

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, animal diet preparation animal enrichment, animal observations, enclosure refurbishing and workspace cleaning and maintenance. Volunteers may also have the opportunity to receive training on CCTV use and data collection.

The volunteer's workload will be reviewed daily, and additional responsibilities may be given, which could include supporting the outreach and engagement team with content creation, social media reporting, website administration and supporting the team at outreach and engagement events.

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, with possible working hours on some weekends as agreed by the ex-situ manager in advance, up to a maximum of 37.5 hours week. We would like the candidate to start on 10 March and commit until 12 September, with a minimum commitment of at least three months required. A later starting date may be considered. Please advise your availability in the application.

Who with?

The volunteer will be managed by the Saving Wildcats Conservation Project Officer. When supporting the ex-situ animal management team daily supervision and any necessary training will be provided. Any work around the project's conservation breeding for release centre (CBRC), which houses the wildcats, will be done with direct supervision from the animal management team.

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 careful breeding and extensive preparation that occurs in the project's CBRC for wildcats. 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 and the Saving Wildcats conservation project officer.

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.

Good practical abilities (i.e. basic maintenance and general cleaning) and a desire to learn (or expand on) animal management skills and approaches.

A reasonable level of fitness with a willingness to work outdoors in all weather conditions. Work will be undertaken onsite at RZSS's Highland Wildlife Park and will include a significant level of outdoor working.

A responsible attitude to health and safety, be well organised and motivated with the ability to demonstrate initiative and work unsupervised.

An interest in content generation and a desire to learn how to use content creation software such as Adobe InDesign and Photoshop.

A full UK driving license.

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 cbell@rzss.org.uk by the end of Wednesday 12 February. In your cover letter, please make it clear what role you are applying for, 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 cbell@rzss.org.uk. We are looking to recruit one volunteer for this role, and we hope to schedule interviews for the week commencing Monday 17 February.