

Mini Sleepover @The Adelaide Zoo 11th-12th May 2024

On the 11th of May we had 26 children from Defence families aged between 5 & 7 join us for a sleepover @ The Adelaide Zoo.

On Saturday the children were dropped off by their parent/guardian. They were all super excited and a little bit nervous for their stay. We started off with some games on the grass at the front of the Zoo so the children could get to know one another. We also learnt what animal they were most excited to see at The Zoo. After everyone had arrived, we then made the journey into the zoo. The kids did amazing juggling all their gear to enter the zoo. After what felt like a long walk, we finally made it the Education Center which would be our quarters for the evening. After we put our stuff down it was time for a quick re fuel with tinny teddies and apple juice.

After our snack we split of into groups ready for our zoo scavenger hunt. On their list they had to find which clue matched which animal. We spent this time going around the zoo trying to find the animals on our scavenger hunt as well as many others along the way. Did you know that a Sea Lion learnt how to swim on its own at only a couple of weeks old? We saw the sealion jump into the water making a big splash! When we saw the meerkats, the zookeepers had left presents in their enclosure. We decided it must be their birthday so of course we had to sing them a happy birthday!

After the scavenger hunt it was time to burn off some energy at the nature playground. The playground was quite impressive even coach Angela was convinced by the children to give it a go!



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After a play, it was finally time to meet our own special Zookeeper for the night, James.

James took the children into a special room that had some reptiles. This room is not normally accessible on a normal zoo visit. James showed them a Blue Tongue Lizard and a Spiny-Tailed Skink. Did you know that a Blue Tongue Lizard uses its Blue Tongue to ward off predators by making them think it is poisonous?

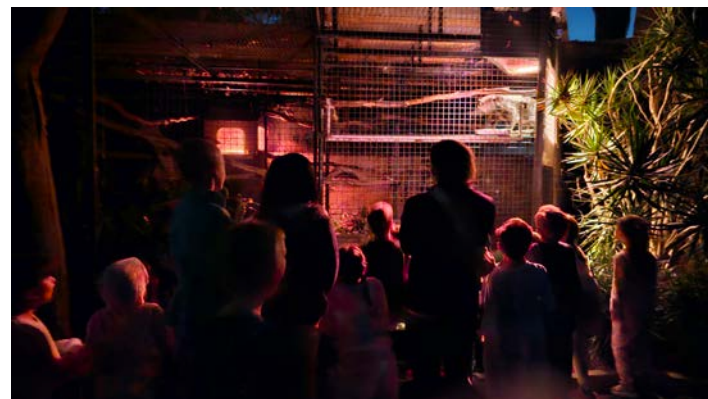
After this it was then time for dinner; Nuggets, Pasta, Salad & Sausages.

Once the kids had finished eating it was time for them to set up their mattresses and change into their Pyjamas. It was then time for the much-anticipated ice cream in a cone with chocolate sprinkles!

Now that the kids had a sugar rush, we were ready for the night walk of the zoo! The kids were so excited to be the only ones walking around the zoo in the dark. We were looking to see some of the nocturnal animals. We had some very brave children who conquered the fear of the dark to participate in the night walk. We got to see the Red Panda moving around in the trees. Only being seen with a torch. After the night walk, it was time to head back and settle in for the night.

Sticking with the animal theme we watched the Bee Movie. The kids enjoyed this film someone evening saying this was the best part about the sleepover. After the movie was over it was time to get some much-needed sleep.

Before we knew it was morning time. We had a few early morning risers who were awake and ready for breakfast. There was cereal, toast and apple juice to choose from. We then woke up the remaining children who enjoyed a bit of a sleep-in. After breakfast, the kids got ready for the day and packed up their beds.



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Once everyone was packed up and ready, James took everyone on a morning walk. The Zoo was not open to the public yet meaning we had our very own special tour. As it was daylight, we were able to go a lot further in the zoo. After the big sleep the lions were up and about getting right up and close to where the children were. The lion's raw was so loud! Did you know that a lion's roar can be heard up to 8km away? Did you know that in the morning tigers like to explore a new environment kind of like taking your dog for their morning walk? We then get so an Otto up nice and close. Many were so excited that they were so close to an otter! Did you know that zookeepers put treats in between the logs overnight so the ottos can explore around to find their food? We also got to see some very well-hidden alligators. We also learn that Dingos are dogs.



After a pretty spectacular morning walk, it was time to head back to the education center for the last time. We then discussed some of the things we learnt and talked about what we enjoyed most during the sleepover. The favourite animal by far was the Meerkat. They also loved that the Giraffes were so nice and calm. Most kids agreed that the walks around the zoo, when they were the only ones there, was the best part of the sleepover. Others enjoyed playing with their friends and eating ice-creams. The kids then had some time to ask James any final questions about the animals. Did you know a frog can jump over 120 times in a row?



Just like that it was time to say our final goodbye and get ready to see their parent/guardians eagerly awaiting outside. Families then had the opportunity to reenter the zoo with their child with all children receiving a free re-entry pass into the zoo for that day.



To find out what The Y is running next for Defence Families head to our website: [Defence Communities YMCA SA](http://DefenceCommunities.YMCA SA) or email: youth@ymcasa.org.au

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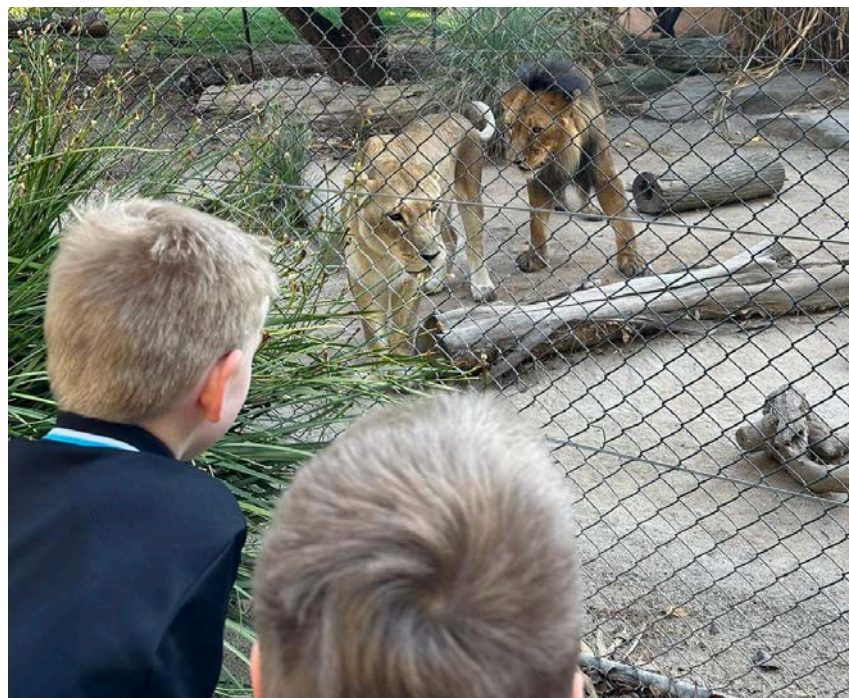
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