in their jobs varies from person to person. For many zookeepers the satisfaction of caring for animals that represent some of the last of their species on earth and helping to conserve these species through captive management programs is the greatest reward of the job. Being instrumental in the lives of these animals and helping their species to survive is very gratifying.

For safety reasons, close contact between keepers and animals is very limited and strictly managed. However, even with limited contact, the relationships that develop between keepers and the animals they care for are often strong and can also be a rewarding aspect of the job.

6. **What do zookeepers like least about their jobs?**

Depending on the particular job and on the person, zookeepers have different likes and dislikes about their work. However, many zookeepers encounter similar conditions in their jobs that are difficult, repetitive and just not much fun. These include: working outside no matter what the weather conditions, cleaning up feces (poop), cleaning and scrubbing animal holding areas and exhibits, and preparing animal diets. These activities must be done once or twice a day, every day, and can become repetitive.

7. **How much time each day do keepers spend scooping poop? How much time each day do keepers spend feeding the animals?**

For most zookeeping positions, preparing diets for the animals and cleaning up after them can take up to 75% of each day. As previously mentioned, there is usually little to no close contact with the animals depending on what type of animals are being cared for, though keepers do spend some of their time observing the animals under their care for any indications of health problems or unusual behavior.

8. **What types of medical situations do keepers handle? What types of medical procedures do the veterinarians handle?**

The most important job for a keeper in relation to the health of the animals is to be observant. Any abnormal behavior, such as a change in eating habits, could be a sign of sickness or injury. Most wild animals do not tend to show major
signs of sickness — in the wild a sick-looking animal would be more prone to attack by other animals than would a healthy-looking animal. Therefore, zookeepers must be extremely observant in order to detect any subtle irregularities in an animal’s behavior, physical condition or routine. These irregularities can indicate that something is not quite right with the animal.

If keepers do observe abnormal behavior, they may collect urine, feces or other samples to be analyzed by the vet. These samples are also collected and analyzed on a regular basis to monitor the health of all zoo animals. When animals need long-term routine medicine, injections, rehydration, force feeding or wound care, keepers may incorporate these duties into their daily routines. The veterinary staff performs routine examination on some species; emergency and short-term care, such as stitching or surgery; and more extensive intensive care if needed. Experience with caring for sick or wounded animals can be beneficial to a zookeeper, but training in veterinary medicine is not required.

9. What are a keeper’s daily duties? What is involved in a typical day?

A zookeeper’s typical day may look something like the following; however, this would depend on what types of animals are cared for by the keeper.

8:00 a.m. - Begin the day by checking on the animals, making sure that all the animals are there and observing them for any abnormal behavior or signs of sickness or injury. Often when animals are sick, they will exhibit signs of illness in the morning.
- Prepare morning diets
- Clean outdoor enclosure while the animals are still inside
- Feed morning diets
9:30 a.m. - Shift animals to outdoor exhibit by the time the zoo opens
- Clean indoor holding areas
12:30 p.m. - Lunch
1:30 p.m. - Prepare afternoon diets
- Finish cleaning and complete other projects
- Write daily reports for each animal
4:00 p.m. - Shift animals to indoor holding areas
- Feed afternoon diets
- Observe animals for any signs of abnormal behavior or signs of sickness or injury.
4:30 p.m. - Lock up before leaving

Of course, each day is different from the next, with different projects to complete, meetings to attend, educational programs to present for zoo visitors, or unexpected events that occur. Accomplishing the daily duties often takes the majority of an eight-hour workday. Many keepers are also significantly involved in conservation projects or educational programs for which they must find time during their daily routines.
ACCOUNTING: ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE BOOKKEEPER

2001 Pay Range: $12.00-$17.00/hr

**Brief description of job/daily duties:**
- Reconcile income accounts and accounts receivable accounts monthly and correct errors found
- Collect outstanding invoices
- Assist manager with accounting questions
- Enter all deposits into accounting system
- Enter pledges and send reminders to donors

**Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:**
- Two- or four-year degree, preferably in bookkeeping/accounting
- Two years accounting experience
- Knowledge of accounting procedures and Excel program

**Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:**
Most two- or four-year colleges or universities

**Valuable skills and strengths for this position:**
- Research skills: many errors go back one or more years so you must be able to look into old files and find the information you need
- Problem-solving skills: finding errors and correcting them
- Planning skills: computer systems and organization needs are constantly changing and you need to be able to think ahead and forecast what will be needed in five years
- Attention to detail: small errors can cause big problems! You must be able to focus on the little things with each situation and follow through consistently.

**Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:**
Zoo Society office associate, accounting, human resources, membership, major gifts and development assistants, group sales, ZooStore inventory manager, education registrars, all department supervisors including zookeepers involved with grant-funded programs.

**Challenges of the job:**
Working in a constantly changing environment — new programs are continuously being created, departments are shifted, managers’ needs evolve — you must always be paying attention to details and analyzing entries.

**Rewards of the job:**
- Regular work hours (9-5, Monday-Friday)
- Sense of completion when task is finished
- Sense of accomplishment when problem is solved (it’s like winning a game or finishing a puzzle)
- Location (if you do accounting it’s much better to be at the zoo than in a stuffy office building!)

**How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:**
Manage funds for conservation programs that the Zoo Society is involved in and help collect the pledges to support these programs

**Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:**
Accountant/bookkeeper, office manager, auditor researcher
WOODLAND PARK ZOO
ZOO CAREERS FACT SHEET

EXHIBITS: MANAGER OF PLANNING AND INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS
2001 Pay Range: $24.66-$28.70/hr

Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Coordinate activities of staff and consultants involved in long range planning, exhibit and facilities planning, design and construction
• Coordinate interpretive planning and design for exhibits, interpretive research and writing. Coordinate activities of creative services team (graphic designers)
• Primary managerial job functions include planning, organizing, directing assignments, coordinating, contracting, scheduling, budgeting, conducting meetings and communicating though a variety of means

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
• Planning
• Design
• Landscape architecture
• Ecology
• Business and public administration
• Professional writing
• Organizational development
• Communication
• Law
• Marketing

Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:
Any community college or university project management program

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
• Ecological and conservation-related knowledge
• Analytical skills
• Supervisory skills
• Artistic sensibilities and understanding of design and contractual processes
• Patience and perseverance
• Communication/human relation skills
• Organizational skills
• Writing skills

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
Zoo director, capital projects manager, exhibit design supervisor, horticulturists, manager of conservation education, interpretive naturalists, project managers, contractors

Challenges of the job:
• Managing multiple, complex projects simultaneously
• Developing expertise in diverse subject areas and academic disciplines
• Respond to challenges in the areas of budget and personnel, must provide decisions and direction under time pressures
• Often required to work evenings, weekends and holidays

Rewards of the job:
• Sense of satisfaction and constant learning as a member of many multidisciplinary work teams
• Satisfaction in seeing new exhibits and other projects completed
• Helping others to accomplish the work of the zoo with high fidelity to mission
• Contributing to conservation ethic
• Helping to improve the zoo as an educational resource and nurturing the values of respect, care and hope for sustaining biodiversity

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
Results in environments and communications that reinforce the inseparable connections between the survival of wildlife species, wild places and human cultures. Provides ecologically-based exhibits in which wildlife’s reliance on natural habitat is reinforced and illustrated. Provides settings conducive to conservation education.
WOODLAND PARK ZOO
ZOO CAREERS FACT SHEET

ZOOKEEPER
2001 Pay Range: $16.50-$19.20/hr

**Brief description of job/daily duties:**
- Cleaning cages
- Diet preparation and feeding of animals
- Animal observation for medical and behavioral changes
- Record-keeping
- Animal training
- Animal health procedures
- Plant maintenance
- Sample and or data collection for research
- Giving tours and talking to the public

**Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:**
- College courses in zoology and biology
- Experience working in a veterinary clinic or volunteering at a zoo
- Experience in animal training
- Horticultural knowledge — mostly toxic versus nontoxic plants

**Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:**
Most four-year colleges offer biology and/or zoology. Also see “Schools/Training” in the “Resources” section in this packet.

**Valuable skills and strengths for this position:**
- Animal observation skills – must be able to notice very subtle changes in physical appearance or behavior
- People skills and public speaking skills
- Flexibility
- Patience
- Physically fit
- Basic knowledge of tool use and gardening
- Team-oriented
- Self-motivated
- Carpentry skills
- Research and writing skills
- Conscious of safety

**Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:**
Horticulture, maintenance, plumbers and electricians, public relations staff, education and events staff, other zookeepers and animal management staff

**Challenges of the job:**
- Finding different things and enrichment opportunities for the animals — keeping them busy and entertained nonstop takes a lot of effort.
- Sensing when there’s something wrong with an animal and trying to figure out what’s wrong is challenging.
- Training of animals and introduction of new animals to one another can be a slow and frustrating process.
- It can be difficult when animals that we care for become sick, injured or die.
- The work can sometimes be boring, dirty and tiring.

**Rewards of the job:**
- Learning more about the animals with which we work
- Having a close relationship and contact with amazing animals. It is rewarding when the animals recognize you.
- Having a physical job with a lot of time spent outdoors (not at a desk)!
- It is fun to talk to people interested in animals and to teach people about endangered species and conservation.
- It is rewarding when you know you have helped improve the lives of animals in your care.

**How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:**
Teaching people about natural behaviors, social systems and natural history of wild animals. Because of the work we do, visitors can watch animal behavior firsthand and hopefully become inspired about nature and wildlife conservation. By talking to the public we can educate them about issues affecting plants, animals and habitats and what everyone can do to help. Research we do and observations we make can be used to help animals in the wild and we are helping to breed endangered species in order to help protect animals in the wild.

**Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:**
Working in a veterinary clinic, kennel or wildlife rehabilitation center; wildlife field research; farming
Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Supervise 10-12 keepers
• Coordinate keeper schedules
• Evaluate keeper job performance
• Ensure proper animal care standards are met
• Help with special projects
• Schedule and facilitate animal shipments
• Ensure workplace is safe
• Coordinate with other zoo departments on various projects and to track work orders
• Purchase special equipment

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
All other zoo departments

Challenges of the job:
• Trying to communicate everything that keepers need to know or share with others
• Long, irregular hours
• More to do in any one day than can be done (must constantly reprioritize)

Rewards of the job:
• Opportunities to interact with, observe and manage many kinds of animals
• Working in a beautiful park
• Working with passionate and motivated staff
• Sense of belonging to a very special place

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
Managing exotic animals with the goal of having self-sustaining (zoo) populations, participating in field conservation projects, teaching people about wildlife and nature and the importance of conservation. Contributing to the body of scientific knowledge about animals — zoos research and discover things about animals that were not previously known

Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:
Supervisory positions in veterinary clinics, kennels or wildlife rehabilitation centers; wildlife field research, farming
Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Oversee various fund-raising programs to raise operational and restricted income for the zoo
• Development activities include membership, annual fund, large fund-raising auction (Jungle Party), major gifts, planned giving and capital campaign.
• Facilitate communication between the zoo and funders; create opportunities for involvement through networking with various organizations and potential funders
• Work with zoo director and the Woodland Park Zoological Society Board of Directors to determine strategies and methods for fund-raising programs.

Challenges of the job:
• Keeping priorities straight and focused toward fulfilling strategic objectives
• Fund raising in a community with many resources and competition from other worthy nonprofits
• Demonstrating the need to raise substantial sums of money on a continuous basis, for zoo operating purposes

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
• Generally five or more years of experience in the field of fund development
• Bachelor’s of arts with master’s of arts preferred

Rewards of the job:
• Securing funding for education and conservation programs
• Developing partnerships with community members who are passionate about the zoo’s mission
• Securing funding for new and improved exhibits

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
The fund raising process is building awareness and educating people about the zoo’s conservation message. Every part of this job leads to conservation.

Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:
Sales and management; other nonprofit work

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
• Commitment to mission
• Excellent people skills, including expertise in nonprofit management
• Solid organizational, writing and administration skills
• Demonstrated success in fund development

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
In addition to development staff, all other top administrators at the zoo – director, deputy director, marketing director, guest services director, capital project manager, education and conservation manager, planning and interpretive exhibits curator, grounds and facilities supervisor, etc.
EVENTS PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
2001 Salary Range for Specialist: $13.94 - $20.05/hr
2001 Salary Range for Assistant: $12.02 – $17.31/hr

Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Plan and implement medium to large scale events at the zoo including: ZooTunes, Jungle Party, Donor Club events, and Jungle Party redemption items
• Implement all marketing promotions
• Communicate with zookeepers, zoo volunteers, and other parties throughout the planning and implementation of events
• Maintain, collect, organize and distribute accurate information regarding events at the zoo
• Assist with general office administrative duties: filing, phone calls, reports, etc.

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
• Bachelor’s degree in related area or equivalent experience is required for this position
• Background in either communications, marketing or logistics is helpful
• Ability to work in an organized, flexible and efficient manner, in an environment of fast-paced work and frequent change

Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:
Any universities offering degrees in communications or marketing

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
• High energy
• Good communication skills
• Be detail-oriented
• Be able to work closely with others as a team
• Be prepared to do physical work (manual labor) which is often required in the setup of events
• Good public relations skills
• Willingness to work extended hours, including weekends

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
Work closely with a variety of people in different departments such as marketing, creative services, maintenance, catering, and visitors’ assistance

Challenges of the job:
• In the summertime, the job requires you to work long, physically-demanding hours, including on weekends.
• Flexibility is a key to success in this job. It is a challenge to coordinate multiple events on zoo grounds while accommodating the needs of keepers, horticulturists, admissions, marketing and other zoo departments.

Rewards of the job:
• Achieving success with an event – when all parties involved are pleased with the outcome
• The slow season (the wintertime) is the biggest reward of the job. During the winter you have time to catch your breath, reflect, and begin planning for next year.

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
Events help educate the public about wildlife conservation and help them learn to appreciate wildlife. Also many events raise money for the zoo, bring in gate admission or otherwise bring in funds that support conservation programs and the zoo as a whole.
WOODLAND PARK ZOO CAREERS FACT SHEET

LANDSCAPE SUPERVISOR
2001 Salary Range: $22.99–$24.95/hr

Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Supervise daily, seasonal and annual horticultural work programs at Woodland Park Zoo
• Implement programs and develop plans for new landscaping and renovation in animal exhibits
• Administrative duties related to the above

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
• A bachelor’s degree in horticulture or botany
• Experience in a public garden setting (five years)
• Experience in horticulture maintenance (five years)
• Supervisory experience (two years)

Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:
Any community college or university program in botany, horticulture or landscape architecture/design. Also see “Schools/Training” in the “Resources” section in this packet.

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
• Good communication skills
• Organizational skills
• Experience in public garden or zoo horticulture setting
• Habitat management knowledge

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
Zoo horticulturists, custodial maintenance supervisor and staff, education managers and staff, exhibits supervisor and operations manager, interpretive and exhibits manager, director, events coordinator and staff, guest service, fund managers.

Challenges of the job:
• Project planning and implementation for large scale projects
• Managing a 92-acre facility with complexity of design, plant material and topography
• Supervising 20+ people
• High demand for customer service with interaction at all levels of zoo and zoo society staff

Rewards of the job:
• This job is most rewarding after all the planning and work to see the results of the projects in new landscapes and to take satisfaction in the visitor’s enjoyment of the zoo.
• It’s rewarding to work in a place where everyone has great dedication and pride in their work.

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
Our development of natural landscapes for animal exhibits helps create a sense of immersion into real habitats and the hope is to open the visitor to conservation messages. It allows the concept that wildlife need habitat to survive. Horticulture staff members also help to educate the public by presenting educational programs. Horticulture staff members contribute to Jungle Party, the annual fundraiser, by donating their time for tours and other events.

Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:
Landscape supervision in other city departments, not-for-profit organizations, or in the private sector; landscape architect; landscaping
**WOODLAND PARK ZOO CAREERS FACT SHEET**

**COMPOST/RECYCLING COORDINATOR**

2001 Salary Range: $15.08 – $16.03/hr

**Brief description of job/daily duties:**
- Manage all aspects of Zoo Doo composting program, including composting operations, sales, marketing, research and development of new products/marketing strategies
- Coordinate and implement zoo’s recycling programs (aluminum, glass, plastics, paper, etc.)
- Tend compost demonstration and display vegetable garden in the zoo’s Family Farm

**Challenges of the job:**
- Finding the right balance between various duties and responsibilities of the position, especially in summertime when recycling workload increases dramatically
- Finding new ways to improve the sales/marketing of the compost and generate more revenue
- Creating new ways the zoo can help increase its conservation of resources

**Rewards of the job:**
- Making a positive impact on the environment
- Running a well-respected program that is popular in the local community
- Finding new and creative ways to make more money from sales of compost
- Being known, affectionately, as Dr. Doo!

**How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:**
Both the composting and recycling components of this job contribute significantly to resource conservation, which in turn benefits the environment and helps to preserve habitats that are important to wildlife conservation.

**Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:**
- Basic knowledge of composting process and recycling systems

**Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:**
- Master Composter Program through Seattle Tilth (information at (206) 633-0097 or www.seattletilth.org)
- Compost facility operator certification programs

**Valuable skills and strengths for this position:**
- Strong communication skills
- Ability to speak publicly to diverse audiences, including the media
- Good organization skills (for planning and implementing bulk sales)
- Ability to work well with a broad range of personalities from diverse backgrounds
- Ability to research and implement new projects

**Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:**
Managing commercial composting or recycling operations; sales/customer service careers; public relations

**Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:**
Work occasionally with most other positions at the zoo on various projects, but most duties are carried out independently.
WOODLAND PARK ZOO
ZOO CAREERS FACT SHEET

GARDENER
2001 Salary Range: $14.81 – $19.93/hr

**Brief description of job/daily duties:**
- Turf maintenance
- Watering
- Tree pruning
- Leaf cleanup/blowing
- Weeding
- Planting
- Greenhouse work
- Irrigation repair
- Plant propagation

**Challenges of the job:**
- Completing tasks within a time frame, especially when unexpected additional work comes up
- Making sure the plants we use in the exhibits are not toxic to the animals and those outside the exhibit are not toxic to visitors
- Potential for injury
- Yellowjackets!

**Rewards of the job:**
- Seeing the landscape grow and look better each year
- Using plants to simulate different parts of the world
- Learning

**How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:**
Using landscaped habitats to simulate other parts of the world can stimulate visitors to consider biodiversity and its value. Working with education staff to provide materials to educate visitors and presenting programs for visitors. Zoo horticulturists also work with the AZH (Association of Zoological Horticulture) to work for the preservation of endangered and threatened species of plants.

**Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:**
- Bachelor’s or higher degree in horticulture
- Practical experience
- Volunteer experience
- Pesticide license

**Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:**
Any community college or university program in botany, horticulture or landscape architecture/design. Also see “Schools/Training” in the “Resources” section in this packet.

**Valuable skills and strengths for this position:**
- Knowledge of plants and their care
- Physical health
- Knowledge of landscaping tools and equipment
- Willingness to work outdoors in any weather

**Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:**
Forest and wetland restoration, botanical garden staff, park maintenance, landscaping, plant nursery staff

**Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:**
Maintenance, zookeepers, education staff, exhibit design staff
ANNUAL FUND MANAGER
2001 Salary Range: $17.79 – $25.58/hr

Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Responsible for the oversight of all annual giving programs, which include the annual fund, membership and fund raising events.

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
• Experience in managing and implementing annual program or equivalent project management and experience.
• Bachelor’s degree

Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:
• Seattle University
• University of Washington

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
• Organization skills
• Communication skills
• Strategic thinking and planning
• Ability to excel in team environment
• Computer proficiency

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
Work with a variety of staff in different departments including marketing, events, accounting and with the director and deputy director

Challenges of the job:
• Working with volunteers

Rewards of the job:
• Being able to “see” the results of your fund-raising efforts: expansion or improvement of an exhibit, continuation of an education program that otherwise would have ended, support of a new conservation project, etc.

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
Raise funds necessary to support education and conservation projects and programs

Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:
Marketing
PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM SPECIALIST
2001 Salary Range: $19.59 – $22.80/hr

Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Develop educational materials for grades K-12
• Attend meetings focusing on the goals of the zoo, program development, program funding or a variety of other topics
• Track the funds being spent for the programs overseen
• Work with staff members on program team to assist them in meeting their goals
• Communicate with individuals or groups from other organizations to find ways we can work together to support common goals
• Teach programs of all types to students, teachers and other visitors

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
• College degree in one of the biological sciences, English or teaching
• Proficiency in computer programs such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access
• Minimum five years experience in related field

Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job: Any four year college

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
• Excellent communication skills oral and written
• Management skills
• Organizational abilities
• Basic math and finance (tracking expenses and budgeting)
• Ability to do research
• Customer service

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
Staff at all levels in all departments

Challenges of the job:
• Lots and lots of meetings
• Frequently overseeing the work of others without getting to create/present new programs or materials
• Making sure that everyone who needs to be kept informed is (and knowing who needs to be kept informed)
• Balancing many things at one time
• Personnel issues can sometimes be challenging, managing and/or working with lots of people with a wide variety of personality traits, skills and needs

Rewards of the job:
• Teaching
• Always learning new things
• Working in such a beautiful and exciting place
• Making a difference in people’s lives and for the animals, plants and habitats of the world

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
Teaching people to care about animals, love them, respect them, whatever emotion or reaction we can help cultivate may help those people to tread more lightly on the earth and work to benefit plants and animals as well as ecosystems. There are very few people in the world that do not like any animals so it is easy to use wildlife to teach people not only about the natural world but to teach many different subjects. The more exposure people have to animals the more they begin to care and want to make a difference.

Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:
Different aspects of this job relate to a variety of careers: teacher, accountant, manager, customer service
WOODLAND PARK ZOO
ZOO CAREERS FACT SHEET

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT
2001 Salary Range: $21.95 – $24.66/hr

Brief description of job/daily duties:
• Compile and analyze financial information to prepare entries to accounts to document business transactions
• Devise and implement system for general accounting
• Maintain fund-raising accounting reports
• Analyze financial information detailing assets, liabilities, and capital
• Prepare balance sheets, profit and loss statements and other reports
• Audit contracts, orders and vouchers and prepare related reports
• Conduct studies and submit recommendations for improving the organizations accounting operation
• Perform payroll transactions
• Prepare federal, state and local annual reports and tax returns

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
• Bachelor’s degree in accounting from four-year college or university
• One or two years related experience and/or training or equivalent combination of education and experience

Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:
• Any four-year college or university

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
• Language skills — read, analyze and interpret information including financial reports and legal documents. Ability to present information to management, public groups or board of directors
• Mathematical skills — ability to work with concepts such as probability and statistical inference, and fundamentals of plane and solid geometry and trigonometry. Ability to apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios and proportions to practical situations.
• Problem solving skills — ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts and draw valid conclusions. Ability to interpret a variety of technical instructions in mathematical or diagram form and deal with several abstract and concrete variables.
• Knowledge of nonprofit accounting procedures and practices
• Computer skills in Excel and other accounting software

Challenges of the job:
• Consistently challenged to find innovative technological solutions to complex logistical and procedural accounting problems

Rewards of the job:
• Consistently challenged — it never gets boring
• Working for an organization who’s mission is to help make the world a better place
• Being able to listen to CDs while working

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
The accounting department is the steward of the donors’ money and helps monitor and guide the spending of those funds. The department also contributes by improving business planning and efficiency. The result is less waste and more money for conservation.

Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:
General manager or accountant for a business or organization.
REPORTED TO WOODLAND PARK ZOO CAREERS FACT SHEET

SECURITY OFFICER


Brief description of job/daily duties:
- Ensure that animals, visitors and staff are safe
- Ensure that visitors follow safety precautions while at the zoo
- Reunite lost family members
- Perform first aid and CPR when necessary
- Handle emergency situations such as medical emergencies, drunk or violent visitors, fires or fire drills, natural disasters

Valuable qualifications (education/training) for this position:
- Law enforcement training
- Military training
- Medical training, especially Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification

Schools that offer programs that lead to employment in this job:
- Some community colleges offer EMT training
- Law Explorers program of the Boy Scouts (for students 14 and up to explore careers in law enforcement)
- Training programs through the United States military

Valuable skills and strengths for this position:
- Good people skills
- Skills in moderating and diffusing high-stress situations
- Self-defense training
- Ability to prioritize

Other zoo staff members with whom you work closely:
- Guest services staff, maintenance staff, city fire department

Challenges of the job:
- Handling multiple serious calls at once
- The variable level of stress – the stress level can go from 0-10 in a matter of seconds

Rewards of the job:
- Knowing that you’re helping people, such as finding a lost child or helping someone through a medical emergency

How this job contributes to wildlife conservation:
- Help keep the zoo safe so that visitors can learn about wildlife conservation in a secure environment

Other careers requiring similar qualifications and skills:
- Police officer, emergency medical technician (EMT)

Woodland Park Zoo security officers
CAREER CORNERS

The following excerpts from interviews with Woodland Park Zoo’s staff members come from the Career Corners column in Zoo Edition, the Education Department’s biannual teacher newsletter. More Career Corners can be found in the Teacher Newsletter section of the zoo’s Web site: www.zoo.org.

**Spring 2007**
Excerpts from an interview with Jennifer McCrary, ARAMARK food services

WPZ: What is your title, and what does your job entail?
JM: I am the General Manager of ARAMARK at Woodland Park Zoo. I am responsible for the oversight and operation of food services for visitors to the zoo. This includes daily concessions, catering and special events. I market the food services that we offer here at the zoo, and help create the menus and design for our catered events. We serve a lot of food here — it’s a big job!

WPZ: What’s the best part of your job?
JM: I like being the “boss”. That sounds funny, but as the boss, I get to make decisions that have an impact. Starting this winter all of our plastic ware — the forks, knives, spoons, cups and containers — will be made of corn husks instead of plastic. Corn husk products use a renewable resource instead of petroleum and take only 30-45 days to biodegrade. A regular plastic cup takes 2,000 years! Another important decision I made is to buy only grass-fed beef for our hamburgers and hot dogs. It’s a little more expensive than other types of beef, but it’s much better for everyone — better for the cow, better for the environment, better for the consumers. And since we served 43,400 hot dogs last year, it makes a difference!

WPZ: What did you study in school?
JM: My degree is in sociology, and my favorite subject was English. Those subjects gave me a good background for dealing with people and with a variety of situations. In high school I was pretty much involved in every extracurricular activity, from school newspaper to debate team.

WPZ: How did you prepare for this job?
JM: I started working at the zoo at one of the concession stands when I was 17 years old, and continued to work in food services during the summers throughout high school and college. My hard work and attention to detail was noticed, and it was suggested that I move to the catering department. I knew nothing about catering at the time, but I found that I liked it very much. Because I kept asking questions, I learned a lot. I made a lot of mistakes, too, but really found my calling in the service industry.

WPZ: What do you like best about your job?
JM: I like being part of people’s experience of the zoo. We have over a million visitors to the zoo every year, and most of them purchase and eat food here. It becomes a positive part of their memory of the zoo — lunch is an important part of school field trips, too! I also love coordinating the catered events that we offer, it comes very naturally to me. I love to plan the parties. You get to participate in someone’s wedding — perhaps the most important day of their lives. Last year we catered 328 events at the zoo! It’s very rewarding.

WPZ: What advice do you have for students that might like a job like yours?
JM: Get experience working in a food environment while you are in school. It’s hard work, you need to be dedicated, so you need to be sure you like doing it. Part of my success at my job is the way I got started in this business. I worked my way up, and I’ve done all of the different jobs. My staff might not always like what I tell them, but they know that I’ve done their job, and understand it.

WPZ: Why do you like your job?
JM: I’m a real foodie — I love to cook, and I love to eat in restaurants. I enjoy being part of this industry and serving people. At the same time, I love the zoo and am very passionate about having a positive impact on our environment. With this job, I get to combine both of these passions. I feel very lucky.

**Fall 2006**
Excerpts from an interview with Operations Supervisor, E.J. Hook

WPZ: What is your job title and what duties does that entail?
EJH: I am the facility operations supervisor at the zoo and that involves managing four work groups: Horticulture, Grounds Maintenance, Systems Maintenance (heating/cooling, water systems, etc.) and Pest Control. It’s all the stuff that isn’t directly working with the animals, but helps to support the animals, the zoo visitors and the staff. Systems Maintenance includes the life support systems and pools around the zoo — all the stuff that keeps the animals healthy.

WPZ: What kind of training and education do you have?
EJH: I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Landscape Horticulture and Design and an Associates’ degree in Ski Area Management (that was good for a few years as a ski bum, but I didn’t make much money!). I have other certifications, such as a pesticide license and I am certified as an irrigation auditor. I also own my own environmental consulting company. Much of what I know, I learned through experience over 28 years in the field — the school of hard knocks teaches me well, much more than books. I needed the book background to get where I am, but I needed the experience in the field to put it all into practice. I had four years of landscape experience before I went to college — it made all the difference to have practical experience first and then apply the academic knowledge to what I already knew.

WPZ: What was your first job?
EJH: My very first job was as a busboy in a restaurant when I was 14 years old.

WPZ: What’s the best part of your job?
EJH: The people I get to work with everyday!

WPZ: What are the biggest challenges of your job?
EJH: The biggest challenge is balancing the multiple needs that are out there in the zoo — the staff needs, zoo visitors’ needs, facility needs, animal needs and the aesthetic (it’s got to look right!). All those things, including safety, have to be thought of and balanced to find the one solution that meets everyone’s needs. But that’s also one of the most fun things about the job — you need to problem solve and be creative to accomplish your work.

WPZ: What do you think are some valuable skills and strengths needed for this position?
EJH: You have to work well with people, you need a good general knowledge of a lot of technical things, and you have to understand how things work and how they fit together. You need to learn from the past and anticipate the future in order to act correctly today.

WPZ: What advice do you have for kids interested in a career at a zoo?
EJH: It’s very important to go out and get your hands dirty and try to see what the career really is before you decide that’s the direction you want to go. What you might assume the job entails or what the “glamorous” parts of the job are, might be an illusion — you need to experience it to know how you actually fit with a job and if you truly enjoy it. It’s most important to enjoy the job so you can have a sense of fulfillment from it.

**Spring/Summer 2006**
Excerpts from an interview with WPZ Public Programs Supervisor, Katherine Steen

WPZ: What is your job title and what duties does that involve?
KS: I am the public programs supervisor. Public programs are free programs that are available for all zoo visitors of all ages. They include the raptor flight program, Bugs on Wheels and Reptiles on Wheels, and keeper talks, among others. I supervise the staff and volunteers that present these programs, and help to create new programs. Right now most of my time is devoted to creating programs for Zoomazium.

WPZ: How did you get this job?
KS: When I was 13, I was in Girl Scouts and I participated in a program called Wider Opportunities, through which I took a class called Wildlife Careers for Women. It was a two-week program at the Bronx Zoo that gave me the opportunity to work at a variety of zoo jobs, including zookeeping and education. At the end of the two weeks I knew I either wanted to be a zookeeper or a zoo educator. After I graduated from high school, I went to Cornell University and got my degree in Animal Science. In addition to my degree, I also got a lot of experience teaching. Experience is so important — anyone can get a degree, but you really need the experience with people.

WPZ: What are you doing to plan for Zoomazium?
KS: Right now I am collecting resources to see what we can use in programs — and it’s a lot! We will have quite a few animals that will be housed in Zoomazium that we will be able to include in programs. We also have a great collection of biofacts, which are natural objects from animals, such as bones, fur, and feathers. It’s good to include them in programs since it is often the only opportunity visitors have to touch some of our animals.

But the most important resources are the people that are involved now, and will be involved in the future. It’s been exciting to work with the design team to help to create the space, to decide what will be in the building, and what it will look like. I’ve been working with the Education Department staff to see where their interests and skills are, and to help them develop programs. I have also been recruiting a new group of volunteers to present the programs.

WPZ: What do you think is the most exciting thing about Zoomazium?
KS: It’s so new. We are the first zoo to put all of these elements together in one place, providing an unparalleled nature play space for young children. Other zoos have play spaces where children can explore nature, but we are the first to include
technology. Because of that we will be able to keep the building fresh and interesting for children (and their parents), even if they visit regularly. For example, there will be places where we will use computers and video to put pictures of animals in particular places. Because those pictures are not printed on paper and displayed on some kind of permanent fixture, they can be changed frequently. So if you come in one day and there is a squirrel nest in a tree, the next time there could be a whole family of squirrels, or an owl with eggs, or something entirely different. We have created, in essence, two mini-versions of the zoo; one for children from birth to age three, and the other for children aged four to eight, and we’ve involved children in the planning of it all.

WPZ: What advice do you have for students that might want a job like yours?

KS: Get the experience! Volunteer! It’s a great job - I get to work with animals and with people — that’s the best part. Come and visit the zoo with your family! Check out Zoomazium! It will be cool!

Fall 2005
Excerpts from an interview with WPZ Director of Conservation, Dr. Lisa Dabek

WPZ: What is your job title and what duties does that entail?

LD: I am the new Director of Conservation, and I’m still learning what my duties are! (Dr. Dabek was hired in February 2005) One task is to expand the conservation programs at Woodland Park Zoo and help continue to integrate conservation into all other aspects of the zoo, such as exhibits, education, etc. I also run the Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program, which is an international field conservation program in Papua New Guinea that is based here at the zoo.

WPZ: What type of education and previous work experience is valuable for this job?

LD: For education, a good background in science and math is important. Also, since conservation is an interdisciplinary field, you would want a background in such subjects as social science, anthropology, economics and/or political science. As far as past work experience, I did a lot of field research on animal behavior and biology. I’m a researcher and conservation biologist. It’s also important to be able to coordinate projects. I coordinate between different departments here at the zoo, as well as between the zoo and other zoos, and different conservation organizations.

WPZ: Can you describe a typical day of field research?

LD: There is no typical day! But I’ll describe a random day I had recently. We had just radio-collared two tree kangaroos in the rain forest in Papua New Guinea. The next day, we went out early in the morning with local field assistants and other members of the field team to track the animals. We hiked through the forest, trying to hear the signal. Then, when we finally found the signal, we had to search for the tree kangaroos in the trees. After we found them, we collected all relevant data, including GPS location, the species of the tree they were in, nearby plant life, etc. as well as photographing and documenting the animals and the area. Then we hiked back to the field camp. That evening we sat around a fire in a bush hut, telling stories with the local people, while eating local greens and rice. Finally, I crawled into my tent and fell asleep listening to the sounds of the cicadas.

WPZ: How do zoos play a role in conservation?

LD: Several ways. One way is that the animals here at the zoo serve as ambassadors for wild animals. Visitors and schools come to the zoo and learn about and develop an appreciation for the animals they see here. They want to help protect these animals in the wild. The zoo is a place that inspires people to take action, either internationally or right in their own backyard. Another way zoos play a role in conservation is by allowing researchers to do preliminary research on zoo animals. Researchers can learn about the biology of animals, information that is often very hard to get in the field. This gives them a baseline of knowledge that they can expand on when they go out into the field. Also, researchers can test equipment on zoo animals before putting the same equipment on animals in the wild. For example, we tested the radio-collars on the tree kangaroos here at the zoo before we put them on animals in Papua New Guinea.

WPZ: What advice do you have for kids who want to make a difference?

LD: I always say that it may seem like a small thing that each individual can do, but it adds up. Students should think about how they live in the world: what type of lunch bag do they bring to school, do they recycle what they can, what kind of plants do they plant in their garden, all the way up to what and how they study in school. They should listen to what their passion is and then study hard.

Spring 2005
Excerpts from an interview with Terry Blumer, Woodland Park ZooStore Manager
WOODLAND PARK ZOO CAREERS • 117

WPZ: What is your job title and what duties does that entail?
TB: ZooStore manager. It entails overseeing one of the zoo’s major revenue-generating businesses.
WPZ: What’s your educational background?
TB: I have a B.A. in architecture and I did my Masters work in museum studies.
WPZ: What was your first job?
TB: My very first job was bussing tables for the summer at a restaurant at a mountain resort. I was 12.
WPZ: What’s the best part of your job?
TB: Competing with people’s perceptions of what retail is and what it does, including striking the balance between encouraging consumption while encouraging conservation.
WPZ: What are the biggest challenges of your job?
TB: As far as being a manager goes, you have to have people skills for dealing with staff and customers. It’s also important to have a strong business acumen. And I’ve found that my background in anthropology and non-profit administration provides me a solid foundation for dealing with running a small business within a bureaucracy.

Fall 2004
Excerpts from an interview with Nathan Ricard, WPZ Accounting Supervisor

WPZ: What is your job title and what duties does that entail?
NR: My job title is Accounting Supervisor. I’m responsible for all the money that comes into and goes out of the zoo.
WPZ: What’s your educational background?
NR: I have a degree in Biology. I started out as an Accounting major but switched halfway through because the classes were too boring! But ever since I graduated, all my jobs have been in accounting.
WPZ: What was your first job?
NR: I had paper routes and lawn mowing jobs, but my first real job was at McDonald’s.
WPZ: What’s the best part of your job?
NR: I like knowing what’s going on with the zoo. I feel really connected with the different animal projects because my section gets to write the checks for them. I’m at the center of the information highway.
WPZ: What are the biggest challenges of your job?
NR: Having to pay attention to every tiny detail. One wrong code can mess everything up. You have to focus on what would be a trivial matter to most people.
WPZ: What skills are necessary for a job like yours?
NR: A comfort level with math. You can’t be scared of numbers and do what I’m doing. You don’t have to be trigonometry king, but you do have to be comfortable with math. Also, it helps if you love to do puzzles. You change the job into a big puzzle. When you get a right answer, you get a big rush like when you’ve solved one. Finally, for the level of detail this job takes, it helps a lot to care about what your company is doing. It would be easy to get jaded and let errors pile up. But if you really care about your company, you don’t let that happen. That’s why the zoo is the perfect place for me.

Spring 2004
An interview with Deborah Jensen, President and CEO of Woodland Park Zoo

WPZ: What is your job title and what duties does that entail?
DJ: I’m the President and CEO of the Woodland Park Zoo, which makes me the senior staff person responsible for setting zoo direction and managing day-to-day operations in conjunction with my senior staff. I answer to the Board of Directors and represent the zoo in the community. I also help make sure the zoo has the financial resources to stay strong and healthy.
WPZ: What’s your educational background?
DJ: My undergraduate degree is in Botany and I have a Ph.D. from University of California, Berkeley from the Energy and Resources Department. This is basically an environmental science program that also includes public policy and economics. The program requires you to think about the natural sciences, economics, and policy issues when trying to solve environmental problems.
WPZ: What was your first job?
DJ: When I was 19, I took a year off from college to work as a field assistant doing field research for a professor in Arizona. It was a 30-hour a week job; I rotated every other week in the field and or in the lab. I fell in love with the Sonora desert, and found that it was really fun to do field science and research. While a student in school, I did the kind of miscellaneous jobs almost every student does to get by: bookkeeping, waiting tables, etc. I think everyone spends some time in the early part of a career doing jobs just to earn money while they look for a job that
satisfies both their workplace and personal goals. There’s no straight line that takes you from school to the perfect position.

WPZ: What’s the best part of your job?

DJ: The people with whom I get to work.

WPZ: What are the biggest challenges of your job?

DJ: I think the biggest challenge is that Woodland Park Zoo is an organization going through a lot of change right now. It’s a big balancing act to keep all of the wonderful qualities the zoo’s had for the last 100 years in the middle of a lot of change. I think my challenge is to help paint a positive picture of where we could be and what we could grow into to inspire achievement of our goals. We also need to get the word out about everything we do here at the zoo. Those of us who work here every day know how much education and conservation work we do, in addition to being a fun place to go on a family outing. We have some work to do for people to come to know this other side of the zoo - the part that isn’t necessarily their first impression of the zoo.

WPZ: What advice do you have for kids who want to make a difference?

DJ: The first thing is to believe that you can make a difference and that you don’t have to wait until you’re grown up to start. Deciding you want to make a difference and then taking action is key because life really does reward action. When you start small and take on things that are doable, you learn that results are possible. Then, it’s easier to take on bigger and bigger projects. For example, one of the things we did last year at the zoo was to open the new Jaguar Cove exhibit. One of the people who helped us with the exhibit opening was an elementary school student who had decided he wanted to help our jaguar have a new home. He took all of the money he had in his piggy bank and gave it to the zoo to help pay for our jaguar’s new home. He could really understand the difference he made when he saw the new exhibit. He also taught all the kids in his class that they could get involved and make a difference too. This young man is a good example of an individual seeing a problem and then resolving to take part in the solution. Finally, you have to pick something that you really care about personally because you won’t devote the time and energy it takes unless it is something that really matters to you. But, the first step is believing you can make a difference.

Fall 2003

Excerpts from an interview with Patricia Medici, researcher with The Conservation Status of Jaguars, Pumas and Tapirs and Their Potential as Landscape Detectives for the Brazilian Atlantic Forest, one of the jaguar conservation projects supported by Woodland Park Zoo. The interview was conducted by Ryan Whitehead and Amy Brewer, two members of the zoo’s teen program, Zoo Corps.

WPZ: Where are you from and where do you live now?
PM: I was born in Sao Paulo City, Brazil, and now live in the western part of the state, about 800 km from the city.

WPZ: What languages do you speak?
PM: I speak Portuguese and some English.

WPZ: Have you ever seen a jaguar in the wild?
PM: I have spent the last six years of my life in the field doing research and I saw my first wild jaguar about two weeks ago. We were on our way to a research site when we saw a jaguar in the middle of the road about 100 or 150 meters away. We stopped to watch it for a while, and it walked away into the forest. It was really great.

WPZ: How far do you have to go each day to do your research?
PM: We drive about 50 km to the sites in the park, and then walk 1 or 2 km to the site.

WPZ: Do you know how many jaguars are in the area that you are studying?
PM: We probably have 20 or 21 individuals in the park, both spotted and black jaguars.

WPZ: What is the main purpose of your research on tapirs, and how does it relate to jaguar conservation?
PM: We have been researching both species as landscape detectives, as we say, to reveal the dispersal routes and pathways in the landscape. We found out some time ago that these animals leave the park and visit the forest fragments nearby, so we have been taking advantage of this behavior and identifying the potential land pieces to be restored as corridors.

WPZ: What has inspired you to conserve rain forests?
PM: I grew up in a small district of Sao Paulo City, very close to the coast, in the middle of the Atlantic Forest. I grew up watching the forests being logged and being destroyed so I believe that was something that really planted a seed in my heart and made me want to do this.

WPZ: What do you like most about your work?
PM: I really like the fact that I get to be in the forest every day. I feel connected to nature and to the animals.

WPZ: What is the hardest part?
PM: The hardest part, I’d have to say, is the mosquitoes and the tics. And the bot flies.

WPZ: What do you think kids should study in school to
help become a researcher and conservationist?

**PM:** I strongly believe that professors should teach more about animals, nature and the different ecosystems. With more knowledge, kids would have more questions in their minds and become eager to answer those questions, which would encourage a lot more kids to become biologists and researchers and conservationists. Another important thing is for kids to learn more languages. There is lots of information about animals and nature in other languages, and most of the kids just don’t have the chance to read that because they don’t know the language.

**WPZ:** Besides donating money, what can I do in everyday life to help jaguars survive in the wild?

**PM:** First of all, whatever you learn about tapirs, jaguars, any other animal, or about different ecosystems, you should share with your friends, and make them excited about that. It would be nice if kids all over the world had the chance to get involved with local conservation initiatives. We tend to believe that conservation is something that can only be done by researchers and scientists, but there is always something near your home that you can do to help. So you just have to go ahead and see what can be done in your neighborhood and in your city, and that would really help.

**Spring 2003**

Excerpts from an interview with Erin Sullivan, zookeeper in “Bug” World

**WPZ:** How did you first become interested in the field of entomology?

**ES:** I had a lifelong interest in bugs (so I’m told) and I was in Bug Club at San Francisco Zoo when I was a kid. In college, I majored in biology and we had a selection of required courses to choose from. I chose to take “The Behavioral Ecology of Insects” and it had everything I’d been looking for – biology, physiology, morphology, chemistry, and biochemistry plus arts. All of these are encompassed in insects and other arthropods – they’re little packets of science! I started to volunteer at the San Francisco Insect Zoo and it was a perfect match for me. In 1996 I came to WPZ to help design “Bug” World and to take care of the bugs.

**WPZ:** What are the best parts of your job?

**ES:** The best thing about my job is that it is different every day. We have a basic routine, but there is always something new and exciting going on. I also enjoy the problem-solving aspect of my job – whether it’s trying to figure out how to breed Phyllium or the best way of showing millipede legs to a child.

**Winter 2003**

Interview with Terry O’Connor, Interim Education Director
WPZ: Can you briefly describe your job here at the zoo?

TO: I manage the Education Department, which means that I am responsible for all of the education programs, both on- and off-site. Part of my role is to work with other AZA (American Zoo and Aquarium Association) institutions. This gives us an infusion of new ideas; the networking helps our programs and we can share what we are doing with others.

WPZ: How did you get involved in education here at the zoo?

TO: I have a Bachelor’s degree in zoology. I’m not an educator by training; I’m an educator by experience. I started at WPZ as a volunteer. Part of the work I did was behavioral research on snow leopards and fruit bats. But I found that as I was doing animal observations, I enjoyed interacting with visitors. The first job opportunity that came up at the zoo was in education, so my career took a different path and I’ve now been working in education for 21 years.

WPZ: What is the best part of your job?

TO: There are a lot of best parts of my job. It is very rewarding to help set an education project in motion and then watch it take off. I also love teaching – a high point for me is when I can help to train docents or be a part of a teacher training workshop. I enjoy the opportunity that I have to work with other zoos and aquariums through my work with AZA. It’s good for our zoo programs and it’s professionally and personally fulfilling for me.

The highest priority is always the animals. Their needs must be weighed against those of the grounds and animal keepers, and the aesthetics of the exhibit, all while staying within the limits of time and money, and keeping construction impacts to a minimum. The wild dog exhibit, which just opened at the zoo, includes two shallow pools. The pools have to be safe for the dogs we have now, and for puppies, should we have them in the future. The pools need to be drained and cleaned, so the keepers need easy access for daily operation. They need to be kept in good working order, so maintenance workers also need easy access. And access points need to be either aesthetically pleasing or invisible to visitors. For example, the hose and faucet that the keepers use for cleaning are easily accessible inside the fake tree stump in the middle of the water bank.

WPZ: How are you involved in AZA conservation programs?

TO: My work with AZA conservation programs is related to education, a relatively new part of what a TAG or SSP does (see the Conservation Corner in this Zoo Edition for information on TAGs and SSPs). I co-chair the AZA Bat TAG, which I’ve been involved with for 10 years. Many of our projects are related to education about bats. One of our first projects was developing an education curriculum and kit about Rodrigues fruit bats. These materials are used for every 5th grade student on Rodrigues, an island in the Indian Ocean off the east coast of Africa. In addition to the materials developed, we saw that conservation on Rodrigues needed something broader – there was a need for an environmental educator on the island. The recognition of this need led to the hiring of Mary Jane Raboude, a native Rodriguan, to conduct environmental education on the island. Mary Jane’s work is supported by contributions from AZA institutions.

After so many years of working with the Bat TAG and conservation programs for Rodrigues fruit bats, I am very excited that Woodland Park Zoo is getting Rodrigues fruit bats soon, which brings the story back home.

WPZ: What special skills do you need to work in education at the zoo?

TO: The education staff at WPZ come to the zoo with a lot of different backgrounds. Some key skills are the ability to work with people of all ages, and great communication skills. Writing is also a big part of our jobs. What I think is characteristic of people here is a love of learning – a boundless enthusiasm to learn –because to be a good teacher you have to be a good learner.

WPZ: What advice would you give to students who might want to work in education at a zoo?

TO: Learn everything you can! You might plan to obtain a background in education, life sciences or environmental interpretation. I think the best thing is to read and learn as much as you can to find out what interests you. Volunteering can also help you learn more about what you want to do. The Zoo Corps program here at the zoo is a great way to do that. It’s hard to know what you want to do unless you get to try it. Beyond that, no matter what area you want to go into, find opportunities for speaking and working with people and for writing. Come to the zoo and spend some time here! If you love being here and studying animals, plants and habitats, and are enthusiastic about sharing that love with other people, then you’ll enjoy a job as an educator in a zoo.

Fall 2002

Interview with Linda Sullivan, Project Manager

WPZ: Can you briefly describe the purpose of your job?

LS: I manage capital construction projects here at the
zoo. I enter the process once decisions have been made as to what the project is, where it should be located, and how much time and money is available. I think I’m like the driver, trying to get a van full of people from one point to another. The people on board are very creative and very committed to their vision of where we should go and how we should get there. Not all of those visions are the same – so I take each person’s input, consider the whole picture, and get everyone to get to the destination point safely (and sanely!), on time, and without running out of gas (money, time and motivation).

WPZ: What is your background?
LS: I have a degree in landscape architecture from the U.W., and a degree in journalism from the U. of Nebraska. I like to write, love plants, and have always been interested in and inspired by outdoor environments. Project management offered the opportunity to combine these and other interests. It is especially rewarding to recreate and evoke a specific natural environment.

WPZ: What are some of the challenges in managing a project at the zoo?
LS: As in any project, you need to keep the big picture in mind, be alert to differences of opinions – some of which may not be obvious – and be aware of anything that might slip through the cracks. In general, ensuring that the whole design and construction team is moving in the same direction is challenging. At the zoo, the team includes representatives from many departments including horticulture, animal management, exhibits, education, visitor services, interpretation and marketing/development. The goal is to make a new exhibit work for all of these groups and the zoo’s visitors.

The highest priority is always the animals. Their needs must be weighed against those of the grounds and animal keepers, and the aesthetics of the exhibit, all while staying within the limits of time and money, and keeping construction impacts to a minimum. The wild dog exhibit, which just opened at the zoo, includes two shallow pools. The pools have to be safe for the dogs we have now, and for puppies, should we have them in the future. The pools need to be drained and cleaned, so the keepers need easy access for daily operation. They need to be kept in good working order, so maintenance workers also need easy access. And access points need to be either aesthetically pleasing or invisible to visitors. For example, the hose and faucet that the keepers use for cleaning are easily accessible inside the fake tree stump in the middle of the water bank.

WPZ: What are some of the special skills do you need to be a project manager?
LS: Organizational skills are essential. Because I am dealing with money, a complete paper trail is imperative. I have to track expenditures, changes in design details and their subsequent expenses, and to produce project documentation with very little advance notice. There are a number of good computer applications to help with many aspects of managing a project, so computer literacy is important as well.

WPZ: What advice would you give to students who might want to be project managers?
LS: I’ve always wanted variety in my job, so I tried to develop the biggest bag of tools possible. My advice to students would be to learn as much as possible and develop as many skills as you can, so you can do many different projects, whatever looks most interesting. Learn to understand the strengths and areas of expertise of the people you work with on a project team and don’t be limited by your lack of knowledge or experience. If it is a job that really interests you, go for it!

Spring 2002
Interview with Zookeeper Eric Kowalczyk

WPZ: Have you always been interested in animals?
EK: Yes. As a child I spent a lot of time watching birds. One summer, I found a box turtle someone had dumped on a beach. I took it home and turned the whole garage into a huge box turtle habitat. My father had to park in the driveway.

WPZ: What did you study in college?
EK: I took classes I thought looked interesting, not ones that would lead directly to a specific job. I took some French, math and humanities, but mostly zoology. After graduation, I went on to WSU for my master’s degree. I did field research studying pygmy nuthatches and got a master’s in zoology.

WPZ: What was your first job with animals?
EK: My first animal jobs were both volunteer jobs at The Seattle Aquarium and in the aviary here at Woodland Park Zoo. I was hired at the zoo in 1978. I spent some time working with the giraffes, and then was assigned to the pheasantry.

WPZ: What do you like about your job?
EK: Almost every day I learn new things. I spend a lot of time cleaning and feeding, but I also get to spend time watching the birds. The more answers you get, the more questions you find. I am also the studbook keeper for five species of hornbills. This means that I manage a database that tracks all of the individual hornbills in captivity and their genetic lineage.
WPZ: Do you get involved in issues concerning wild as well as captive birds?

EK: Yes, and that’s the other thing I enjoy most about my job. Working here gives me the means to “walk the talk,” to be an advocate for wild birds, such as being active in events like International Migratory Bird Day. In May people focus on wild birds that migrate thousands of miles each year.

WPZ: Any other projects in which students could participate?

EK: They could adopt a hornbill nest. A project in Thailand allows people all over the world to adopt a hornbill nest. When you adopt a nest, a local villager is hired to protect it. Some of the villagers who are now earning money protecting the nests used to feed their families by poaching. They are held in high esteem in the village, and are teaching their children to care for the birds. This project helps both the birds and the local people. And, by protecting the birds’ habitat, the habitat of many other species is being protected also.

WPZ: What advice do you have for students who want to pursue a similar career?

EK: If you study what interests you, and find a job you love, you will always be learning. The sky’s the limit in finding ways to improve our jobs. It is up to each of us to find the ways.

WPZ: How did you get started in your career?

JB: I was a student at the University of WA, considering medical school, when conservation and ecology were beginning to be taken seriously as areas of concern and study. I’ve always had a love of nature and biology, so I chose to study botany and forestry. The forestry program was designed for park rangers and naturalists who would be working in national and state parks.

While I was in college, I volunteered for environmental organizations, teaching people about the natural world. During the summers, I was a wilderness ranger in the Wallowa Mountains of NE Oregon, maintaining trails and orienting hikers and campers. I packed in all of my botany books and lived in a 10’x12’ wall tent.

Because I worked and volunteered all through school, I knew when I graduated what I wanted to do and where to look for work, and I had the experience to get a job I wanted.

WPZ: What was your first job?

JB: After graduation, I worked part time as a teaching assistant at the U.W., and volunteered at the brand new Discovery Park. I was hired to work part time, and became one of the city’s first Park Rangers.

Creating environmental education programs in parks was difficult at that time, since the rest of the city parks were primarily community centers and playfields. A natural park like Discovery Park or Camp Long needed a very different way of thinking and planning. So I went back to school and earned a Masters degree in Public Administration. This degree helped me in writing grants and making innovative programs happen with very little money.

From Discovery Park, I went to Camp Long, and established education programs there, then I moved to the zoo. My first project at WPZ was to provide strollers for zoo visitors. Later I became Education Program Curator and then I went on to become involved in creating zoo exhibits. I’ve done a wide variety of jobs here!

WPZ: What advice do you have for students who might want to work in environmental education and exhibit design?

JB: Follow the path with heart, and as you walk, you will begin to see other things that are needed, things you can’t anticipate when you begin. I never thought I would have a desk job, wear a tie or work at a computer, but sometimes where you think you
are going is not where you end up. Be flexible and cooperative, for me that has allowed me to best serve the zoo’s overall vision and be able to share my passion for nature with other people.

SPRING 2001
Excerpts from an interview with Pat Maluy, Senior Keeper, Elephant Unit

WPZ: What kind of background education and experience do you have for your job?
Pat: I’ve always been interested in animals. When I was growing up, my father raised game birds, spotting dogs and horses. The rule was, “If you want to ride the horses, you must clean the barn.” So I did! I also kept all sorts of reptiles, and raised mice and rats for food for them.

WPZ: What is your education background?
Pat: I studied both biology and zoology, and got a lot of on the job training.

WPZ: What was your first paid job?
Pat: I worked in the animal nursery at Lion Country Safari and helped with the educational shows. My next job was as a Vet Tech in Atlanta, with a second job as an ambulance driver for the local Humane Society.

WPZ: When did you have your first experience working with elephants?
Pat: At my next job, with Zoo Atlanta. I worked primarily with carnivores, but I was also a relief keeper in the Children’s Zoo and with the elephants.

WPZ: When did you come to Woodland Park Zoo?

WPZ: What does your job consist of, normally?
Pat: Primarily, the basic care of our elephant herd and their building, but also training of both elephants and keeper staff, scheduling staff, record keeping and presenting public programs.

WPZ: And now you have five elephants to care for instead of four! How has this baby changed things?
Pat: Very much like any new baby. The routine is totally disrupted, our regular duties have expanded exponentially, and there is a lot more stress for the rest of the elephants. But this is a good thing. Our elephants need this experience to be successful socially. Our elephants have never been around a newborn elephant, so this is very new for them. This baby is also very important for captive elephant conservation. She is one of only three Asian elephants born in North America during 2000, and one died of a heart defect after only a day. If we are going to continue to keep elephants in captivity, we must be able to increase the population without taking more elephants from the wild.

WPZ: What advice would you give a student interested in working with elephants?
Pat: Get a good education. If they are interested in becoming an elephant keeper, they should study biology, zoology or zookeeping, and get animal care experience as a volunteer. There is also a training school specifically for elephant keepers in Arkansas, called Riddles Elephant and Wildlife Sanctuary (www.elephantsanctuary.org). They offer training for both experienced elephant handlers, and for interested people with no elephant experience.

But you don’t have to be a zookeeper to be involved with elephants. The field of elephant research is wide open, with a great variety of possibilities. People are just beginning to study bioacoustics, the way elephants communicate through sound, both audibly and subsonically. And to understand how many elephants there are in the wild, we need a more accurate census of individuals, and how they use their territory.

A whole new field is opening up for people with advanced knowledge of chemistry, and that is the behavioral aspects of smell and scent. When elephants meet, they spend a lot of time smelling each other. What are they learning from these smells? How do they use that knowledge? We now know that elephants exude a fluid between their toenails. This smell differs from individual to individual, and an individual’s smell can change because of stress or injury. How do these changes happen? How do they effect the behavior of other elephants? These are all great research questions.

There is so much to learn about these interesting and endangered animals – the possibilities are endless!

WINTER 2001
Excerpts from an interview with Sallie Stahl and Bea Lorimor, maintenance laborers in WPZ’s maintenance department:

WPZ: Can you give me a brief description of your daily duties?
Bea: Work starts at 6 a.m. I help assign duties if needed to the crew, unlock buildings on zoo grounds, and do lots of cleaning.
Sallie: We open up, clean buildings, keep pathways clear and do whatever comes up.
WPZ: Do you cover certain areas or the whole zoo?
Sallie: For me, it’s divided up. I cover the south end of the zoo, including the Education Center and the Family Farm.
Bea: I’m everywhere. My scheduled areas vary during the week. Sometimes I’m in Northern Trail, Australasia, Day and Night Exhibit, or the gorilla exhibits.
WPZ: What brought you to the zoo?
Sallie: Dave Wymore (who had a 30+ year career at WPZ, retiring as maintenance crew chief in 1999) was sitting at Kidd Valley, where I was working. I was sweeping near him and he asked if I wanted a job at the zoo! That was in 1985 and I was hired on as a seasonal worker.
Bea: I applied to the City of Seattle and was hired on in 1994 to do maintenance at the summer concerts part-time. From there, I was chosen from the pool of workers to do full-time maintenance.
WPZ: What do you think are some valuable skills and strengths needed for this position?
Sallie: A good attitude.
Bea: The ability to work under any kind of weather conditions since the zoo is open every day. Also, the challenge of being able to deal with a variety of situations in an efficient and safe manner.
WPZ: What are some challenges of the job?
Sallie: Worrying about the public and their safety.
Bea: Yes, the school groups and events are major factors. Also, keeping the communication lines open with all of the other departments within the zoo, so that everything runs safely and smoothly for everyone.
WPZ: What do you think are some rewards of the job?
Sallie: A good atmosphere and the positive environment. It’s a great place to work!
Bea: I love being around the animals. I also enjoy the variety of work, everything from setting up tables to cleaning up puke. Okay, maybe I could use a little less variety in my job! I’ve also been able to help out with the African Village Mural Project. The kids are great. It’s been really amazing.
WPZ: How does this job contribute to wildlife conservation?
Sallie: Keeping up the grounds, keeping things clean and healthy for the animals and the people, and keeping this a safe environment to visit and work in. Also, we work hard at recycling.
Bea: The City of Seattle is also moving towards using detergents and cleaners that are more environmentally-friendly. We also make sure there’s proper disposal of wastewater and that the paper towels we use are made from recycled paper.
WPZ: Looking at the big picture, without maintenance laborers like you, the zoo would not be able to function as a facility for education, conservation and recreation.
Sallie: That’s true! I never really thought of it that way.

FALL 2000
Excerpts from interview with WPZ’s Compost Coordinator, Ollie McIntyre:
WPZ: Ollie McIntyre, what is your official job title here at Woodland Park Zoo?
Ollie: I am the zoo’s compost coordinator, but I’m also known as Dr. Doo, the Prince of Poo, and my favorite, the #1 of #2!
WPZ: What do all those job titles involve?
Ollie: I run the Zoo Doo composting program, the zoo recycling program and the vegetable garden at the Family Farm.
WPZ: How did you get into this line of work?
Ollie: Before I came here, I worked for the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in the coordinating center of a cancer prevention study. Towards the end of the study, I started looking for a change of pace. I wanted a more active job where I could be outdoors more. I saw an ad in the paper for the job of Zoo Doo coordinator here at the zoo. It sounded really interesting so I applied, and went to the library to study up on composting.
WPZ: What advice would you give to kids who want to follow in your footsteps?
Ollie: Wear boots! Seriously though, I would tell them to keep your options open. Figure out what you’re really interested in and how you want to spend your days. Think about what kind of environment you’d like to be in. When you hear about something that sounds interesting and fun, go for it!
WPZ: Why is recycling important?
Ollie: Recyling keeps our waste from taking up lots of space in a landfill and creating lots of environmental problems. We can reuse the material, save money and save resources. Composting is nature’s recycling program. Animal waste is an organic material that will naturally break down. What we do at the zoo is create the best possible environment for composting to occur.
WPZ: What’s your least favorite part of the job?
Ollie: When people don’t separate their recyclables! Sometimes I even find dirty diapers in the recycle bins.
WPZ: What’s your favorite part of the job?
Ollie: I love the huge impact we have on the environment. By composting Zoo Doo, we save
600 tons of waste from going to the landfills every year. We also save a lot of money in disposal costs. If we didn’t compost, the zoo would have to pay $50,000 - $60,000 every year in disposal costs alone. And by selling Zoo Doo to the public, we offset our operational costs. But the most rewarding part is the environmental benefit and resource conservation: we’re saving the world one poop at a time!

WPZ: Very clever! Any parting words?
Ollie: Woodland Park Zoo Doo — it’s not just compost, it’s a movement!

SPRING 2000
Excerpts from interview with WPZ’s Associate Veterinarian Dr. Darin Collins:

WPZ: When did you know that you wanted to be a veterinarian?
Dr. Darin: From the beginning, first and second grade. I always liked animals. I used to watch Disney and Wild Kingdom with Marlin Perkins. I’ve always liked science.

WPZ: What kind of education and training do you have?
Dr. Darin: I took a lot of advanced science classes: calculus, physics, physiology and chemistry. I majored in chemistry and biology at the University of Illinois, where I also went to veterinary school. I was at the University of Illinois for nine years. After graduating I worked in emergency care and continued to focus on exotic animal species. While working as a veterinarian in Colorado, I also volunteered at the Denver Zoo and then at the Shedd Aquarium and Lincoln Park Zoo when I lived in Chicago.

WPZ: What is the best part of your job?
Dr. Darin: Variety! I like getting to work with all the different species of animals. It’s also very exciting working with consultants, all kinds of doctors in the community that volunteer their time to care for the animals. I get to work with veterinarians from all over the world. I’ve been able to travel to Malaysia and Indonesia where I’ve trained veterinarians. I like the research and writing. I use the Internet and talk to other vets to get information. For example: Woodland Park Zoo is getting Komodo dragons this year and I had to ask other professionals about their diet and other health issues. I’m always learning.

WPZ: What challenges are involved in your job?
Dr. Darin: You have to understand the behavior and the natural history of the animal you’re working with when evaluating their health. For example, a tree kangaroo with a sore leg still needs to exhibit natural behaviors and must climb in order to be comfortable. That means we have to keep the animal somewhere where it can climb while we are treating the injury. Another challenge is staying current in all areas of veterinary medicine because we’re learning so much all the time.

WPZ: What is the most interesting operation you’ve performed at the zoo?
Dr. Darin: I think it was Nadiri’s [western lowland gorilla] birth. It was a difficult birth so Jumoke, the mom, had to be brought to the zoo’s animal hospital for the delivery. It was a rare opportunity to have zoo vets, zookeepers, and doctors from the community all helping Jumoke give birth to her first infant. I’ve drained an abscess from the eye of a poison dart frog. I once brought a tree kangaroo to a community hospital after hours for a CT scan to find an infection. The zoo doesn’t have certain medical equipment which other members of the community can provide.

WPZ: What advice would you give to someone in school who is interested in becoming a veterinarian?
Dr. Darin: Meet a vet! Go talk to a local veterinarian and ask them for advice. Read books from the library, books about veterinary medicine and taking care of animals. Have a pet and become involved in its care. You can also develop great skills from activity clubs like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H etc.

WINTER 2000
Excerpts from interview with WPZ Gardner Allen Howard:

WPZ: What is your job here at the zoo?
Allen: I am the gardener for the Tropical Rain Forest. I develop and maintain the landscapes in each of the exhibits.

WPZ: Have you always been interested in plants?
Allen: Yes. As a small child, I helped my parents work in the family garden, and when I was 7, I was given some garden space of my own. I picked out my own seeds (ageratums and marigolds), planted them without any supervision, and they grew! Later, I went to the nursery with my father to pick out my first tree, a peach tree. We took it home, and I planted it. It grew, and it produced peaches! It was amazing.

WPZ: What is the best part of your job?
Dr. Darin: Variety! I like getting to work with all the different species of animals. It’s also very exciting working with consultants, all kinds of doctors in the community that volunteer their time to care for the animals. I get to work with veterinarians from all over the world. I’ve been able to travel to Malaysia and Indonesia where I’ve trained veterinarians. I like the research and writing. I use the Internet and talk to other vets to get information. For example: Woodland Park Zoo is getting Komodo dragons this year and I had to ask other professionals about their diet and other health issues. I’m always learning.

WPZ: What challenges are involved in your job?
Dr. Darin: You have to understand the behavior and the natural history of the animal you’re working with when evaluating their health. For example, a tree kangaroo with a sore leg still needs to exhibit natural behaviors and must climb in order to be comfortable. That means we have to keep the animal somewhere where it can climb while we are treating the injury. Another challenge is staying current in all areas of veterinary medicine because we’re learning so much all the time.

WPZ: What is the most interesting operation you’ve performed at the zoo?
Dr. Darin: I think it was Nadiri’s [western lowland gorilla] birth. It was a difficult birth so Jumoke, the mom, had to be brought to the zoo’s animal hospital for the delivery. It was a rare opportunity to have zoo vets, zookeepers, and doctors from the community all helping Jumoke give birth to her first infant. I’ve drained an abscess from the eye of a poison dart frog. I once brought a tree kangaroo to a community hospital after hours for a CT scan to find an infection. The zoo doesn’t have certain medical equipment which other members of the community can provide.

WPZ: What advice would you give to someone in school who is interested in becoming a veterinarian?
Dr. Darin: Meet a vet! Go talk to a local veterinarian and ask them for advice. Read books from the library, books about veterinary medicine and taking care of animals. Have a pet and become involved in its care. You can also develop great skills from activity clubs like Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H etc.
valuable experience, since it gave me the opportunity to see whole tropical ecosystems as they are in the wild. In Panama, I lived for three weeks with the local Indians, camping in the rain forest.

WPZ: What special challenges are there in planning landscapes for animals?

Allen: Some forest floor birds need open ground, so I look for plants that have most of their branches up higher. Some birds need lots of branches near the ground for perching. If it is an exhibit with destructive birds, I try to find plants with vertical branches that the birds can’t destroy as easily. Sometimes I make a great match with plants and animals. I planted a palm tree in the ocelot exhibit, and the cats loved it! It was wonderful to see how entranced they were with this tree. They eat a lot of the palm fronds, so I rotate a new tree in every few months. Another time, I put a lot of branches in the back corner of the tanager exhibit, and the birds moved right into them. It nearly doubled their living space in the exhibit. Those are real successes.

WPZ: What are you working on right now?

Allen: Getting some larger plants well established in the exhibits. That will give the plantings a more natural, permanent look, with plants of different sizes.

WPZ: What advice would you give to students interested in a career in horticulture?

Allen: Start working in the field as soon as you can, get lots of practical experience, and meet as many people as you can that are working in the field. That way you can get an idea of all of the areas of specialization.

FALL 1999

Excerpts from interview with WPZ Senior Keeper, Tina Mullett:

WPZ: What is your job here at the zoo?

Tina: I’m the senior keeper for the Tropical Rain Forest building and the bird areas, the penguins, the temperate forest, waterfowl, and the conservation aviary. What I do is supervise all the keepers that work in those particular areas and coordinate the activities that go on day to day.

WPZ: Do you take care of any of the animals?

Tina: Yes I do. I’m trained to cover any of the areas, so if someone is sick or on vacation I can come in and help cover. And I help with special procedures or when we’re catching an animal up to take it to Animal Health. The rest of the time I do paperwork, attend meetings. That part of the job isn’t as interesting as working with the animals.

WPZ: What kind of training did you have to make you qualified for your job?

Tina: I have a Bachelor of Science in zoology. When I came to Woodland Park I had 6 years of experience working as a zookeeper so I’ve been a keeper for just about 18 years now.

WPZ: What kinds of classes did you take in school?

Tina: I took classes in parasitology and animal behavior, a lot of chemistry and calculus.

WPZ: What made you want to be a zookeeper?

Tina: When I was younger and going to school I wasn’t particularly interested in becoming a zookeeper. It wasn’t until after I got out of college that I considered becoming a keeper. When I was younger I thought it would be more interesting to do lab work. Then when I was in college I realized that for me it was boring being in a lab all the time, and rather then looking at blood work, tissues and poop, it was more interesting to actually be in the field with the animals and look at their behaviors. At that time I switched tracks.

WPZ: What advice would you give to someone currently in school who’s thinking about becoming a zookeeper?

Tina: Spend a lot of time watching animals, learning and reading about animals, helping out with family pets, and going to the library and reading. If you want to be a zookeeper you really have to develop your observation skills and get to know what’s normal for animals so you can spot when there’s something wrong. Just be observant and watch animals.