

Volunteer Role Description: Saving Wildcats ex-situ conservation volunteer

Who are we?

Saving Wildcats (#SWAforLife) is a European partnership project dedicated to Scottish wildcat conservation and recovery. We aim to prevent the extinction of wildcats in Scotland by breeding and releasing them into the wild. The project is funded by the EU LIFE programme and led by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) alongside partner organisations NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Norden's Ark and Junta de Andalucía, with wildcat releases supported by Cairngorms Connect. Please visit the project website for more information: savingwildcats.org.uk.

What's involved?

The role will primarily involve assisting the ex-situ animal management team with activities related to animal husbandry prep, animal enrichment, animal observations and enclosure refurbishing. The animal support volunteer will also have the opportunity to shadow and learn from experienced keepers directly and provide support within our Conservation Breeding for Release Centre (CBRC). Volunteers will also have the opportunity to have some training on CCTV use and data collection.

Where?

The successful candidate will work alongside the projects' ex-situ animal management team based in the Saving Wildcats office at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park in Kincaig. Most practical work will be undertaken either in or around the office area or with keepers onsite in the CBRC.

When?

This is a full-time position during office hours, up to a maximum of 37.5 hours week. This position will be available for six months (depending on the successful candidate's availability). We would like the candidate to start on Monday 8th April and commit until 27th September. Earlier start dates are also possible with a minimum commitment of three months required. Please advise your availability in the application.

Who with?

The Saving Wildcats ex-situ animal management team will provide daily supervision and any necessary training. Any work around the CBRC will be done with direct supervision.

What will the experience provide?

Volunteering will give you the opportunity to contribute directly towards conservation efforts for the critically endangered wildcat in Scotland, as part of the RZSS Saving Wildcats project team. You will learn about the conservation issues affecting wildcats and the actions being taken to prevent their extinction, including the first dedicated Conservation Breeding for Release Centre (CBRC) for wildcats in the UK and the field programme to assess the release sites, mitigate the threats, and monitor the releases. You will gain direct practical experience of wildcat animal management practices, wildcat observations, and behaviour development techniques.

We'll provide you with full training and ongoing support from the ex-situ animal management team.

You will also be provided with accommodation (a private room in a shared hostel located in a town near Highland Wildlife Park), expenses up to £50 per week, and a discount to be used on-site at Highland Wildlife Park for lunch. Transport to and from the hostel to Highland Wildlife Park will be provided on working days, but you will be responsible for your own transportation outside of working hours so having your own vehicle may be advantageous.

What we're looking for:

A strong interest in Scottish wildcat recovery and conservation and a desire to learn about the challenges involved in species restoration.



Comfortable with outdoor working and good practical abilities (i.e. basic maintenance and general cleaning) and a desire to learn (or expand on) animal management skills and approaches.

Work will be undertaken onsite at RZSS's Highland Wildlife Park and will include a significant level of outdoor working.

You will need a reasonable level of fitness with a willingness to be outdoors in all weather conditions.

You will have a responsible attitude to health and safety, be well organised and motivated with the ability to demonstrate initiative and work unsupervised.

You will need to be at least 18 years of age and will be required to provide two referees who will be contacted with your consent. You will also be required to undergo a basic disclosure check prior to volunteering, which you will be reimbursed for once you have begun volunteering.

RZSS is committed to being fair, open and inclusive. We believe that RZSS benefits from the involvement of volunteers from diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences. We accept people of all genders, races, disabilities, ages, religious beliefs, and sexualities to be part of RZSS. We try to make our spaces and working conditions as accessible as possible and welcome requests to accommodate the individual. We expect our volunteers to adhere to the Guidelines on Equality and Diversity upon induction and throughout their time volunteering to us.

How to apply:

Please send your CV and a cover letter via email to hparsons@rzss.org.uk by the end of Wednesday 20th March. In your cover letter, please explain why you would like to be considered for this experience and detail your availability. Please make sure your cover letter is no more than one A4 page. If you have any questions about this experience, please contact hparsons@rzss.org.uk. We are looking to recruit one volunteer for this role.