



Voluntary Work Placements at Chester Zoo

The Chester Zoo voluntary work placement programme offers placements across several areas within the animal and plant teams. Designed for those undertaking sandwich placements as part of their degree studies, or for post graduates who wish to gain practical industry experience.

This work placement gives the opportunity to gain hands-on, practical experience, incorporating theoretical training through academic workshops which covers many aspects of modern zoo management. It's designed to prepare and support you for employment in zoos and other areas of animal care industry.

As we are a registered charity, these placements are on a voluntary basis. Monthly stipends of up to £120 per month may be payable based on appropriate expenses. We also provide full uniform and lunch vouchers each day you attend.

We expect full time hours, working 5 days out of 7 on a rota including alternate weekends, working 7am to 4pm (birds) or 8am to 5pm (all other sections).

When completing the application form for an animal husbandry work placement you will be asked for your preference in which area you would prefer to work. Here is some additional information about each of the teams.

Hoofstock and Rhinos

A very varied team working with critically endangered Black Rhinos, Greater One-horned Rhinos, as well as several antelope species, Zebra, Banteng, and Warthogs amongst others. Regarded as one of the physically 'heavy, hands on' teams to work with so a very good level of personal fitness is required. Being alert at all times and obeying instructions immediately is required.

Hoofstock and Giraffes

A team caring for our breeding herd of Rothschild's Giraffes, Okapi, Anoa, Onager, Bactrian camels, Congo Buffalo, Red River Hogs, and Babirusa as well as South American Tapir, Malayan Tapir, Pudu and the Oriental Short-clawed Otters. This role is mainly outdoors and there's a lot of walking involved in this 'heavy and hands on' role, so a good level of fitness is required. Being alert at all times and obeying instructions immediately is required.

Carnivores

A very hands-off section to work with. This team looks after many of our 'category red' species, such as the Lions, Tigers, Jaguars, Cheetahs, Giant Otters, Andean Bears, Sun Bears and Painted dogs. As well as Bush Dogs, Scottish Wildcats and Granddier's Vontsira.

Although there are restrictions when working with dangerous animals, you will be encouraged to observe and report. You will also be expected to gut chickens, pull weeds and clean windows when carrying out this role.



Small Mammals

Our 'Twilight team' look after many nocturnal animals such as in our Fruit Bat Forest, which require a reverse lighting regime. They also look after the Red Pandas, Meerkats, Aardvarks, Giant Anteater, Capybara, Visayan Warty Pigs, Sloths, Rock Hyrax, Naked Mole rats, various squirrel species, Cloud Rats, as well as small rodents including the Sengi.

There is a lot of walking at pace when undertaking this role and a fair amount of direct public contact talking and assisting our visitors inside the walk-through bat house where there are free-flying bats..

Elephants

A very hands-off section where Keepers never go into the same space as the elephants. Many of the tasks will be around the periphery of this section, and although you will not be directly working with the elephants, you will be working alongside the team and will learn a lot about their care and their specific health needs.

Primates

A team split into 4 departments working with Great Apes, Sumatran and Bornean Orangutans and Chimpanzees. You have the opportunity to spend approximately three months working in each area. There is restricted access to many areas within this team. To ensure our primates stay fit and healthy, you need to be very self-aware about your own state of health at all times, and adhere to the strictest personal hygiene regimes. It's a very hands-off but rewarding section which requires alertness, personal discipline and cautiousness to ensure you never touch the Primates for your own safety.

Parrots & Penguins

The Parrot & Penguin team is split into 3 technical sections, Monsoon Forest and Islands, Incubation and Rearing, Parrots and Penguins and you will spend time with each. This provides a lot of varying experience with such a wide range of bird species, from category 1 species such as the Cassowaries, to the tiniest hanging parrots and waxbills, learning some of the most delicate, clinical and intricate Keeper skills and observations to be applied in a conservation breeding setting.

Tropical Birds & Waterfowl

The Bird team is, again, split into 3 technically demanding sections, Tropical House, Waterfowl and Bird House. The team have a variety of species to care for including hornbills, flamingos, Javan Green Magpies, pheasants, waterfowl and many other conservation dependant species. You will learn important and high standard general Keeping skills in some of our largest and most dynamic aviaries, both indoors and out. A Passion about birds is required in this hands on role.

Herpetology including Invertebrates

Spilt into three departments, invertebrates, including the butterfly house, reptiles and amphibians. This section is technically challenging and the teaching is thorough and focussed around an evidence based approach. You will have the chance to work with all three departments, all of which have examples of conservation breeding.



The role here is diverse, where different styles of zoo keeping are experienced, from managing and creating artificial environmental conditions to collecting and analysing husbandry information. Where appropriate, this is quite a hands-on section where you can observe the strict protocols around modern category 1 reptile management. You will largely be inside in warm and humid conditions.

Aquarium

This is another very technical section where attention to detail and observational skills are key. You will have the opportunity to learn and hone a variety of skills including; breeding and managing fish populations, testing water parameters, breeding and managing live food cultures and maintenance of life support systems from small tanks to larger aquaria. There's a lot of walking involved, so a good level of fitness is required.

Animal Food Provision (Logistics)

All Voluntary Work Placements will spend two weeks at the Zoo working with our Logistics department. This is the team who procures, and then sorts and distributes the food orders (including browse) throughout the Zoo so it is as great way to see a completely different angle to the diets we offer and to learn about some of those provided to other teams which may have a very different food provision to your own team. You will focus some of your time with Logistics managing the cricket and locust breeding and as live food is an important part of many diets zoo wide, we hope it reduces `sensitivities` for those who are a bit squeamish in this area!