

## Beauties and the Beasts

Submitted by Ava Tajbakhsh (4th grade)



Foreground (LtoR): Hana Sun, Paige McGill and Beth Evenhuis take in the sights with the Troop, and parent chaperone Cindy Newton

It was a dark and stormy night... a gaggle of Girl Scouts huddled in the rain outside of the Oakland Zoo on a recent wet Friday evening, waiting for their chance to share a snooze with the Zoo's furry, feathered and scaly residents.

Junior Girl Scout Troop 734, 4th graders from Los Perales and Rheem Elementary schools, got a nice surprise at the first meeting of the year from Troop leaders Jennifer Gerst and Karen Diemoz, when they announced that the Troop would be attending one of the Zoo's overnight educational programs. The Troop had to learn lots of rules about staying at the Zoo, including what's okay to bring and what's not okay to bring because some things might hurt the animals, such as people food.

Other Girl Scout Troops were at the Zoo that night also, but because Troop 734 was the last group to be called inside, they got to set up their sleeping bags on the stage at the Education Center. After they left their things they grabbed raincoats and flashlights and went out to tour the Zoo in the dark with a guide. The great thing about being at the Zoo at night was that the Troop had a chance to see all of the nocturnal animals while they were awake, like the bats, while daytime animals, like Scout Ilene Drobny's favorites, the bunnies, were sleeping. It was too dark to see the alligators in the water, and the black

widow spider was really creepy.

The girls also got to paint little flower pots that night. Afterwards, the Zoo gave the girls some hot chocolate, a snack and little time to chat among themselves, then it was time to go to sleep. They left the hall light on in case anyone woke up during the night.

In the morning, everyone had breakfast and packed up their stuff. They got to meet a couple of animals in the Education Center, a bearded dragon and a cute chinchilla! The girls planted flower seeds in their pots, and learned how zookeepers train animals to come when they are called. They do this by giving the animals rewards.

Before leaving they got another tour of the Zoo in the daylight, and saw zebras, elephants, giraffes, monkeys and all sorts of birds. "We learned a lot about animals," said Scout Uma Gaffney, "like what alligators eat and that the oldest tortoise at the Zoo is at least 120 years old but nobody knows for sure because they didn't really keep good records back then."

Troop 734 thinks that other Girl Scouts will like this trip. If you go, says Scout Ellen Gerst, "You'll wish you could stay more than one night!" Uma recommends that you "Sleep outside if it's not raining, and bring your camera!"

For more information on the Oakland Zoo's educational programs, go to <http://www.oakland-zoo.org/education>

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