

## What's the Scoop at your Niabi Zoo

Join us every Wild Wednesday as we look at your Niabi Zoo. From conservation efforts to staff, discover what's the scoop at your Niabi Zoo.

This week, let's start by looking at the staff that helps make Niabi Zoo run. From managers to maintenance to educators to keepers, it takes a lot of people to keep the Zoo running, even in the off season.

When the Zoo closes for the season, the question we get the most is, "Where do the animals go?". The answer is the animals stay right here at the Zoo! This means is our keepers are responsible for the animal's care all year round, yes even Christmas and New Years!

So what does a Zoo keeper do on a daily basis? If your answer is scoop poop, that is a very small part of what a keeper is responsible for. They do clean exhibits and feed the animals but their job consists of so much more! They have to be observant to the slightest change in the animals' behavior that might indicate they aren't feeling well, they need to provide enrichment for the animals on a daily basis as well as train the animals. All of our keepers have bachelors degrees, with many having masters degrees. Our keepers have worked at other zoos across the country, specializing in working with certain types of animals, from herpetology to ornithology.

Here at Niabi Zoo, to guarantee each animal has the best care, the animal department is divided into what are called strings that has certain animals on it. String 1 is Primates, String 2 is Carnivores and Reptiles, String 3 is Birds and Small Animals, String 4 is Hoofstock, String 5 is Commissary and Quarantine. Each string has a primary keeper, who is in that area 5 days a week guaranteeing consistency in care and training along with "swing" keepers who are trained in multiple areas to cover when the primaries have a day off.

Today we're going to meet Danielle Benham, Primary keeper for String 3, Birds and Small Animals. Danielle came to Niabi Zoo from Texas, where she got a B.S degree in Ocean and Coastal Resources at Texas A&M with a concentration in migrating passerines. Danielle did an internship at Fort Worth Zoo in their bird department before moving onto the Dallas Zoo's bird department where she spent over 3 years. Now she has brought her expertise here to the Niabi Zoo and oversees the bird collection here.

Danielle oversees the care and feeding of over 25 different species of birds, each with their own unique diets, personalities and exhibit needs. Without a great knowledge base of these animals, a frugivore could be fed the same as an omnivore, a masked plover could be without a wading pool, a red tailed hawk and a macaw could receive the same type of enrichment....if none of that made any sense, that's ok, that's why we have keepers here at the Zoo who know how to take care of their animals!

The next time you see one of our keepers here at the Zoo, know that they have worked very hard to get to "scoop poop" and everything that goes with it and if you have a question about any of the animals, they are always happy to tell you about the animals at your Niabi Zoo!