



Zookeeper Internship Description **updated 12-27-10**

The internship program at Dickerson Park Zoo is designed to provide an opportunity for college students to earn college credit or otherwise fulfill college requirements for graduation by performing an internship

Interns are accepted from majors and minors such as biology, zoology, wildlife conservation and management, wildlife biology, captive wild animal management, animal science and similar fields. An occasional student may also be accepted from recreation or another field.

Interns are accepted each semester. Priority is given to those students who wish to do an internship for college credit or to otherwise meet a college requirement. Students who wish to do an internship just for the experience will be accommodated when possible. Due to growing demand for internships, it is increasingly more difficult to accommodate those requests, particularly in summer when demand is greatest. Making application as early as possible is recommended, especially for the summer semester. Most summer internships will probably be confirmed five to seven months before the beginning of the summer semester. Several interns are accepted each semester.

We work with colleges locally and regionally to provide internship opportunities but often can accommodate a few students from outside these areas. Most interns during the summer are from schools outside the Springfield area, and many of them are not from the Springfield area. They come here specifically for the internship, work 40-hour weeks until they reach their hourly requirement (150-160 hours for most), and then return home.

A small number of interns can also be accommodated during the winter break period which is sometimes long enough to provide an intern experience of 120-150 hours, depending on the length of the school break, for students whose schedules would allow them to work 40 hours per week.

Hourly requirements for internships vary from one school to another and from one department to another within the same school. Information on internships and approval to receive credit for the experience is given by students' advisors/professors. Most students completing internships for credit are juniors or seniors; occasionally sophomores are selected for the program. We schedule internships around the student's school and work schedules as best we can and according to the student's hourly requirements. The zoo has no particular hourly requirement other than interns will not be accepted for anything less than three hours on any day they are here. Work cannot begin later than 1:30 p.m.

Internships at Dickerson Park Zoo are unpaid work positions. Background checks and proof of TB tests within 12 months of the beginning of the internship are required. Some housing is available on-site for interns. We have two dormitory-style rooms, each of which has a bunk bed. Therefore, we can accommodate housing up to four interns at one time. The rooms are located in the keeper building which is in active use every day of the year during the daytime. At night, only interns typically occupy the building. There is a shower in each of the two restrooms located next to those rooms, and the building also has a small kitchen area and cable television. Washers and dryers are also available on grounds. We do not charge for the use of those facilities. The majority of our summer interns utilize these facilities.

The zoo is located near the intersection of Interstate 44 and Hwy13/Kansas Expressway. There are many restaurants (mostly fast food) near the zoo. WalMart, Walgreens and several convenience stores are nearby. Interns are free to come and go when not working, and visitors are allowed within guidelines.

Interns work alongside animal keepers doing typical daily tasks such as cleaning, feeding and minor maintenance, and other work projects. They may also assist with or observe routine minor veterinary procedures that would occur within their work area. Interns are usually rotated through different areas of the zoo for a broad experience which may include the veterinary hospital and the education department. The education department has a collection of animals separate from the main zoo exhibit collection.

Dickerson Park Zoo is organized primarily by geographic themes – Africa, South America, Australia, Missouri Habitats, Tropical Asia and Diversity of Life. Diversity of Life is primarily reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Except for Diversity of Life, the other areas will each have a variety of mammals and birds.

Dickerson Park Zoo is a small- to medium-sized zoo. The animal collection totals more than 600 animals representing 160-170 different species. Interns should dress for outdoor work. T-shirts with the zoo logo will be provided by the zoo.

Application forms and background check authorization forms are available. References and transcripts are not needed. There is currently no fee for an internship, but a modest fee may be initiated in the future to cover the cost of shirts, nametags and similar items.

Mike Crocker
Zoo Superintendent
Dickerson Park Zoo