



Animal Care and Conservation Manager

Position Title:	Animal Care and Conservation Manager
Employment Classification:	Full Time, Non-Exempt
Reports to:	Director of Operations
Department:	Animal Care
Salary:	\$30.00-\$33.00 per hour
Benefits:	Vacation, floating holiday and sick time accrual; 100% of premiums for medical, dental, life, and LTD; 401k and FSA Plans

JOB SUMMARY

The Animal Care and Conservation Manager is responsible for overseeing and coordinating all aspects of the care, husbandry, training, and management of the Living Coast Discovery Center's animal collection. This position is responsible for the hiring, training, supervision, and development of personnel associated with animal care and conservation programs.

The Animal Care and Conservation Manager serves as the primary lead for developing, implementing, and maintaining animal care standards consistent with current best practices in the zoological and animal care industries, including applicable Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) recommended practices and regulatory requirements.

Additional responsibilities include attending required management meetings and organizational events; supporting facility operations and serving as Manager on Duty as assigned; maintaining professional relationships within the animal care and conservation community; developing new partnerships and networking opportunities to support animal acquisition and conservation initiatives; implementing and maintaining the animal collections plan; supporting staff professional development; and ensuring the Animal Care Department upholds the organization's mission, values, strategic priorities, and commitment to quality guest experiences.

DUTIES AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Animal Care

- Develop, implement, and maintain animal care, husbandry, training, and enrichment protocols and procedures consistent with current industry standards and AZA recommended practices.
- Ensure animal care practices and procedures comply with applicable USDA, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) requirements and permits.
- Manage, train, and provide direction to lead staff responsible for the daily care, husbandry, and training of the animal collection.

- Ensure Animal Care staff provide appropriate environmental enrichment for exhibit and program animals.
- Provide support and troubleshooting during animal care and facility emergencies, including pump failures, ozone system failures, water-quality issues, sick or injured animals, and other urgent situations.
- Work closely with the consulting Veterinarian to monitor and maintain the health and welfare of the animal collection. Participate in routine animal health walkthroughs or designate an Animal Care Specialist when unavailable.
- Clearly communicate veterinary and animal care updates to staff, including changes to medications, handling procedures, daily care requirements, and other veterinary directives.
- Assist with important weekly and periodic maintenance and cleaning activities, including backwashing, Turtle Lagoon maintenance, and coordination of shark exhibit cleanings performed by contracted divers.
- Serve as the lead for animal care emergencies, including power outages, evacuations, pump failures, and other facility emergencies. Communicate clearly and appropriately with emergency personnel and partner agencies, including the Chula Vista Police Department, City of Chula Vista Public Works, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge personnel, and other applicable agencies.

Wildlife Conservation Program

- Lead the management and coordination of animal care associated with all wildlife conservation programs.
- Serve as the primary point of contact for partner institutions and organizations involved in conservation programs.
- Lead animal release activities in accordance with current best practices and program requirements, including transportation, banding, blood collection, genetic screening, behavioral observations, data collection, and other applicable procedures.
- Manage husbandry and care protocols, reproductive needs, breeding plans, provisioning procedures, release plans, and other requirements established by conservation programs and partner agreements.
- Train and oversee staff and volunteers in the proper husbandry and handling of rails, owls, and other species involved in wildlife conservation programs.
- Maintain accurate records and ensure conservation program documentation is completed in accordance with permit requirements and partner agreements.

Personnel Management

- Recruit, hire, train, supervise, and evaluate Animal Care personnel.
- Provide clear, appropriate direction and feedback to support employee, volunteer, and intern performance and professional development.
- Foster a positive and collaborative work environment by recognizing outstanding performance, encouraging teamwork, and supporting employee, volunteer, and intern morale.

- Delegate workloads appropriately and effectively based on departmental priorities, staffing, and individual responsibilities.
- Develop and communicate daily task assignments and priorities for Animal Care Specialists and Animal Care staff.
- Create and maintain Animal Care staff schedules and submit weekly schedules to the Director of Operations by established deadlines.
- Ensure Animal Care personnel receive the training, resources, and supervision necessary to maintain high standards of animal care, safety, and regulatory compliance.
- Review and update animal care protocols as needed and support Animal Care Specialists with volunteer and intern training, development of new protocols, exhibit setup, recordkeeping, and data analysis.
- Provide guidance and direction regarding changes to the care or management of individual animals based on veterinary recommendations, behavioral observations, or other identified needs.
- Maintain departmental and conservation program budgets and support the maintenance and application of required permits.
- Conduct routine emergency response drills in accordance with applicable permits, policies, and procedures.

Other Duties and Responsibilities

- Attend upper-management meetings, including weekly manager meetings, and provide insight, recommendations, and direction regarding Animal Care Department operations.
- Serve as Manager on Duty as assigned, including responding to guest concerns, supporting Gift Shop and other departments as needed, responding to emergencies, and completing opening, closing, and facility rounds.
- Attend relevant animal care, conservation, professional association, and partner meetings and conferences, including AZA, RAW, and other applicable organizations.
- Maintain fiscal responsibility for Animal Care Department purchases and expenditures.
- Lead the management, development, implementation, and ongoing evaluation of the animal collections plan.
- Maintain positive professional relationships with zoological, aquarium, conservation, veterinary, and other relevant industry partners.
- Support animal acquisition efforts and identify opportunities to expand professional and conservation networks.
- Perform other duties as assigned that support the mission and operations of the Living Coast Discovery Center.

QUALIFICATIONS

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in biology, marine biology, zoology, life sciences, or a related field; equivalent education and experience may be considered.
- Five or more years of professional experience in animal husbandry, animal care, and environmental enrichment, including experience with multiple taxa such as arachnids, insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds.
- Two or more years of supervisory experience overseeing the training, coordination, and performance of staff, volunteers, and/or interns.
- Demonstrated experience training animals using accepted professional standards and techniques.
- Working knowledge of and hands-on experience with aquatic life support systems, water-quality testing, and the identification and treatment of fish diseases.
- Working knowledge of and experience operating and maintaining aquatic life support equipment, including sand filters, canister filters, UV sterilizers, protein skimmers, and ozone generators.
- Demonstrated experience handling, restraining, and providing care for exotic species, such as raptors, reptiles, and/or mammals.
- Current CPR/First Aid certification or the ability to obtain certification upon hire.
- Demonstrated ability to work cooperatively and enthusiastically as part of a team while contributing to a positive and high-quality guest experience.
- Ability to work independently, prioritize competing responsibilities, solve problems, and remain resourceful and effective in high-pressure situations.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

Preferred Qualifications and Skills

- Experience working with additional animal taxa, including tropical fish, parrots and other avian species, and mammals.
- Knowledge and experience with Microsoft Office Suite, including Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook.
- Experience with public speaking, interpretation, informal education, or guest engagement.
- SCUBA/Open Water certification; Master Diver certification preferred.
- Experience working in an AZA-accredited or professionally recognized zoo, aquarium, wildlife facility, nature center, or conservation organization.
- Experience developing or maintaining animal collection plans, conservation programs, permits, or institutional animal care protocols.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

This position works in a fast-paced, multi-faceted environment requiring the ability to multitask, prioritize responsibilities, and respond quickly to changing circumstances and

emergencies. The position requires regular outdoor work in a variety of environmental conditions, including intense sun, heat, cold, wind, and rain. Occasional driving may be required.

Physical requirements include, but are not limited to, standing, walking, sitting, typing, bending, reaching, and lifting up to approximately 50 pounds. The noise level in the work environment is typically moderate to loud.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions of the position.

SCHEDULE

This position requires varied and flexible hours based on animal care needs, facility operations, events, meetings, and other organizational requirements. A typical schedule is five days per week, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., including weekends; however, the schedule may vary based on departmental and organizational needs. The position may require occasional evenings, holidays, or schedule adjustments to respond to animal care, conservation program, emergency, or facility needs.

DISCLAIMER

This job description is intended to describe the general nature and level of work performed by employees in this position. It is not intended to be an exhaustive or comprehensive list of all duties, responsibilities, qualifications, or working conditions associated with the position. Duties and responsibilities may be modified as organizational needs change. The Living Coast Discovery Center is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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Please submit cover letter and resume in electronic format to Katharine Leon, Director of Operations, directly at katharine@thelivingcoast.org by Friday, October 2nd, 2026