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Master Roof Thatcher Working at Zoo's African Savannah

When Nashville Zoo wanted to add some authentic charm to its African Savannah, William Cahill was the person to call. Cahill, a master roof thatcher, is currently working on a thatch project at a new area near the elephant exhibit built for private events, functions and programs.

Authentic thatch roofs are quite unique. Using water reeds cultivated from the meadowlands in New Jersey, Cahill blends layers of thatch onto the roof with tools that haven't changed much since the trade first began 2,000 years ago. When completed, the thatch roof will not only protect guests from rain, but the layers act as insulation, providing relief from both hot and cold weather. It also gives the enclosure the look and feel of an authentic African hut.

This is Cahill's second thatch project at Nashville Zoo. In 2004, he completed a roof on the gift shop by the giraffe exhibit. Cahill is one of only two in the country who has completed an apprenticeship in the trade. Since moving to the United States from Ireland in 1986, he has traveled the country working not only at Zoos, but also private residences and historic homes. Cahill's work has been featured nationally on Martha Stewart, CBS Show, NPR, This Old House and covered in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal. Cahill will be at Nashville Zoo until the project is completed around June 4. For more information about Cahill and roof thatching, visit www.roofthatch.com.

Nashville Zoo is accredited by the prestigious Association of Zoos and Aquariums, assuring the highest standards of animal care and husbandry. The Zoo is a non-profit organization located at 3777 Nolensville Road and is open every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. The mission of the Nashville Zoo is to inspire a culture of understanding and discovery of our natural world through conservation, innovation and leadership. For more information about Nashville Zoo, call 615-833-1534 or visit www.nashvillezoo.org.

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