

Phoenix Zoo - Elephant Engagement

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Poster Abstract:

Our community partner, Rich Sartor, who is the Director of Living Collections at the Phoenix Zoo, reached out to the EPICS (Engineering Projects in Community Service) program at Arizona State University hoping to find ways to improve the lives of the animals in captivity as well as making the jobs of the staff-zookeepers less complicated. Mr. Sartor's current objective is to find solutions to promote behavioral and mental enrichment for each specific group of animals at the Phoenix Zoo. Our team decided to work with the group of Asian Elephants in hopes to improve their exercise and mental stimulation. Currently, there are three female Asian elephants at the Phoenix Zoo, who are all in their early 50's, which is approaching the high end of their life expectancy. The three elephants do not get along as each elephant wants to be the matriarch of the herd, which could lead to dangerous clashes between the animals. Because of this, they must remain separated and are rotated through two backstage areas and a main viewing enclosure.