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Zoo Safari students create fake giraffe for lion to attack

By SAMANTHA JOHNSON
The Lufkin Daily News

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Students participating in the Ellen Trout Zoo's "Escape to Africa" Zoo Safari program concluded their week of learning and excitement on Friday with a unique animal enrichment activity.

The incoming fifth and sixth grade students spent some time each day constructing a giraffe, affectionately named "Jim-Bob" by the program participants, from cardboard.

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(ENLARGE)

"Because the giraffe is going in the lion habitat, we have to make it from materials that aren't harmful to the lions," said Alissa Boothe, seasonal education assistant for Ellen Trout Zoo.

With the help of Boothe they put bits of meat in the body of the fake giraffe, and assembled it in the lion habitat.

Then everyone moved to the safety of the viewing area and watched as Mashaka, a 3-year-old African lion, made his way into the habitat and attacked the cardboard giraffe.

"We want him to be as much of a lion as he can be," Boothe said.

Jessica Todd, who will be a sixth grader, has been coming to Zoo Safari since the second grade.

"Working with the lion this year was my favorite part," Todd said.



Samantha Johnson/The Lufkin Daily News (ENLARGE)

Throughout the week, the students take photos of the animals and keep a journal. They also get behind-the-scenes looks at the day-to-day routine of zookeepers and zoo animals.

"We're really excited to give the kids a chance to interact with the animals," Boothe said.

Boothe said that the biggest excitement of this summer's Zoo Safari is the new educational building.

"Because of this space we were able to double our registration this summer," Boothe said.

Boothe, who has seen the Ellen Trout Zoo grow since her childhood, sees the new education building and other recent additions as just a few more reasons why the zoo is special to the community.

"Because it's a city zoo, we want people to know that it's their zoo," Boothe said.

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