

SOUTH FLORIDA WILDLIFE CENTER

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM INTERNSHIP CURRICULUM

Program Length: 12 Weeks

Commitment: 24 Hours Per Week (288 Hours Total)

Department: Environmental Education & Outreach

Program Overview

The Ambassador Animal Care Internship provides students with hands-on experience in the daily husbandry, training support, enrichment, behavioral observation, and educational use of non-releasable ambassador animals. Interns develop practical skills in animal care while learning how ambassador animals contribute to wildlife conservation and public education.

This internship is ideal for students pursuing degrees in Wildlife Biology, Zoology, Animal Science, Veterinary Technology, Wildlife Conservation, or related fields.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the internship, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate proper husbandry techniques for ambassador animals
- Understand species-specific nutrition and enclosure maintenance
- Prepare and distribute diets safely
- Assist with enrichment planning and behavioral observations
- Understand operant conditioning and positive reinforcement principles
- Safely handle approved ambassador species under supervision
- Assist with educational animal presentations
- Recognize signs of stress, illness, and abnormal behavior
- Maintain accurate animal care records
- Demonstrate professionalism in wildlife care and education

Weekly Curriculum

Weeks 1

Orientation and Ambassador Program Foundations

- SFWC mission and ambassador program
- Animal welfare standards
- Safety protocols
- Zoonotic disease prevention
- Introduction to ambassador species
- Shadow daily husbandry

Weeks 2-3

Daily Husbandry

- Diet preparation
- Feeding protocols
- Cleaning and sanitizing enclosures
- Animal observation
- Record keeping
- Introduction to weekly and monthly tasks

Weeks 4–6

Animal Behavior & Enrichment

- Behavioral observations
- Species-specific enrichment
- Positive reinforcement concepts
- Enrichment creation

Weeks 7–8

Handling & Educational Participation

- Safe handling techniques
- Presentation preparation
- Animal transport procedures
- Public interaction guidelines
- Shadow educational presentations
- Choosing a behavior to train

Weeks 9–10

Medical Support & Advanced Care

- Basic health assessments
- Medication observation
- Getting creative with life in human care

Weeks 11–12

Leadership & Professional Development

- Ambassador program management
- Animal welfare ethics
- Career pathways

Internship Completion Requirement

As part of the successful completion of the South Florida Wildlife Center Conservation Education and Outreach Internship Program, interns must complete the following:

1. End-of-Internship Survey

Complete the official South Florida Wildlife Center End-of-Internship Survey to provide feedback regarding your internship experience and help improve future educational opportunities.

2. Final Reflection Project

Choose ONE of the following options:

Option A: Internship Reflection Blog Post

Write a 500–1,000 word blog post discussing:

- Why you chose the internship
- Experiences and skills gained during the program
- Educational programs and outreach activities completed
- Conservation concepts learned
- How the experience contributed to your academic and professional goals
- Advice for future interns

OR

Option B: Professional Presentation

Prepare and deliver a 10–15 minute presentation on a conservation education topic, outreach initiative, wildlife species, community engagement effort, or lessons learned throughout the internship experience.

Evaluation Criteria

Attendance and Reliability – 25%

Professionalism – 20%

Program Participation and Engagement – 35%

Final Reflection Requirement – 10%

Supervisor Evaluation – 10%