

Taronga Zoo: Could you be their next volunteer?

By Nelly Year 4



Could you be Taronga Zoo's next volunteer, helping the zoo and its animals in the name of conservation and education?

Importance of volunteers to society

Volunteering is a powerful, practical and sustainable way to contribute to improve our society; it is encouraging people to participate in the development of their local, national and global community.

There are many benefits of volunteering; it is one of the best ways to generate strong relationships and make new friends. Volunteering can also build up self-confidence, and it can be good for your physical health.

"We take people on tours around the zoo and telling them all about the animals, we meet and greet people and give them maps, we give them directions, we do things like spot guiding," Susan Barisic said.

Volunteering statistics in Australia

In 2010, 36.2% of people aged 18 and up have engaged in formal volunteering. Australian volunteers worked a total of 713 million hours in 2006. The reason most people volunteer is because they want to help others and the society.

You can help Taronga Zoo and their animals by volunteering. There are a variety of roles you can choose from including; guest experience, life sciences, short term and bush regeneration volunteers.

"I suppose the most interesting thing being a volunteer, in general meaning is all the fantastic and different animals the zoo has, and the thing that's been very good for me to learn is about the conservation that Taronga does so we're not just about people visiting animals," Susanne Barissic said.

Taronga Zoo also has a program to support teens 13-19 years old, who genuinely care about wildlife, Youth at the Zoo (YATZ) offers them the opportunity for fun and educational experiences both inside and outside the zoo, during the holidays.

*Did you know that
62.6 million people
volunteer a year?*

Guest experience volunteers get the chance of working in the information centre, advising visitors, handing out maps; participating in interpretation activities; spot guiding (providing information and navigation to visitors on the grounds); conducting visitor surveys, assisting with crowd control and even helping with special events.



Taronga Zoo does not currently have an education program, but if you would like to assist their education department, Taronga Zoo has administrative assistant roles available.

Bush Regeneration Volunteers helps Taronga Zoo's horticulture staff with bush regeneration, mainly of Taronga's native bushland properties, on the harbour foreshore.

"The thing that's been very good for me to learn is about the conservation that Taronga does so we're not just about people visiting animals," Susan Barisic said.

You might be one of the lucky 90 people who get to be part of Taronga Zoo's centenary celebrations, such as special birthday events, you're helping the zoo and having fun.

If you do want to volunteer this is the procedure. You first need to decide on which volunteer position you would like to apply for, and then you find out the dates of the opening applications. When recruitments open select a criteria and fill out the application form for your advertised position, then send Taronga Zoo your application form and selection criteria by the closing date. (Unsolicited applications will not be accepted, applicants must only apply for positions that open).

If you are enjoying your time as a volunteer you might want to think about changing into a zoo keeper, it may be more challenging than you think, but it is very rewarding. You need to have experience working with animals, since you will be working at a veterinary surgery, wildlife park, RSPCA, animal welfare organisation, dog training, wildlife rescue agency, kennel, animal breeder or an animal groomer.

Complete a certificate II in Animal Studies and a certificate III in Captive Animals through a register training organisation like Taronga's register training organisation, the Taronga training institute. A large part of a zoo keeper's responsibility is giving information to visitors, so you might want some training with public speaking.

Once you have completed a certificate gain some experience within a zoo such as Taronga's program which enables people to get real hands-on experience. When you are a student of the Taronga Training Institute you are placed as an intern keeper to complete the required practical component of the course.

Everyone has different reasons of why they want to volunteer, here are some benefits of volunteering to help you decide why you want to volunteer. By volunteering you gain new skills and it is a great way to make new friends, there are lots of other benefits that you can make if you just try to volunteer.

Changes in zoo

Long before Sydney's Taronga Zoo opens its gates each and every morning, a team of zookeepers, vets, technicians, horticulturalists and volunteers gets to work to keep the 28-hectare site that way.

Little surprises veteran volunteer Elizabeth Finch, who remembers the days when "zoo do" was sold as compost for \$2 a bag (animal waste is now processed by a contractor) and bicycling monkeys were kept to entertain at children's birthday parties.

"They didn't know in those days," the volunteer of 32 years says about the changing practices of zoo keeping. "There were a lot of concrete enclosures and they kept animals separated from each other," Susan Barisic said.

The zoo has put the call out for an extra 90 volunteers, who are needed to -assist with special birthday events throughout the year.

The volunteers, who will be part of the guest experience team, will also guide visitors around the Mosman site, conduct historical walks and tours of the floral clock, which the zoo is redoing for the centenary.

She said that volunteers will play a crucial role in helping spread the zoo's conservation message — protection of 10 legacy species over the next 100 years, including the platypus and bilby. I hope that this article has encouraged you to at least consider being a volunteer at Taronga Zoo.

This is how Taronga zoo demonstrates their value. It's **basic!**

Be supportive and enthusiastic

Acept and take responsibility

Show dignity and respect

Innovate and take initiative

Clear and simple