

Real Life 101
The Zoo

Zookeepers at the petting zoo provide medical care to the animals, feed them, and clean the area. They supervise the births of new animals, and bottle-feed the baby animals to get them used to people and petting zoo environment. Zookeepers also communicate with zoo guests to talk about the animals, so they have to love working both with animals and with people. A zookeeper needs a bachelor's degree or at least two years of study in biology, psychology or zoology, and most importantly, experience with animals.

An **animal ambassador** takes birds of prey, snakes, reptiles and mammals from the zoo to visit the surrounding community, school or media events, where they can educate the public about the local wildlife and incite people to help animals. Apart from community outreach, animal ambassadors show animals to the visitors in zoo and spend most of their time taking care of the animals and training them. Most of these animals come to the wild life centers and zoos with some kind of injury, like the Eastern screech owl featured in this episode, and need continuous care.

Experience working with animals is most important in applying for work in the zoo, so be sure to volunteer with an animal shelter, wildlife center, zoo, or an animal rehabilitation center accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which regulates standards of conservation breeding, habitat preservation, public education, field conservation, and research of threatened and endangered species. More information on AZA accreditation is available at <http://www.aza.org/what-is-accreditation/>

A **habitat designer** is responsible for design, construction and maintenance of the zoo facilities and exhibits. Designing an exhibit starts as early as two years in advance. At the early stage of research, habitat designers learn about the animals from the zoo staff and travel to the countries where the animals come from to study the habitats the exhibit is supposed to emulate. There are no official days off, since the zoos are open every day but Christmas, and contract work means being on call at any hour of the day. However, taking a habitat design to completion and seeing the animals live there and the zoo visitors react to the exhibit is very rewarding.

School and training:

- 3 years in engineering
- 2 years in specialty training (such as civil and structural engineering)

Learning engineering involves a lot of math, calculus and physics, which are all used on the job every day. Whether you want to be an engineer in construction of bridges, high rises or theme parks, identify what your interest is and research that area. Visit these sights and study them. Be persistent. The key to entering the competitive industry of design and construction is experience, so internship is indispensable.