

# A Day in the Life of...

## Lea Knight, Visitor Services Officer

**From lost property to lost children, customer service to zebra car servicing, Perth Zoo's Visitor Services Officers (VSOs) are kept pretty busy from before the Zoo opens until after the last visitor leaves.**

Lea Knight is one of four VSOs that work at Perth Zoo to provide visitors with a memorable experience. Starting in November last year, Lea joined the Zoo team after many years in the hospitality industry in Australia and overseas.

"I was overseas for 12 years, living in Ireland, Greece, the UK and Canada," Lea says. "I had some amazing experiences working in hospitality and meeting people from vastly different cultures, ages and backgrounds.

"When I returned to Australia in September 2010, I was looking for a new job and on a whim checked out the Zoo's website to see if they had any vacancies. Lo and behold, the VSO job was advertised so I applied and here I am."

VSOs are at the front line of customer service at the Zoo and that requires a lot of coordination and interaction with people, from visitors to volunteers and keepers.

"Before I started, I didn't stop to think



exactly how many people work at the Zoo. There are a lot of names to remember and matching faces to names and the animals they look after. It's still a work in progress.

"I love working with people and I get the opportunity to work in an environment that has the added bonus of animals. People's passions really shine through here, including in our volunteers. I've learned a lot

about community education and global conservation action.

"The physical side of the job is something I enjoy as well. Most of the time we're out in the grounds on our bikes, putting up signs, finding lost children or tending to first aid. Of course, there are our regular duties but there are always things that we can't plan for and they keep us on our toes."

### A Day in Lea's Diary

**8:00 am** Lots to do before the Zoo opens. Check notes from day before, update the daily briefing sheet for the Docents (volunteers), help front entrance staff get ready for their day and then jump on the bike to scan the perimeter fence and open up the Rainforest Retreat and Bukit Station – all before 9.

**9:15 am** Head to the Docent Lodge to brief the Docents on what is happening at the Zoo today and any developments or new animals at the Zoo. The VSOs are the point of contact between the Docents and other Zoo staff.

**9:30 am** Update the display board and announcements for the day with the relevant walking tours and special visitor experiences. Then it's a catch up with our supervisor to plan other activities for the day such as exhibit area checks for any maintenance that may be required. After that, it's a good time to go out into the grounds and see how things are going.

**11:20 am** Get a wallet from yesterday's lost property to give back to the owner who has come in to collect it. Drop carob pods brought in by a Docent for the giraffe herd.

**12:30 pm** Lunch

**1:30 pm** Play the elephant walk announcement over the PA system as keepers are just about to take Tricia for a walk around the Zoo grounds. The time of the announcement varies so we need to be on the ball and listen for the word from the keepers over the two-way radio.

**2:30 pm** A Docent calls for help over the two-way. A young visitor has fallen and cut their knee. Rush down with the First Aid kit and a bandaid stops the tears.

**3:30 pm** Leave notes for VSOs who are on the following day to advise them of what has been happening and what jobs need to be done the next day.

**4:00 pm** Home time.