BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO

Internship Program



Animal Care Specialist Intern: Large Carnivores

Interns in this role will support the daily care and welfare of large carnivores within the Habitat Africa! The Savannah and Great Bear Wilderness habitats. This hands-on learning experience is designed for individuals interested in pursuing careers in animal husbandry, zoology, biology, conservation, or related fields.

Ranging from the largest terrestrial mammalian carnivore to one of the smallest, successful interns will collaborate with experienced Animal Care Specialists on various tasks, including daily husbandry, habitat maintenance, diet preparation, behavioral observation, and enrichment activities for some of the Zoo's most notable and charismatic species, such as Mexican wolves, African painted dogs, polar bears, Alaskan brown bears, and the often overlooked but delightfully charming dwarf mongoose.

As part of this team, interns will have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience working with potentially dangerous animals in a protected contact environment, learning how to navigate safely around these species. Unique opportunities include learning how to identify individuals within large social groups; observe social dynamics; navigate seasonal changes related to animal care; and if lucky, may observe breeding patterns. Additionally, this team is responsible for the care of Mexican Wolves, a species involved in a USFWS recovery program that necessitates a uniquely different husbandry strategy compared to other species at Brookfield Zoo Chicago.

In addition to daily animal care responsibilities, interns complete a supervised project—such as an enrichment, research, or observational study—based on departmental needs and individual interests. Interns work in a fast-paced, team-oriented environment and are expected to demonstrate professionalism, adaptability, and a strong commitment to animal welfare.

AT A GLANCE

PAY RATE: Unpaid
HOURS/WEEK: Full Time (35+ hours/week)
COMMITMENT: 10-12 weeks
LOCATION: Onsite at Brookfield Zoo Chicago
PREREQUISITE: At least 1 year of college credit & experience
COLLEGE CREDIT: Available upon request



Position Details: Large Carnivores

Physical Requirements

Animal Care Specialist positions are physically demanding, and interns may be subjected to a variety of physical demands and environmental factors and exposures. Candidates must have the ability to perform essential functions with or without reasonable accommodations, such as:

- Ability to stand, walk, kneel, or squat for extended periods.
- Ability to lift up to 50 pounds regularly
- Comfort working outdoors in varying and extreme weather conditions, including inclement weather, extreme heat, and cold temperatures.

All interns, regardless of proximity to animals, must have an up to date TDAP (Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis) vaccination (booster within the last 10 years) and test negative for TB (Tuberculosis) within the last 12 months.

Scheduling Expectations

Brookfield Zoo Chicago operates 365 days a year. Schedules vary by position, but may include weekends, holidays, early mornings, and evenings. Successful interns exemplify a positive attitude, strong work ethic, an eagerness to learn, and an ability to work effectively both in a team and independently. Given the competitive landscape of professional animal care, candidates should be mindful of the following scheduling requirements:

- Must be willing to commit to 10-12 weeks in a term, not to exceed 480 total hours.
- Availability is required for the full internship term, including weekdays, weekends, holidays, early mornings, and evenings.
- Schedules may change based on animal and departmental needs, with advance notice provided whenever possible.
- Any anticipated scheduling conflicts should be disclosed during the interview process.

Preferred Qualifications

- Preference is given to those who have completed at least 2 years of college.
- Multilingual ability, Spanish fluency a plus.