

Volunteering Opportunities – Monkeyland, Birds of Eden and Jukani

Volunteers will be considered if they have a genuine interest in wildlife, can speak English, are hard-working, fast-learning, enthusiastic and prepared to cheerfully fulfil tasks asked of them.

At the SAASA sanctuaries in Plettenberg Bay, we have the following volunteering programmes:

1. Multilingual Ranger/Guide at Monkeyland

The SAASA sanctuaries fund themselves through revenues from tourists who take educational tours in our sanctuaries which house over 550 primates, more than 3,500 birds and 50 plus predator cats, reptiles and other wildlife.

Guided tours in our Monkeyland forest last for one hour. The tours must leave the visitors with general primate knowledge, information about each of the species that reside in our sanctuary and an understanding that primates do not make good pets but are happier in the trees, forests and wild habitats with peers of their own species.

German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Hebrew, Portuguese and Swedish guides are particularly in demand, but any knowledgeable person who can use entertainment to further environmental awareness will be considered.

In addition to conducting guided tours of our forest, volunteer rangers/guides will help out with other activities that are essential to the wellbeing of our resident primates and the smooth running of our sanctuary:

- Assisting permanent staff with the cleaning the primate enclosures and replenishing food;
- Removing litter from the car park and the forest;
- Assisting permanent staff with the afternoon replenishment of food in the forest;
- Assisting permanent staff with cleaning the suspension bridge;
- Helping to prepare food for the primates in the farm kitchen;
- Helping permanent staff with any ad hoc activities, including maintenance tasks around the sanctuary;
- Helping with the weekly litter removal from the Monkeyland Road;
- Helping permanent staff to clean the marmoset enclosures;

2. Birds of Eden Volunteer

Visitors to Birds of Eden may walk freely around the sanctuary and, therefore, guided tours are rarely requested. However, it is important that there are members of the Birds of Eden team available in the sanctuary to answer visitors' questions, help with species identification and ensure that visitors are adhering to our sanctuary rules. Volunteers at Birds of Eden will help out with a wide range of activities that are essential to ensure the wellbeing of our resident birds and the smooth running of our sanctuaries. These may include:

- Cleaning the boardwalks and barriers;
- Helping to prepare food for the pre-release enclosures and hospital enclosures;
- Cleaning of the hospital – mopping the floors and washing bowls;
- Assisting with daily food preparation duties in the kitchen;
- Helping the permanent staff with feeding;
- Helping with small maintenance jobs around the sanctuary;

- Looking for nests of certain species;
- Helping permanent staff to monitor the animals within the sanctuary;
- Keeping the sanctuary clean by picking up any litter;
- Helping with preparing and providing food for the bats and bushbabies;
- Helping staff with the end of day activities – prepping and storing food for the following day, removing food bowls (so that they don't attract vermin) and taking them back to the farm area and making sure that everything is locked and put away safely;
- Long-term volunteers who have developed deep knowledge of our bird species may be able to conduct guided tours of the Birds of Eden sanctuary if the opportunity arises.

3. Jukani Volunteer

The guided tours at Jukani last for around 1 hour and 20 minutes. Occasionally, long-term volunteers who develop a strong knowledge of our apex cats and other wildlife and demonstrate an aptitude for imparting that knowledge to guests in an informative and entertaining manner may be invited to conduct their own guided tours of our sanctuary. For the most part, volunteers are involved in other activities which are essential to ensuring the wellbeing of our animals and the smooth running of the sanctuary. These may include:

- Helping staff to set up the curio store prior to opening to the public;
- Morning cleaning of the raccoon enclosure;
- Morning and afternoon feeding of the raccoons;
- Assisting with animal food preparation;
- Accompanying staff during the feeding of our carnivores;
- General cleaning and maintenance of the sanctuary; washing vehicles, sorting the store room;
- Helping permanent staff with replacing of the bedding for shelters;
- Cleaning the fly-trap and re-stocking them with bait;
- Assisting permanent guides with larger groups, helping to keep the group together and ensure the sanctuary rules are being adhered to;

4. Media Volunteer - Public Relations / Marketing / Journalism / Social Media / Photography / Filmmaking

Monkeyland, Birds of Eden and Jukani depend on visitor interest to fund themselves. Therefore, this area of our work is of critical importance to raise awareness of our sanctuaries and work and we always welcome additional help and expertise.

The projects that media volunteers will be involved in depends on what is happening at any given time and the volunteers' individual skills, experience and interests. It can range from writing press releases, creating videos, taking journalists on private tours and attending marketing events, creating social media campaigns to the more mundane but essential work of editing photos and uploading them to various platforms.

Working closely with our marketing manager will prove to be fun and enlightening for any animal enthusiast with a gift for writing, photography or marketing.

Media volunteers are based at Monkeyland but may work across our three Plettenberg Bay sanctuaries, depending on the projects that are involved with.

Specialist skills

We also welcome volunteers with specialist skills, experience and interests who can lead or become involved in a number of different projects or help us with those wish list items that we never quite make it to. This includes, in particular, fundraising or applying for grants, IT specialists and web designers/content managers and people with trade experience, whether it be electricians, plumbing, carpentry etc., there's always lots to do to maintain our buildings and forest.

These are unlikely to take up all of the volunteers time so would be alongside the activities outlined above.

Fundraiser/grant proposal writer for SAASA

The South African Animal Sanctuary Alliance (SAASA) is the sole custodian of all the animals at Monkeyland, Birds of Eden, Jukani Wildlife Sanctuary and Monkeyland-KZN.

SAASA is constituted under Section 21 of the Companies Act as a non-profit organisation and actively works towards providing captive-raised animals with a better and more natural life.

Some of SAASA's projects include:

- Our Special Monkey Home which is for primates who are disabled, orphaned, elderly, blind or otherwise unable to live happily in the Monkeyland forest. We also welcome disabled primates from other locations in South Africa, and countries abroad to come and live out their lives with us;
- The relocation of primates from various locations around the world to our newest sanctuary, Monkeyland-KZN, is another ongoing and costly activity;
- Our African Grey project whereby we are in the process of building a specific aviary for the hundreds of African Greys that need a safe, forever home, either because they have been rescued from the trade or because they have been left behind as they have outlived their human owners;
- Our project to purchase the forest that is the current site of Monkeyland so that all of our current and future primates are guaranteed a safe home and the land cannot be sold.

There is much ongoing and new work to be done so that we can continue to provide a safe, forever home for all of the animals in our care and those still to find their way to us. However, all of this costs an awful lot of money. We don't currently have anybody within SAASA with the skills and experience of fundraising or grant proposal writing which is needed to generate the necessary funding.

IT / Web Design / Content Management

The ongoing development and enhancement of our websites, along with troubleshooting the odd technical issue means there's always areas we could use technical expertise that we don't have in-house. If this is you and you are happy to share your knowledge but also have the opportunity to help out on outdoor projects whenever computers and time allow, then this is the perfect place for you.

Trades People

Volunteer carpenters, gardeners, electricians, plumbers, painters etc. are always welcome as there's always lots to do at the reception site, the forest and even the volunteer accommodation.

General Qualifications and/or Experience needed:

All volunteers must be able to speak English. A genuine interest in primates, birds, apex cats and other wildlife is vital. If you are interested in any of the above positions, please send us your CV and a completed application form describing what knowledge/experience makes you the right person to volunteer at our sanctuaries. Applications can be sent to Paula at volunteer@saasa.org.za

Minimum stay requirement: No less than 4 weeks

Minimum age: 18 for all sanctuaries

Contact Information: Paula Hallam at volunteer@saasa.org.za for an application form and to see if we have availability for your preferred dates.