

KEEPER INTERVIEW – RHINOCEROS



First Name & Title: *Sue, Rhino Zookeeper*

List the animals you are responsible for: *Rhino, hippo and elephants*

How many years have you worked at the Denver Zoo? *Since 1990*

How many years have you been a keeper? *Since 1988*

Why did you become a keeper?

My love of animals guided me to choose a field where I could make a difference in saving endangered species on a daily basis.

What is your background?

Associate of Arts, Associate of Science in zoo biology from a zookeeping school – Santa Fe Community College Teaching Zoo. Worked as intern at University of Florida Vet School 2 years, Lube Foundation 1 ½ years, zoo keeper at San Antonio Zoo 1 ½ years.

Briefly describe your “typical” day or your primary job duties.

A typical day includes a brief meeting with co-workers to discuss the day’s activities. Then a visual inventory, and “good morning” to all the animals. Animals are fed and cleaned, and throughout the day, training, demonstration or enrichment are provided to all the animals.

What do you like most about your job?

I make a difference in the lives of each one of the animals under my care. The best part is to have that one-on-one contact with some of the coolest animals on the earth!

What is the most difficult part of your job?

Being a zookeeper is physically demanding, but the hardest part is the loss of an animal that you have taken care of for so many years. They become family and strong bonds form over the years.

Tell us something interesting about the animals you work with.

Rhinos have a reputation for being aggressive and stupid, but they are far from that perception. Rhinos have distinct personalities, and have the intelligence level of dogs. My dog doesn’t sit on command as well as Mshindi (black rhino)!

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

Get as much animal experience as possible (internships, volunteer, etc.) It’s hard work, but incredibly rewarding!