

NATURAL ENCOUNTERS INTERNSHIP

The Houston Zoo is offering an opportunity for students to participate in an unpaid internship in the Natural Encounters Department! An intern in this department will help provide excellent care for a wide variety of birds, reptiles, and mammals including meerkats, otters, small rodents, and small primates. Our structured program optimizes learning opportunities for interns as well as their daily contribution to the department.

During this internship, interns will gain understanding and experience in the day to day husbandry of multispecies exhibits and ambassador animals. In addition to that, interns will contribute to departmental keeper chats, gain exposure to basic terminology and the theory of operant conditioning training, and experience in creating and providing animal enrichment within the structure of a comprehensive enrichment program.

Successful candidates will participate in many aspects of husbandry including:

- Diet preparation and feeding
- Proper nutrition and care for a variety of species
- Maintaining of animal exhibits and holding areas according to AZA and USDA regulations
- Observing and recording animal condition, behaviors, and responses
- Designing appropriate enrichment
- 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 50 pounds) on a regular basis. Due to the nature of this environment, interns will have some public contact requiring considerable communication skills.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS:

- 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 animal care management experience and knowledge
- Interns are required to complete a minimum of 400-hours. This is typically accomplished in 9 hour shifts from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., 5 days a week for 10 weeks. Applicants must be able to work any day of the week, including weekends. Any exceptions must be discussed with supervisor prior to start of internship.
- Must provide a current negative TB test result prior to starting date
- Coursework in biology or zoology-related field is preferred
- Compose and present an educational presentation at the end of internship