VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: Animal Care - Volunteer Aviculture & Animal Husbandry Assistant

Why do we need you?

At WWT we shape unforgettable experiences. We believe the best way for people to understand and connect to wetlands is to experience them, so we bring awe-inspiring nature up close and let it do the talking.

We are involved in maintaining and developing exhibits within the site at Washington in order to enhance the visitor experience. This involves caring for our large collection of rare and endangered species of waterfowl from around the world as well as wetland mammals.

The role would suit someone looking to gain or build upon animal care experience, or willing to get stuck in to outdoors work with animals. We have one of the largest animal collections in the North East, with 48 species, 15 of which are of Conservation Concern, including the current flock of over 60 breeding Chilean Flamingos and a pair of Asian Short-clawed Otters. Previous volunteers have gone on to work in animal conservation work around the world.

With a wealth of experience and proven track record in scientific research, we create and conserve wetlands and save species. We provide wetland conservation solutions that work in today’s society, sustaining both wildlife and people.

Who will be responsible for your role?  
Collection Manager / Collection Keeper

Where will you be based?  
Washington grounds

How much time will it take?  
1 or more days per week 9/10am – 4/5pm (Seasonal) with a commitment to a minimum of a 6 month period in order to get the most benefit from your volunteering experience.

What will you be doing?

- Daily feed preparation, routines and creating animal enrichment
- Cleaning animal rearing facilities, Flamingo house, equipment, ponds and exhibits
- Weeding in exhibits
- Cutting back vegetation in and around exhibits
- Pond maintenance
- Conducting public feed talks for the Otters and Flamingos alongside occasional guided tours.
- Maintaining and improving exhibit fencelines
- Assisting with animal handling and annual health checks
- During breeding season; checking nestboxes, incubators and assisting in the animal rearing facilities
- Occasional tasks may include: building nestboxes, feeders and animal shelters, constructing enclosures and ponds, or assisting with large reserve team projects
• A variety of seasonal duties including putting out and bringing in nestboxes, winter shelter preparation and bedding changing
• Record keeping and animal health and welfare reporting

Who are we looking for?
• Some practical experience in animal care would be desirable
• Able to follow instructions and safely complete activities alone or as part of a team
• Good people skills
• Public speaking skills desirable
• Physical fitness and the ability to lift heavy loads
• Ability to work outdoors in all weather
• Driving licence is desirable

How will you benefit?
• Working in the fresh air with friendly, like-minded people
• Exercise and all-round fitness
• You will be able to become part of the small but friendly grounds team
• Training in use of tools, animal handling and safe working practices on site
• You will be involved in the workings of this centre and will therefore be able to take up any opportunities that become available
• This is an excellent opportunity to work within an internationally important wetland site
• Suitable uniform is provided to all regular volunteers
• Discount is available in the cafe and shop for all volunteers on the day they volunteer

General Notes:
This position may require helping out on other days in addition to rota days but this will be infrequent and will be agreed with your head of department. We will mutually agree the hours that you can contribute and it would be helpful if you could try to give us as much notice as possible on the occasions when you are not able to contribute those hours.

It will be important to present a smart, welcoming and professional image to all Washington visitors and to be sensitive to the needs of our visitors.

You will be required to regularly check the volunteer notice board and emails and to respond to the information contained.

The centre is signposted and there are good public transport and cycle paths to the centre (http://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/washington/plan-your-visit/directions/).

We regret that we are not in a position to reimburse expenses incurred for travel to the site.

This position is entirely voluntary and is therefore unpaid. Any offer of a volunteer placement is not intended to create a legally binding contract between us and any agreement may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. Neither of us intends any employment relationship to be created either now or at any time in the future.

April 2018