

5 Things I love about Bronx Zoo Camp

BY: VERONICA MILLER,
BRONX ZOO CAMP CO-DIRECTOR



I didn't grow up going to camp. I don't know exactly why, but whatever the reason, my first real experience with camp was when I started working at the Bronx Zoo. Part of my job was to lead camp for our rising K-2nd graders, and I went in wondering how on earth I could lead camp when I had no idea what camp even looked like. Thankfully, I had an amazing group of camp veterans who taught me all the ins and outs. And now, 14 summers later, here are the top 5 things I have come to love about summer camp at the zoo.

1. **The Bronx Zoo is our campground.** The Bronx Zoo is the largest urban zoo in the country with 264 acres of exhibits and over 6,000 animals. It is impossible to see everything in one day, but during summer camp, campers get to visit almost every single exhibit! They also get the opportunity to meet and interact with zookeepers or other zoo experts to learn more about wildlife and meet animals up close every day in our zoo classrooms. It's all animals, all the time! Which leads me to #2.
2. **If your kid is an animal nerd, we've got their people.** At the end of every day of camp, our campers share their rose, bud, and thorn of the day: something they loved, something they are looking forward to, and something that wasn't their favorite. This summer so many of our campers' roses were that they made friends that were "weird like them" (actual quote from a middle school camper). And one of my favorite things is seeing kids beg their caregiver to get another camper's contact info so they can stay in touch after camp is over. Even better is when they come back together next year!

3. **We play in the dirt.** Playing in nature and making a mess is a foundational part of our camp – which probably sounds like most camps. But when camp is in the middle of New York City, having a forest to play in makes our camp special! One of my favorite stories is the time our Junior Scientists were tasked with building an animal home out of natural materials they found in the woods, and a big group worked together and made a whole neighborhood with a complex and creative backstory. It was magical.
4. **Our camp leaders are kid experts.** One unique thing about our team is that camp is only one of the many programs that we run throughout the year (though it's our biggest for sure). This means that we are always thinking about, planning, and learning how to serve our kids and families better. Our camp leaders are experts in informal science education and I look forward to seeing all the fun “sneaky learning” activities they create for camp each year – like the time campers made ice cream and it taught them about cheetah conservation strategies.
5. **Bye Bye, Sammy. Hello, Cheese.** The Sammy the Seal show, the daily semi-improvised puppet show that used to happen at the end of each day in Kinderzoo, is always one of the highlights from my camp leader days. It was a time to let loose and be silly while helping reinforce the concepts of the day. Most of my favorite camp staff quotes happened during the show. Sammy has since retired, but this year Cheese the Mouse made his debut to help keep our youngest campers engaged while giving instructions. I think it's fair to say, Cheese's camp future looks bright.

We spend all year planning for summer camp (literally camp ended August 29th and we started planning for 2026 on September 25th) to create fun, memorable experiences and activities that also help campers grow into empathetic and environmentally conscious adults. And based on the number of returning campers we get every year, I think we are doing a pretty good job.

We hope your camper will join us this year! You can register for summer camp at all 5 of our WCS parks starting January 21st!