

## Camp Week 6: July 6-10

Happy Friday Everyone!

I hope everyone has been staying safe with all this heat! This week, our campers decided to chill out in Natural Encounters. It was fun having the building all to ourselves.

Many campers rushed straight in to find **Hope and Danh Tu, the Asian small-clawed otters**. Both Hope and Danh Tu love to swim, and they spend a lot of their time back and forth between their different pools. Having only partially webbed feet, Hope and Danh Tu both showcase more dexterity than other species of otters. Without full webbing, they can use their hands to help manipulate or carry things. This is helpful, since they love to eat crustaceans like crabs and mollusks. To break through their hard shells, both our otters have their favorite rocks that they use to smash open their food.

While some campers watched Hope and Danh Tu play, others explored the rainforest, looking for the **two-toed sloth, Succotash**. We talked about Succotash and how she spends most of her days relaxing. Succotash is around 45 years-old and one of the oldest sloths in human care. While she is relaxing, she loves to chow down on some of her favorite fruits and veggies. Succotash loves green beans, grapes and sweet potatoes too! Her appetite can get her into trouble sometimes, because she also loves ginger flowers. At the top of her rainforest home are some ginger plants, and when she crawls up to munch on the flowers it makes it very difficult for her keepers to reach her!

A trip to Natural Encounters would not be complete without a journey through the **piranha tunnel**. Campers enjoyed crawling through and watching the piranhas swim all around them. We all learned that our piranhas are actually very shy fish. When their keepers take dives in the tank to clean, the fish all swim all the way to the farthest part of their pool and give the diver plenty of space. It is only when they are feeding that they become fearless. Our keepers are sure to only clean the tank when the fish are not expecting a snack!

As we approached the exit, we stopped for a while to look at the **naked mole rats**. Campers observed the mole rats running back and forth through their tunnels. We talked about the mole rat's eyes and teeth. Even though mole rats have eyes that work, their eyes do not connect to their brain, so they cannot actually see. This means they create their entire tunnel system through touch and smell! Since they use all four limbs to move around, it is up to their teeth to move the dirt in their tunnels. To keep the dirt from filling their mouths, naked mole rat teeth actually stick out through their skin! This lets them keep their mouths shut and free from dirt as they dig.

It was tough to leave the **jellies and coral reef** exhibit. Many campers had no problem spotting clown fish like Nemo and blue tangs like Dory. Both types of fish kept swimming back and forth, though the clown fish never swam far away from their anemones. When looking at the moon jellies, we learned a group of jellyfish is called a "smack." Even though we have many jellyfish in our smack, there is not one single brain among them. The simple nervous system they have works a lot like our reflexes. Just like we will jerk our knee when having our reflexes tested at the doctor, jellyfish react without any thought to touch. This allows their tentacles to sting and paralyze their food long enough for them to enjoy a snack!

Campers wrapped up this week excited for more to come, as next week they will get to explore all different species of birds. Have a great weekend!

- **Mr. Nick and the Camp Zoofari Team**