

The **Wild Encounters** program here at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden is a part of the Department of Fun! We engage visitors that walk through the park with animals through handling demonstrations, feeding stations, and animal walks. We are a group of about 50 staff, volunteers, and interns that carry out the mission of the Zoo, getting visitors “close enough to care” and “inspiring every visitor with wildlife, every day.” Hopefully, you’ve seen us around the park; we are usually the ones with big crates or coolers walking to our next location for a random animal encounter, scooping up after the goats in the contact yard, helping feed the camels, or taking brisk walks with our group of interpretive flamingos. We handle animals from cockroaches to snakes to armadillos, and have lots of fun along the way!



We are interested in recruiting volunteers for Wild Encounters Animal Stations, as well as Wild Encounters Animal Handlers.

Wild Encounters Animal Stations:

Our Animal Stations volunteers are our key interpreters in the Contact Yard and Recreation yards (AM and PM shifts) with opportunities to help walk flamingos (AM shifts), interpret during our Galapagos Tortoise encounter (PM shifts), chat about our Kea (AM shifts) and our public feedings for the Camel Encounter (PM shifts).

Animal Stations are where we recruit for Animal Handlers, so to be eligible for a position as an Animal Handler, one must complete 15 hours in our Animal Stations program from the beginning of the season in March to when we open applications for our Animal Handler positions in June. Animal Stations are also a great option for those that are not able to meet the hours commitment of an Animal Handler.

We do have an hour requirement for our Animal Stations volunteers as well. See the chart below for the minimum hours and the suggested hours for our Animal Stations program:

Suggested* hours for animal stations:

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0	0	9	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	0	12	105

**this model includes working four 3-hour shifts a month during the regular season.*

Minimum** hours for animal stations:

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
0	0	3	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	0	0	45

***this model includes working two 3-hour shifts a month during the regular season.*

Number of open positions: 12-15

Required training: Volunteer Orientation, one session of Foundations of Interpretation - offered on 23-Feb, 4-Mar and 11-Mar from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., additional role-specific training.

Wild Encounters Animal Handlers:

Every couple of years we are looking for new folks to join our team in the volunteer capacity as animal handlers. The program is very competitive and we require a hefty time commitment, as well as a high level of dedication and proficiency in interpretation.

NOTE: The only way to join our Wild Encounters animal handling program is by first joining the team as a Wild Encounters Animal Stations volunteer. Once recruited as an Animal Stations volunteer, we will require that those that are interested in applying for our Animal Handling positions fulfill 15 hours as an Animal Stations volunteer from the time the season begins in March to the time we recruit from that group of people to apply for positions in June. Those that have not completed the 15 hours in the Animal Stations program will not be considered for Animal Handling positions.

We will require that our Animal Handlers meet a minimum requirement of 90 hours a year, but that should truly be treated as a minimum. See the chart below for the minimum hours and the suggested hours for our Animal Handling program:

Suggested* hours for animal handlers:

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	4	9	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	4	12	117

**this model includes working four 3-hour shifts a month during the regular season. We always encourage you to be here as much as you can for the upkeep of your handling skills. We welcome those that are able to commit more hours as well!*

Minimum** hours for animal handlers:

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
4	4	6	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	4	9	90

***this model includes working three 3-hour shifts a month during the regular season.*

Number of open positions: 4-5

Required training: Volunteer Orientation, one session of Foundations of Interpretation - offered on 23-Feb, 4-Mar and 11-Mar from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., additional role-specific training.