

HERPETOLOGY INTERNSHIP

The Houston Zoo is offering an opportunity to participate in unpaid internships in the Herpetology Department! Interns will shadow Zoo staff and be exposed to large variety of snakes, lizards, turtles, tortoises, and amphibians. Interns are expected to be comfortable working in proximity to these animals, however, are prohibited from any interaction with venomous species, and certain other nonvenomous species.

Candidates for this position should be self-motivated, dependable, positive, and show an interest in pursuing a career in herpetology. The internship is designed to provide students the opportunity to learn the following:

- Diet preparation and feeding
- Care and maintenance of feeder insects
- Proper nutrition and care for a variety of reptiles and amphibians
- Maintaining of animal exhibits and holding areas according to AZA regulations
- Observing and recording animal conditions, behaviors, and responses
- Retrieving props
- Design and construction of proper habitat setups for different species
- Insight into a local species recovery program (one day will be spent with the Houston Toad Program)
- Positive and educational interaction with Zoo guests

PHYSICAL EFFORT AND ENVIRONMENT:

This position involves a lot of walking and lifting. Time outdoors can be expected, in all different weather conditions including heat, humidity, rain, cold, or dust. It may also involve considerable physical exertion such as climbing, reaching, assuming awkward positions, repetitive motions, and lifting and/or moving of heavy objects (up to 25 pounds) on a regular basis. Due to the nature of this environment, interns will have some public contact requiring considerable communication skills. Interns can expect to present keeper chats for the public towards the end of the internship.

The Herpetology Department houses a diverse collection with 127 species of reptiles and 40 species of amphibians. Interns are not permitted to work with any venomous species and certain nonvenomous species, however, the Houston Zoo Herpetology collection includes many dangerous and/or venomous animals which are not relegated to one area. Extreme care and caution is crucial at all times.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Ability to multi-task and excel in a fast-paced environment
- Ability to work independently while being an important part of a team
- Exhibit strong professionalism and communication skills
- Possess a desire to gain experience and knowledge working with reptiles and amphibians
- Some knowledge of herpetology is preferred but not required
- Interns are required to complete a minimum of 200 hours; internship can go beyond 200 hours if amenable to both parties.
- Interns can expect to participate one weekend day most weeks and some holidays. A schedule will be created with input from the intern but may not include the same days each week. Start time is always 7 a.m.; regular finish time is 4 p.m. but is flexible (options to work more days but less hours in a day).
- Candidates do not need previous husbandry experience but working at other animal facilities is a plus
- Coursework in biology or zoology-related field is preferred but not required
- Compose and present an educational presentation at the end of internship