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Apr 18th, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

## **Life on the Wild Side: An Inside Look at the Zookeepers of Miller Park Zoo**

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*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Rebecca Gearhart, Faculty Advisor  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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Poster Presentation P13

**LIFE ON THE WILD SIDE: AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE ZOOKEEPERS OF  
MILLER PARK ZOO**

Noah Dunham and Rebecca Gearhart\*

Sociology and Anthropology Department, Illinois Wesleyan University

This poster presentation seeks to demonstrate the theories and methods of visual anthropology applied to the zookeepers of Miller Park Zoo. Utilizing participant observation, formal interviews, and informal interaction, the ethnographer worked collaboratively with the zoo staff to create both text and images that define zookeepers as a unique sub-culture. The aim of the poster is to illustrate an emic perspective of zookeeping by focusing primarily on topics the consultants found most pertinent. These include: financial challenges associated with a zoo career, the balance of education and entertainment at the zoo, and the on-going process of animal enrichment. This research is unprecedented, as it provides the public with a unique inside perspective on zookeeping while functioning as a reflexive tool for the zookeepers to reflect on their work and share their experiences with others.