Volunteer Role Description: (Ex-situ) Wildcat Behaviour Data Volunteer

Who are we?
Saving Wildcats is a European partnership project dedicated to Scottish wildcat conservation and recovery. We aim to prevent the extinction of wildcats in Scotland by breeding and releasing them into the wild. The project is led by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland in collaboration with NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Nordens Ark and Junta de Andalucía. Releases are being conducted with the support of Cairngorms Connect and Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return work to mitigate hybridisation (interbreeding) and disease transfer is conducted together with Cats Protection. Please visit the project website for more information: www.savingwildcats.org.uk.

What's involved?
The role involves assisting the ex-situ conservation management team (wildcat captive management) with daily behaviour monitoring and observations via CCTV and data recording from enclosures in our Conservation Breeding for Release Centre (CBRC), in an office environment. The data volunteer will volunteer closely with our experienced wildcat keeper team and will be managed by the senior animal keeper and team leader. Training will be given for using our extensive CCTV system as well as training in the implementation and adherence to a behaviour monitoring protocol and database. Additional duties may also be carried out to support the keeper team including, but not limited to, food preparation, enclosure cleaning, vehicle maintenance, enclosure maintenance and enrichment building. The volunteer will also have the opportunity to learn directly from our keeper team about wildcat behaviour management and breeding prior to their release into the wild. This role does not include any fieldwork.

Where?
The successful candidate will volunteer alongside the project team in the Saving Wildcats office at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park in Kincraig.

When?
This is a full-time position during office hours, with possible volunteering hours on some weekends as agreed by the senior keeper in advance, up to a maximum of 37.5 hours week. We would like the candidate to start on Monday 4 January and commit until Friday 2 July. If you can only start on a slightly later date, we may also consider this. Please advise your availability in the application. Volunteers are able to take days off as agreed in advance by the senior keeper and team leader.

Who with?
Data management will be undertaken independently with training and support provided by the ex-situ team leader.

Any additional duties will be carried out under direction of the team leader and keeper team.

What will the experience provide?
Volunteering will give you the opportunity to contribute directly towards conservation efforts for the critically endangered wildcat in Scotland, as part of the Saving Wildcats team. You will learn about the conservation issues affecting wildcats and the actions being taken to prevent their extinction.

This includes developing an understanding of the daily activities carried out at the first dedicated Conservation Breeding for Release Centre (CBRC) for wildcats in the UK, and of the field programme that assesses potential release sites and mitigates the threats facing wildcats in Scotland today.

You will gain direct practical experience of CCTV use, species specific behaviour monitoring, data handling and recording, as well as an insight into the design and management of a dedicated conservation breeding for release centre.

We'll provide you with full training and ongoing support from the ex-situ conservation team.

You will also be provided with accommodation (a private room in a shared hostel located in a town near Highland Wildlife Park), expenses of up to £55 per week, and a discount to be used on-site at Highland Wildlife Park for lunch. Transport to and from the hostel to Highland Wildlife Park will be provided on working days, but you will be responsible for your own transportation outside of working hours so having your own vehicle may be advantageous.

What we're looking for:
This role would suit someone who wants to gain a career in ex-situ conservation or zoo animal management.

A strong interest in Scottish Wildcat recovery and conservation and a desire to learn about the challenges involved in species translocations. Confidence in handling large datasets, working in Excel and meticulous attention to detail. Good eye for detail and subtle behaviour changes.

Previous experience of working or volunteering in a zoo environment or experience with wild animal behaviour monitoring/observations would be desirable but not essential. Experience and confidence in managing spreadsheets is desirable.

Most of the time will be spent in our CCTV control room, working independently from a set protocol with guidance from our ex-situ team. The candidate will however need to work well with others and be able to communicate effectively as regular exchanges with keepers will be needed.

You will have a responsible attitude to health and safety, be well organised and motivated with the ability to demonstrate initiative and work unsupervised.

You will need to be at least 18 years of age and will be required to provide two referees who will be contacted with your consent. You will also be required to undergo a basic disclosure check prior to volunteering, which you will be reimbursed for once you have begun volunteering.

How to apply:
Please send your CV and a cover letter via email to jsantilhano@rzss.org.uk by the end of Wednesday 25 November. In your cover letter, please explain why you would like to be considered for this experience and detail your availability. Please make sure your cover letter is no more than one A4 page. If you have any questions about this experience, please contact jsantilhano@rzss.org.uk. We are looking to recruit one volunteer for this role, and we hope to schedule interviews on 15 and 16 December.

RZSS is committed to being fair, open and inclusive. We believe that RZSS benefits from the involvement of volunteers from diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences. We will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, disability, age, religious beliefs, and so on. In some cases, extra support may be given to volunteers (e.g. those with disabilities). We expect our volunteers to adhere to the Guidelines on Equality and Diversity.