

# Interning at The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium



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## PERSONAL BACKGROUND

I'm from Cincinnati, Ohio. I've held many jobs, including working at The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, but I never had a position with direct relation to my major until my internship at The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. I grew up going to zoo camps at The Cincinnati Zoo, and that's where my love for wildlife and conservation grew. Going through college, I realized I wanted to work with and for wildlife. I interned in the Congo Expedition Department at the Columbus Zoo between my sophomore and junior years in the summer of 2019. I found the position by searching their website.

## ABOUT THE COLUMBUS ZOO

The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is located at 4850 Powell Rd, Powell, OH 43065. The zoo's goal is to "lead and inspire by connecting people and wildlife." It was founded in 1927, was a small zoo, and didn't have much publicity, even with the residents of Columbus for the longest time. This changed when Jack Hanna became the director of the zoo in 1978. He helped to build the zoo to the world class institution that it is today. The zoo has been levy supported since 1985. It is open year-round and has special events such as Wildlights, which has been around since 1985. The zoo has also added a waterpark, Zoombezi Bay. A golf course, Safari Golf, was also added. The Wilds, a multi thousand-acre conservation park in southeast Ohio, is also owned by The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium. The zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums.

Zoo Entrance



## MY DUTIES ON THE JOB

- Maintained cleanliness of animal enclosures and prepared enrichment for animals
- Measured out exact weights of food and medicine for each individual animal
- Studied full time-keeper staff performing various types of animal training
- Observed and recorded group behavior information of gorillas
- Educated guests on the animals they were viewing

These duties were consistent each day. Interns were rotated between one of three locations in the department. The locations were the gorilla building, bonobo building, and okapi barn. Each location was a base for taking care of multiple species in the department. The species in the department were:

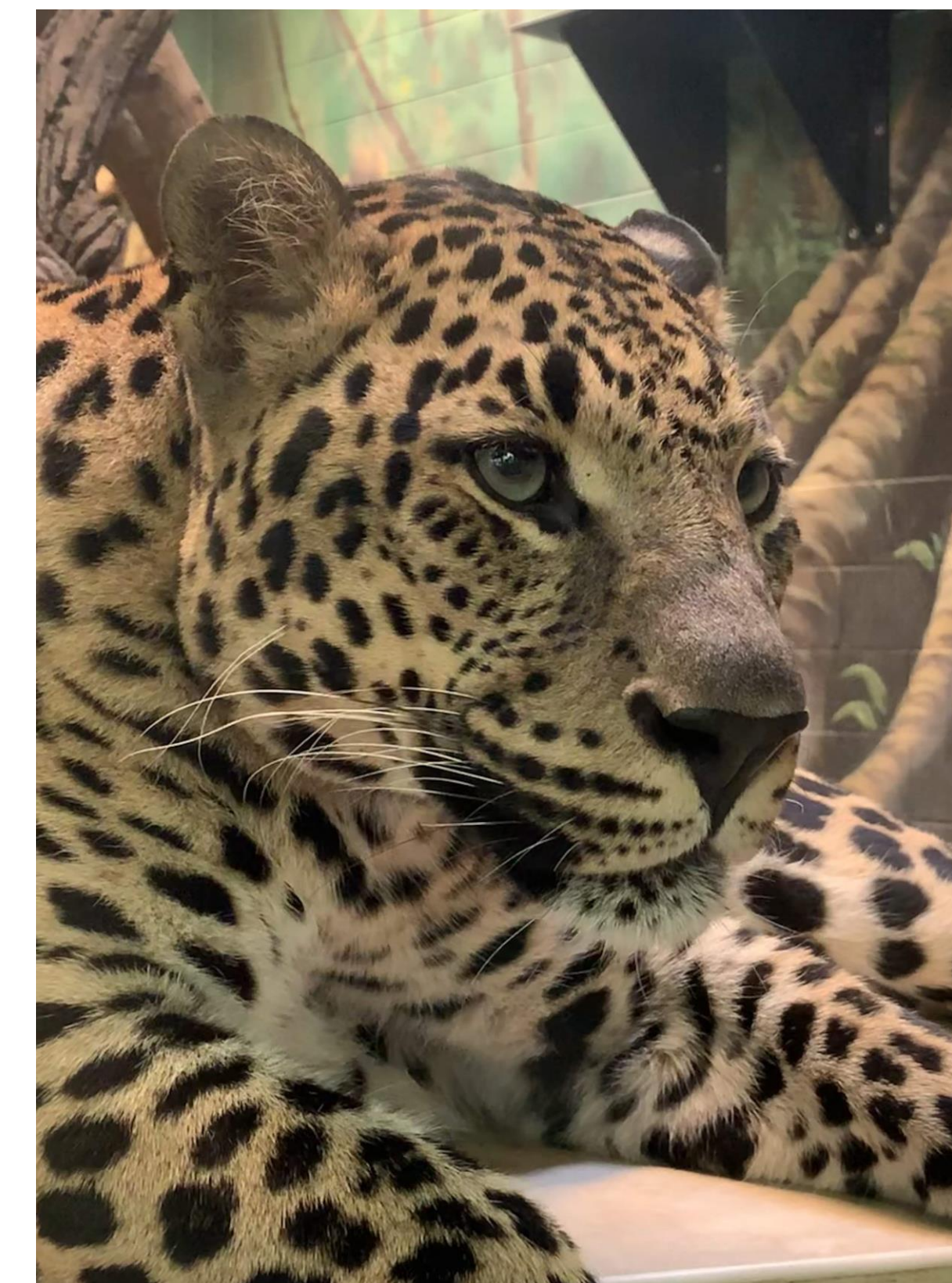
- African Leopard
- Black and White Colobus
- Black Duiker
- Bonobo
- Bornean Orangutan
- Mandrill
- Okapi
- Red River Hog
- Western Lowland Gorilla

Nia, The Gorilla



Nia would like to sit in the bed in the outdoor enclosure, and she was always aware when I was watching her.

Tyrion, The African Leopard



Tyrion is one of three African leopards at the zoo. He has a brother named Jaime. Tyrion and Jaime were named after two characters from the TV show: Game of Thrones, who were also brothers. A way to spot the difference between them is that Tyrion's rosettes (dots) on his forehead make a "W" shape whereas Jaime's makes a checkmark shape.

## OTHER EXPERIENCES

Besides my regular tasks, I was exposed to a variety of other things at the zoo. The zoo made an effort to help interns learn as much as they could about the industry. Some of the other things I learned about included: the nutrition department, the vet staff, the conservation team, other animal departments, and much more!

Keeper Talk



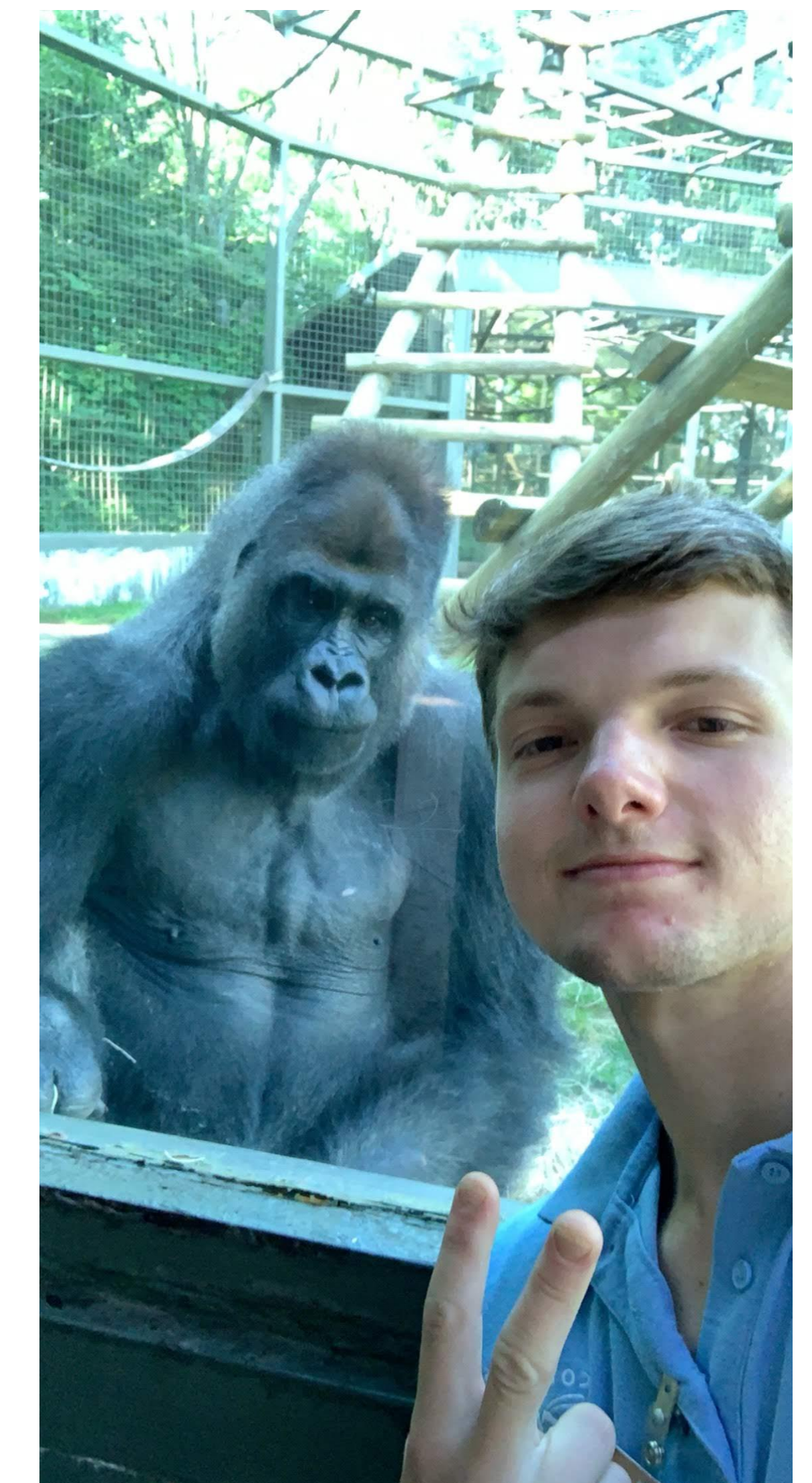
At the end of my internship, I received the opportunity to take the place of a full-time keeper and give the keeper talk to the public about the gorillas. To me, this was the perfect way to end the internship.

## REFLECTION

This internship provided me much insight to the field of zookeeping and the zoo world in general. The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium was very accommodating and made sure I had the most holistic experience possible. I'm most proud of being able to build a rapport with some of the animals. Being trusted to give a keeper talk was also very important to me. Moving forward, I would like to get another internship in a slightly different zoo setting as to gain more experience. I secured an internship with the bird show at The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden for the summer of 2020, but it was canceled due to COVID-19.

For any future students considering an internship at the zoo, I highly recommend it. You should come ready to learn a lot. You're moving frequently, so having comfortable shoes to walk in is a must. It should also be noted that it's an unpaid internship. I worked a second job to pay for bills; you may have to do the same. Do not let this deter you though. The experience was worth it!

Oliver And Me



Oliver has a funny personality and likes to interact with the staff. He makes great facial expressions! Some fun facts about Oliver are that he is the largest silverback gorilla at the zoo, and he has been deaf since a young age.