

### Camp Week 3: June 15- 19

Happy Friday everyone 😊

Week 3 has been so much fun and our virtual campers have been having a blast! This week was all about reptiles- and we had the entire Reptile House to ourselves to explore.

Our first stop in the Reptile House was the **reticulated python**. Our 18-foot-long reticulated python, **Sue**, can often be seen curled up at the back of her exhibit or lounging in her pool. The name reticulated comes from the pattern of her scales, and it means to have a pattern of lines that connect and touch. These designs of yellow, brown, tan and black help reticulated pythons stay hidden from predators and allows them to attack prey in the shadows of the forests in Southeast Asia. We also learned that pythons use their body strength to constrict their prey. The campers all practiced squeezing their hands together as hard as we could and it was a lot harder than we thought- pythons are really strong!

All of the campers requested visiting the **Komodo Dragon** next. Our big Komodo Dragon, **Bogo**, recently left the Houston Zoo to visit San Antonio for a few weeks on a vacation. He will get the chance to meet another Komodo dragon and spend some time together before he comes back to Houston. Campers learned how The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan® (SSP) helps to ensure a genetically diverse Komodo dragon population in Zoo's ([more information can be found here](#)). We love that our zoo is always working at saving animals! We did get to visit one of our younger Komodo Dragon's named Phoenix. He has a lot of personality and is a lot of fun to watch. He could not stop sticking his tongue out at all of the campers.

Our next stop was the **mata mata turtle**. He camouflage's so well in his watery habitat, and we had to really stop and use all of our senses to find him. His shell is rough and knobby, almost like tree bark, and the brown and green colors blended perfectly with the water and leaves. His most unique feature is his snorkel like nose. He only needs to put the tip of his nose out of the water to breath, and that means that he doesn't have to move a lot. Also, the skin on his face and neck are designed to look like leaf litter, making it hard to find him as he rests along the riverbed.

Finally, we ended our reptile adventures with a stop at our **crocodile monitor**. The campers found out that he is one of the longest lizards in the world, and that he is arboreal, which means he loves to climb. We enjoyed searching for him in the rocks around his exhibit. It took some time, but we finally found him clinging to the rocks at the top of his exhibit.

While we were in the reptile house, we came across so many other snakes, lizards, and turtles. Which ones are your favorite? There were so many, we didn't know which way to look. One amphibian we did not see, but we talked about, is the Houston toad. This endangered toad used to be found throughout central and east Texas but is facing many threats. Thanks to the help of the Zoo, though, almost 1 million eggs were released last year! [More of the information we talked about can be found, along with a video on telling the difference between the Houston toad and the more common Gulf Coast toad, on the Zoo's website.](#)

We hope you all had a blast checking out reptiles with us this week. Tune in next week for a trip to visit our Children's Zoo.

- **Ms. Kelly and the Camp Zoofari Team**