

Miller Park Zoo stimulates animals with Enrichment Day

Written by Kasha Henricks, Daily Vidette Reporter
Sunday, 12 February 2012 14:26

The Miller Park Zoo has a variety of animals and species, ranging from tigers to toads. It is no wonder the zookeepers make a point to encourage the animals' natural behaviors.

On Saturday, Feb. 11, Miller Park Zoo made it a priority to stimulate the animals on Winter Animal Enrichment Day.

The zookeepers chose to highlight specific animals throughout approximately 20 minute intervals, including the coati, saki, lemur, gibbons, sun bear, turkey vulture, reindeer, meerkats, and red wolves.

Wendy Klessig, Miller Park Zoo zookeeper, explained why they have days such as this.

"The whole point to enrichment is to provide extra things in the environment to stay physically and [psychologically] active," Klessig said.

"Enrichment Day is just to highlight it, so that we make special big enrichments that are noticeable to the public," Klessig added.

According to Klessig, Enrichment Days have a particular theme and usually take place once in the fall and once in the winter.

"Everything we made had some sort of winter theme," she said.

Miller Park Zoo stimulates animals with Enrichment Day

Written by Kasha Henricks, Daily Vidette Reporter
Sunday, 12 February 2012 14:26

Miller Park Zoo is home to six different lemurs and they all play and keep each other company.

The lemurs enrichment included bins with honey poured over it with hot chocolate powder sprinkled on the honey.



Another interesting enrichment that the zookeepers came up with was for the turkey vulture. They used cardboard to cut out ice skaters and a pond. The zookeepers then cut a little hole in the cardboard pond where fish could sit. It looked as though the ice skaters were ice fishing for the turkey.

Jennifer Rogers, Miller Park Zoo employee, said enrichment entertains more than simply the animals.

“It’s always nice to show people how we keep the animals entertained, and if anything it entertains the zookeepers. They get to see how the animals react differently to different things,” Rogers said.

“It is just to get people to come see the animals doing something in the winter time, because we

Miller Park Zoo stimulates animals with Enrichment Day

Written by Kasha Henricks, Daily Vidette Reporter
Sunday, 12 February 2012 14:26

don't always have a lot of people out in the winter," Klessig said.

Rogers explained the animal enrichment takes place no matter what the weather is like.

"It takes them a lot to plan for these events, so to have a bad day is just really bad. They still do the enrichment though," Rogers said.

Miller Park Zoo creates a list of animals to enrich that the community can publicly view. The list is given to patrons upon entry that lets them know what time the zookeepers will be interacting with specific animals.

"The ones we picked on the list are pretty high profile animals. They are, generally speaking, animals that are going to interact with their enrichment," Klessig said.

Enrichment Day brought in a handful of lucky families that were able to join the zookeepers in stimulating the animals. While not every animal made it onto the list, all the animals enjoyed some form of enrichment.