

KEEPER INTERVIEW – BIRDS



First Name & Title: *Linda, Birds Zookeeper*

List the animals you are responsible for:

A variety of birds including five crane species, a variety of waterfowl, saddle-billed storks, flamingos, ibis, herons, egrets, Andean condors, and bald eagles.

How many years have you worked at the Denver Zoo? *Since 2002*

How many years have you been a keeper? *Since 1995*

Why did you become a keeper?

I've always found animals fascinating. Being a keeper is a way to continuously learn about animals and observe animal behavior. At the same time, zookeeping is a way to aid in conservation and help educate the public about animals.

What is your background?

I began volunteering at a zoo at the age of 14. During my zoo career, I've worked with mammals, birds and herps (reptiles & amphibians). I have a Bachelor of Science in Zoo Science.

Briefly describe your "typical" day or your primary job duties.

"Typical" daily duties include general husbandry such as feeding and cleaning, observation and record keeping, and exhibit upkeep. Zookeeping is interesting because anything can happen on a "typical day" such as taking a bird to the hospital for an exam or banding newly hatched ducklings.

What do you like most about your job?

I enjoy watching bird behavior on a daily basis. Getting the opportunity to see visitors that are interested in the animals they see at the zoo is also rewarding - it's good to see people take away something positive from their zoo experience. Also, my days at work are never boring; when you work with animals there's always something interesting going on.

What is the most difficult part of your job?

Working with the same birds everyday, you come to know them very well. It can be difficult when a bird you work with becomes ill or has to be sent to another zoo. It is part of the job however, and the positive experience of zookeeping makes it easier to deal with illnesses and such.

Tell us something interesting about the animals you work with.

I find everything interesting about birds. One main thing I find interesting about birds are the variety and how each species is adapted to their environment. For instance, the birds I care for have a variety of feeding styles. Bald eagles hunt and kill, cranes probe & peck for food, flamingos filter feed.

What advice do you have for students interested in pursuing a career as a zookeeper?

Volunteer at a zoo to find out if zookeeping is right for you. Working in other animal related fields (such as vet clinics and boarding kennels) helped me to become a better keeper. Take science courses in school.