



# Animal Care Intern at Creation Kingdom Zoo



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Creation Kingdom Zoo

1692 Snowflake Road, Gate City, VA 24251

## About Creation Kingdom Zoo

Before the Creation Kingdom Zoo was a zoo, it was a farm that consisted of cattle, sheep and apple and pear trees. Marc Bradley and his wife purchased the 500-acre farm with the intention of turning it into a conservation facility that worked to protect endangered and rare animals. Since 2010, the zoo has been open to the public to allow visitors to engage in interactions with all kinds of animals. The zoo is one of the only parks in the country that is 100% self funded. The zoo continues to strive to protect and preserve many endangered animals.

<https://www.creationkingdomzoo.com/about-creation-kingdom-zoo/>



## Keeper Talk Project Details

My supervisor asked the keepers and interns to prepare short talks to give to the public as a project. I had to research the animals and then get my supervisor to approve the talks. The talks happened when we were working inside of the enclosures. If customers came through and we could stop what we were doing, we could start talking about the animal whose enclosure we were in. I worked a lot with the primates, so the Black and White Ruffed Lemurs were the ones I was most familiar with. The talks did not have to be elaborate or long, just informative and interactive with the public. The neatest part of doing this would be when the Lemurs would decide to crawl on me while I was in there. This project helped me to familiarize myself with the animals and grew my knowledge on animals that I, until this project, knew little about.

## Overview

Creation Kingdom Zoo is in Gate City, Virginia. It is open to the public Mid-March until December 1st 10:00 – 5:00 on Monday through Saturday and 1:00 to 5:00 on Sundays.

The zoo is a great place to book a field trip for a school, church group, or any other group. Group Pricing is available.

While at the zoo, they offer:

- Fruit cups to feed the primates
- Snacks and drinks
- Gift shop

Admission Pricing	
Adult (Ages 13 and up)	\$16.95
Children (Ages 2 to 13)	\$13.95
Children (Under 2)	Free

## Importance of Diet for Animals in Captivity

Diets are important for all living things, but especially for animals being kept in zoos. Each animal requires a diet unique to them. It can be difficult to meet the needs of each without proper research on the specific dietary requirements of the animal. Animals in captivity are unable to hunt or forage for their own food which makes their diet extremely vital. Without a well-balanced diet, these animals will suffer from deficiencies and could become ill. Monitoring these animals to make sure they are getting the right nutrition has to be a top priority to zoos, rehabilitation centers, and other places where wild animals are kept in captivity.

<https://www.wisbroek.com/en/nutrition-of-wild-animals-in-captivity/>

## My Project: How I Prepared my Keeper Talks

- Researching on my own time
- Learning from the signs on all the animal enclosures
- Asking for guidance from senior keepers and my supervisor
- Observing the animals in real life
- Doing practice talks with family and friends

## Intern Schedule

9:00 A.M.	Arrive at zoo
9:10 – 9:30	Grab radio and checklist
9:30 – 11:30	Feed, water, clean
11:30 – 11:45	1 <sup>st</sup> Giraffe Feeding
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch break/List check off
1:00 – 1:15	Second Giraffe Feeding
1:15 – 2:30	Finish primates + birds
2:30 – 2:45	Third giraffe feeding
2:45 – 4:00	Maintenance tasks/ any odd jobs
4:00 – 4:15	Fourth giraffe feeding
4:15 – 5:00	Put up birds / help feed carnivores

## Black and White Ruffed Lemurs

- Native to Madagascar
- Critically endangered
- Diet in the wild: fruit, seeds, nectar
- Diet at the zoo: fruit and "lemur biscuits"
- Make a loud whooping sound when startled and to communicate with others in their group
- Very curious of everything
- My Favorite Animal that I Interacted with

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/animals/black-and-white-ruffed-lemur>



Left: Black and White Ruffed Lemur on my shoulder while I was cleaning their enclosure

## My Responsibilities as an Intern

The internship required that I work at least 24 hours every week. My main task was to make sure the basic needs of the animals were taken care of. I got to feed the animals, make sure they had fresh water every day, and observe the animals to make sure they were living happily. I also made sure that the animal's enclosures were clean each day.

- Help feed/water the animals
- Clean enclosures
- Observe the animals
- Clean up dropped fruit around the animal enclosures from the public feedings

## Primates

### Primates at Creation Kingdom:

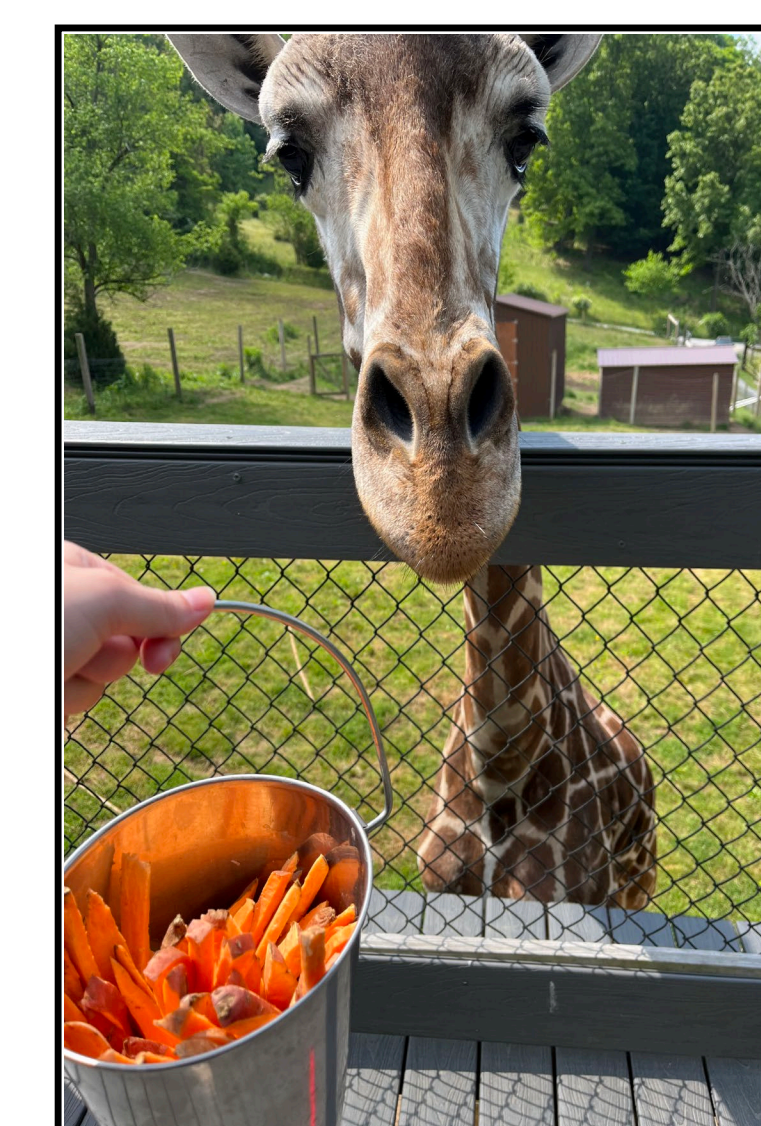
Albifrons Lemur	Black and White Capuchin
Black and White Ruffed Lemur	Black Spider Monkey
Bolivian Squirrel Monkey	Debrazza Guenon
Golden Bellied Capuchin	Hamadryas Baboon
Lar Gibbon	Red Ruffed Lemur
Ring-tailed Lemur	Snow Macaque
White-Bellied Spider Monkey	White Crowned Mangabey
Snow Macaque	White-Bellied Spider Monkey



Left: Ring-tailed Lemur , Right: Debrazza Guenon , Middle: Red Ruffed Lemur

## Giraffe Feedings

The zoo allows the public to purchase tickets to feed the giraffe at certain times of the day. These feedings are a great enrichment activity for the giraffe and super fun for the customer! Creation Kingdom feeds sweet potatoes during the feedings. They are a big hit with Tucker, their five-year-old giraffe!



Pictured above: Tucker, their 5-year-old giraffe, enjoying some snacks

## What I learned:

- Importance of diet in animals in captivity
- How to prepare the diets of several different animals
- How to take care of the basic needs of all the animals
- Communication skills with the public
- How to monitor the animal's health
- How to set up proper enclosures for wild animals
- Understanding of how to interact with the animals safely
- Role of zoos in conservation

## Conclusion

My internship at the zoo will forever be one of the most special times in my life. Not only did I grow my knowledge and my love of animals, but I also formed lifelong friendships with the people I worked beside of. Getting bit by a cockatoo, observing newborn porcupines, getting my phone taken by lemurs and many other things are not memories that I will soon forget. I was even offered a paid internship for next summer if I so wish to return. Creation Kingdom Zoo was a great learning opportunity and a great place to visit as well!