



Job Positions and Descriptions in Zoos and Aquariums

General Information

Zoo and aquarium employment is not always glamorous, but it is highly rewarding! Zoo and aquarium employees share in the knowledge that they are providing the best care for the creatures in their facility, as well as developing a forum for others to learn how they too can participate in the conservation of our planet's natural resources. Much of the work requires physical strength, as well as the ability to make detailed observations. Zoo careers often require attention 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week.

Job Positions and Descriptions

The positions below are a sample of positions offered in zoos and aquariums. These are not current job openings at the Akron Zoo.

Director/Chief Operating Officer:

Executes policies as directed by the governing authority. Responsible for the institution's operation and plans for future development.

Assistant Director:

Assists the director and assumes charge in the director's absence.

Finance Manager/Director:

Manages the institution's finances, including payment of bills, purchasing, investments, and the preparation of financial statements.

General Curator:

Oversees an institution's entire animal collection and animal management staff. Responsible for strategic collection planning.

Animal Curator:

Manages a certain portion of an institution's animal collection (i.e. mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, etc).

Veterinarian:

Responsible for the healthcare program for the animal collection and the maintenance of health records.

Veterinary Technician:

Assists the veterinarian and provides care to the animals under the supervision of the veterinarian.

Registrar:

Maintains computer records on the animal collection and applies for permits and licenses to hold or transport animals.

Curator/Coordinator/Director of Research:

Supervises research projects, serves as liaison between the institution and the academic community, publishes articles in scientific journals.

Curator/Coordinator/Director of Conservation:

Oversees the institution's conservation activities, including field projects. Serves as liaison with government wildlife agencies and other conservation organizations.

Conservation Biologist/Zoologist:

Provides scientific and technical assistance in the management of the animal collection and assists in conducting various research or field conservation projects.

Head Keeper/Aquarist:

Supervises a section or department of the institution; provides training and scheduling for keepers.

Senior Keeper/Aquarist:

Provides primary animal care for a department.

Keeper/Aquarist:

Provides daily care to the institution's animals, including diet preparation, cleaning, general exhibit maintenance, and record keeping.

Operations Director/Manager:

Responsible for the daily operation of the institution's physical plant and equipment.

Curator of Exhibits:

Creates exhibits and assists in the design of graphics.

Curator of Horticulture:

Responsible for the botanical collection and its application to the animal collection, as well as daily maintenance of the institution's grounds.

Curator of Education:

Plans and implements the institution's education programs.

Public Relations/Affairs Manager/Director:

Promotes the institution, its mission, and its programs to the public via the media.

Development Director/Officer:

Develops and manages fundraising activities which can include writing grant proposals and attracting corporate sponsors, as well as soliciting private donations.

Marketing Director/Manager:

Creates advertising campaigns and other activities to increase public awareness of the institution.

Special Events Manager/Coordinator:

Develops and implements events to attract visitors throughout the year.

Membership Director/Manager:

Responsible for maintaining and increasing institution memberships for families and individuals and designing special events for members only. May also be in charge of "adopt-an-animal" programs to raise funds.

Gift Shop Manager:

Manages staff and all aspects of gift shop operation from buying products to designing shops.

Visitor Services Manager:

Supervises the staff and facilities that cater to the visiting public including concessions and restrooms.

Personnel Manager/Director:

Responsible for all personnel matters including payroll, insurance, and tax matters.

Volunteer Coordinator:

Responsible for recruiting and maintaining a staff of volunteers/docents. Duties include scheduling docents for on- and off-grounds activities and keeping docents abreast of new developments to relate to the public.

Docent/Volunteer:

Duties may include diet preparation, small animal care, teaching educational programs, leading group tours, and staffing special events.

Junior Keeper:

Some institutions offer a summer program for high school students who wish to volunteer in a zoo or aquarium setting. Duties are often similar to those of other volunteers, but they are supervised much more closely.