

Introduction to Colchester Zoo's Volunteer Scheme

Thank you for your interest in joining Colchester Zoo's Volunteer Scheme. Below you will find details of the programme and the volunteer role.

Aims and objectives of Volunteer Programme

The Colchester Zoo Volunteer programme provides you with a fantastic opportunity to enhance your knowledge of endangered species and their conservation, as well as the chance to experience the workings of a zoo environment.

Volunteer Roles

To be a Colchester Zoo volunteer you must be open and friendly and enjoy meeting new people as you will be assisting Colchester Zoo and its visitors in a variety of ways. These are detailed below:

- To enhance the visitor experience by being a point of contact for customers, to answer their questions about the animals in a selection of enclosures.
- To enable visitors to get the most from the zoo by providing information when required on all the facilities available in the park.
- To provide a Discovery and Learning experience by servicing themed activity areas, including touch tables, arts and craft stalls and the Discovery Centre when required.
- To raise awareness of Colchester Zoo's Action for the Wild Charity and the conservation work they support and to help raise funds for these projects.

Enclosure experts

It is important to encourage visitors to make the most of all the exhibits and this is achieved by having an "enclosure expert", some one who is able to point out where the animals are and answer any questions the public may have about the animals in that enclosure.

In the case of walkthrough exhibits, you will also be ensuring the safety of the animals and visitors in these areas.

Key enclosures include

These are just a few of the many enclosures volunteers can help with:

- Rainforest walkthrough
- World's Apart walkthrough
- Discovery Centre
- Orangutan Forest
- Chimp Lookout
- Leopards at Ussuri Falls
- Colenso Village goat walkthrough
- Familiar Friends petting area
- Wallaby Walkabout
- Australian Rainbows

- Butterfly Glade
- Lost Madagascar lemur enclosure

Conservation and Fundraising

Colchester Zoo's Action for the Wild supports a large number of conservation projects *in situ* around the world. A major role of the volunteers is to help raise awareness of this work and to help us raise much needed funds to support these important projects. The Action for the Wild room provides a dedicated area detailing the work of the charity. Fundraising merchandise stalls can also be positioned around the zoo to raise money for the major conservation campaigns we support each year.

Additional Responsibilities

In addition, there is the opportunity to assist the keepers with public feeds including elephants and giraffes. It involves answering people's questions on the species concerned, informing them of the animal's specifics (names, ages, etc), collecting donations, handing out food to the public and ensuring a smooth running of these popular feeds.

Special Events

The zoo provides an exciting calendar of themed events such as Halloween, Magic of Christmas, Dream night and Special Senses Day. Volunteers are encouraged to support these events and do so in many ways as entertainers or park hosts.

Colchester Zoo is undergoing a major phase of development with the creation of many more immersive exhibits. As the zoo develops more interactive exhibits the opportunities for volunteers will evolve.

Recruitment

We recruit new volunteers across the year as vacancies arise. You will be invited to have a one to one selection assessment with a nominee of the Volunteer Coordinator. The purpose of this assessment is to ensure you have sufficient information to determine whether our scheme is right for you and for us to find out if you have the right mix of skills and or experience to match the vacancies we have.

If you are successful in your application then you will be invited to attend for an orientation day usually held within a fortnight of the selection assessment. This enables you to spend the day with an experienced volunteer to get an in depth look at the role and for us to get to know you better. If after this day you and we think the role is potentially right for you, you will be invited as a trainee volunteer for four (either four consecutive days or one day per week as best suits you and our other arrangements). After these four days we will make a decision about accepting you as a full volunteer on the programme, extending the training period or refusing a place on the scheme.

Volunteer FAQs

Below are some frequently asked questions about becoming a volunteer at Colchester Zoo. If your question is not covered here, please e-mail: volunteer@colchesterzoo.org

1. If I apply do I automatically become a volunteer?

No, unfortunately we do have a limited number of places. The role can be quite demanding, and so we do need to make sure that we go through all applications and hold robust selection assessment to find the most suitable people.

2. I am a mature person with no formal qualifications?

Age is not relevant so long as you are over 16 years old. Mature volunteers bring a wealth of experience to the role and are valuable members of the team. You need to be able to manage the hilly terrain of the zoo and standing for long periods – however if you need assistance with those things we will talk with you about what may be possible to help with this.

3. Will I receive training?

Yes, if you are successful in your application to become a volunteer you will undergo a thorough volunteer training programme to ensure that you have a good understanding of each role, and can carry these roles to an appropriate standard. There is a four session trial period in place. The Volunteer Coordinator and experienced volunteers will support you in the role during this period, and as you continue to develop during your time at the Zoo.

4. How many days do I have to volunteer for?

You can volunteer up to a maximum of two days per week and a minimum of one day per week (week days) or one weekend day a fortnight as a new volunteer. We require regular commitment from all our volunteers – it is not a case of simply popping in when you feel like it!

5. Is volunteering the same as a work experience placement?

No - volunteering is not to be used in place of a work experience placement, but it is a good way of gaining experience in working with the public and getting to know more about what it is like to work in a zoo environment.

6. Is there a minimum age for volunteers?

Yes, Volunteers must be over the age of 16.

7. How many hours a day must I volunteer for?

In the summer, April to October, volunteers help from 9:45–4:00 with a 30 minute break for lunch. There is also the opportunity to help with late night and early morning special events. November to March the zoo closes earlier, and the volunteer day typically ends earlier.

8. Do volunteers wear uniform follow a dress code?



Yes, our appearance is very important as it shows visitors we are proud of being part of the Colchester Zoo team. You will be expected to always be of a smart appearance, to wear natural make up / hair colours and if you have tattoos that may offend please be prepared to cover these. Piercings would be treated the same as tattoos – if they are discrete, do not offend and not get in the way of you providing excellent service to our guests that's fine.

The rest of the uniform comprises polo shirts, sweatshirt and fleece jacket with zoo logo (you pay a returnable deposit of £30 for this) however if the deposit is a problem please talk to us. You should wear black trousers or shorts of knee length and dark coloured shoes or trainers.

Thanks again for your interest and best regards

Jon Rowe
Volunteer Coordinator