

Camp Week 1: June 1-5

Happy Friday everyone 😊

We've had a great first week of Camp with our virtual campers! We welcomed everyone and divided up into smaller groups to tour the Zoo. The campers posed with their camp flag and had fun getting to know each other. Our camp guide for the week is Jess! She's very enthusiastic about animals with hooves and horns. On our tour of the Zoo, we were on the look out for any animal friends that fit that description.

First, we stopped by the elephant habitat. The keepers were busy cleaning the yard and filling the feeding baskets with hay for the herd. It looks like a big job caring for such large animals! They even have machines to use to scoop out large amounts of poop! Once the elephants came out of the barn, it was fun to watch them use their long trunks to pull pieces of hay out of their feeders. They might not have hooves or horns, but their trunks and tusks are pretty cool. Baylor put his food in a pile on the ground. Hope it wasn't too dusty!

Campers learned the Houston Zoo is helping to protect animals in the wild by supporting research and education efforts in Borneo to help people and elephants live together safely. One of the ways farmers protect their crops is by putting in bee fences –it deters elephants from their gardens and fields because elephants avoid bees just like we do so they don't get stung. The bees also create honey, which the farmers can harvest and sell. What a neat way to keep everyone safe and provide an extra sweet treat. Luckily, the bee box replica we have here at the Zoo hums at a different frequency to not scare Baylor, Duncan, or Tucker!

After that, we stopped by to visit the tapirs, Ankole cattle, and okapi. The campers noticed some interesting features and adaptations on them.

- Tapirs have an interesting nose –it kind of looks like a snorkel and we learned it helps them sniff out food and take breaths of air when they are soaking in their pool.
- Ankole cattle have huge horns. They seemed really heavy, but Jess assured us that Danny Boy, Luni Tune, and Ali Oop have strong neck muscles and their horns are lighter than they look. They are honeycombed to allow them to regulate their body temperature. One of the boys had an itch behind his ear he had to keep scratching!
- Okapi have really long tongues! Kwame and Sukari could practically lick their eyeballs. Some of the campers tried, but none of us were quite as successful.

The last animal we saw in the Zoo didn't have hooves, horns, or even hair! The Galapagos tortoises were out for a tasty meal of lettuce. One of them had made its way into a mud puddle or wallow to cool off. None of the campers liked the idea of taking a mud bath, they much preferred the idea of taking a dip in a swimming pool or playing in their sprinklers at home.

We hope everyone is doing well and you enjoy the attached photos and embedded videos. Next week we will be visiting some of our carnivores on tour!

-Jess and the Camp Zoofari Team