SOUTH FLORIDA WILDLIFE CENTER
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & OUTREACH INTERNSHIP CURRICULUM

Program Length: 12 Weeks
Commitment: 24 Hours Per Week (288 Hours Total)
Department: Outreach & Environmental Education

Program Overview

The Outreach & Environmental Education Internship provides students with hands-on experience in wildlife conservation education, volunteer program management, wildlife admissions support, and ambassador animal care. Interns develop practical skills in public engagement, wildlife identification, animal husbandry, and nonprofit operations while learning how environmental education contributes to wildlife conservation and human-wildlife coexistence.

Interns will assist with volunteer onboarding and training, support daily Resource Center operations, participate in ambassador animal care, and assist with community outreach events and K–12 educational programs.

This internship is ideal for students pursuing degrees in Wildlife Biology, Environmental Science, Wildlife Conservation, Zoology, Environmental Education, Nonprofit Management, or related fields.

Learning Objectives

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

- Understand volunteer program operations, including recruitment, onboarding, training, and retention
- Navigate Volgistics to assist with volunteer records, scheduling, and program administration.
- Assist with volunteer orientations, training activities, and facility tours.
- Identify common South Florida wildlife species and understand their ecological roles.
- Communicate appropriate wildlife coexistence, renesting, and wildlife assistance guidance using established SFWC protocols.
- Navigate the Wildlife Rehabilitation Medical Database (WRMD) and assist with wildlife admissions documentation.
- Demonstrate proper husbandry techniques for ambassador animals.

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- Understand species-specific nutrition, diet preparation, enrichment, and enclosure maintenance.
- Recognize basic indicators of animal stress, illness, and behavioral changes.
- Assist with environmental education presentations and community outreach events.
- Develop public speaking and educational communication skills for diverse audiences, including K–12 students.
- Demonstrate professionalism, teamwork, and ethical practices in wildlife conservation and public education.

Weekly Curriculum

Week 1

Orientation & Department Foundations

- SFWC mission, conservation goals, and departmental operations.
- Introduction to the Outreach & Environmental Education Department.
- Facility orientation and safety protocols.
- Zoonotic disease prevention.
- Introduction to volunteer services and Resource Center operations.
- Introduction to ambassador animal species and welfare standards.
- Shadow daily departmental activities.

Weeks 2–3

Volunteer Program Management & Engagement

- Introduction to Volgistics volunteer management software.
- Volunteer records, scheduling, and database navigation.
- Volunteer recruitment and application procedures.
- Onboarding requirements and orientation processes.
- Assist with volunteer training and facility tours.
- Volunteer communication and engagement.
- Understanding volunteer retention and recognition.
- Confidentiality and professional database management.

Weeks 4–6

Resource Center Operations & Wildlife Assistance

- Introduction to Resource Center operations and wildlife admissions procedures.
- Identification of common South Florida wildlife species.
- Wildlife natural history and species-specific behaviors.

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- Recognizing common wildlife emergencies.
- Public education on human-wildlife coexistence.
- Renesting procedures and guidance for displaced or orphaned wildlife.
- Introduction to WRMD and wildlife admissions documentation.
- Assist with wildlife intake records and data entry.
- Communicating with the public regarding wildlife concerns.
- Understanding when wildlife intervention or rehabilitation may be necessary.
- Shadow Resource Center staff during daily operations.

Weeks 7–8

Ambassador Animal Care & Welfare

- Introduction to ambassador animal husbandry.
- Species-specific nutrition and diet preparation.
- Daily feeding and husbandry procedures.
- Enclosure cleaning, sanitation, and maintenance.
- Animal behavior and welfare observations.
- Identifying signs of stress, illness, and abnormal behavior.
- Species-appropriate enrichment preparation.
- Animal care documentation and recordkeeping.
- Understanding the educational role of non-releasable wildlife.

Weeks 9–10

Community Outreach & Environmental Education

- Introduction to conservation education methods.
- Educational program planning and preparation.
- Public speaking and audience engagement techniques.
- Assist with K–12 environmental education programs.
- Introduction to age-appropriate teaching strategies.
- Assist with community tabling events and outreach activities.
- Develop educational materials and interactive learning activities.
- Wildlife conservation messaging and human-wildlife coexistence.
- Communicating SFWC's mission and community resources.
- Shadow and assist staff during educational presentations.

Weeks 11–12

Applied Learning & Professional Development

- Continued participation in departmental operations.

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- Apply skills in volunteer management and Resource Center assistance.
- Assist with ambassador animal husbandry and welfare activities.
- Participate in educational programming and outreach events.
- Explore career pathways in wildlife conservation, environmental education, and nonprofit management.
- Conservation education ethics and professional responsibilities.
- Reflect on internship experiences and professional growth.
- Complete final internship requirements.

Internship Completion Requirement

As part of the successful completion of the South Florida Wildlife Center Environmental Education & 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
- Volunteer management and Resource Center activities completed
- Ambassador animal care and environmental education experiences
- 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, volunteer engagement initiative, wildlife species, ambassador animal welfare, community outreach effort, or lessons learned throughout the internship experience.

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Evaluation Criteria

Attendance and Reliability – 25%
Professionalism – 20%
Program Participation and Engagement – 35%
Final Reflection Requirement – 10%
Supervisor Evaluation – 10%

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