

Zoo Careers

Zoo Keeping is a very popular career and new positions at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo draw lots of applicants. It is therefore very important that applicants make the best impression in their application to increase their chance of being invited for interview.

Read the job advert carefully and complete the application form and write a covering letter as if you were applying for this position.

Job Advert

TRAINEE KEEPER

**Based at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo
Bedfordshire**

£14,805 p.a. inclusive

You will require some experience of working with animals while you carry out day to day duties under the supervision of senior staff. Some familiarity with accepted husbandry practices and standards and an interest in breeding programmes and conservation is required. You will also be expected to undertake the appropriate studies to progress within the Keeper training programme.

Good communication skills and experience of dealing with the public is essential, together with the ability to work effectively within a team. Hours are 37.5 per week, worked within a roster which includes weekends.

To apply please forward your CV and a covering letter highlighting your suitability to:
HR Department, ZSL by 1st January 2014.

Read about our work on www.zsl.org/

Registered Charity in England and Wales Number: 208728



Job Application Form

Please carefully complete each section of the form in black ink or typewritten and send to HR departments.
Please note, we are unable to accept speculative applications

POST APPLIED FOR:

DEPARTMENT/ LOCATION:

DATE AVAILABLE TO START:

Surname:

First Names:

Title:

Other surnames you have been known by:

Address:

Post code:

Home Tel:

Mobile Tel:

Email address:

PRESENT OR MOST RECENT EMPLOYMENT

Employer:

Address:

Telephone :

From:

To:

Salary: £

Job Title:

Grade if applicable:

Main Responsibilities:

Notice Period:

Reason for Leaving:



EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Please give details of all previous employment starting with the most recent (including periods of unemployment). If you are still in full time education, please give details of any vacation or part time employment. The information given may be used to obtain references at a later date.

Employer	Employed from _ / _ / _	Employed to _ / _ / _	Position held, duties and reasons for leaving
Full Name and Address			
Full Name and Address			
Full Name and Address			

Please continue on a separate sheet using the same format if necessary



EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Starting with the most recent:

School / College or University	Subject or Course	Examination e.g. GCSE	Grade



SUPPORTING STATEMENT

In this section you must give full details of how your skills, abilities and experience match the person specification of the post that you are applying for. *Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary.* **(Please note that CV's will not be accepted as a supporting statement)**



REFERENCES

Please give the details of two referees who can verify your employment record and give information about your suitability for this post. References must include one current and one previous employer. If you have worked for one employer, for your second reference please chose someone who can comment on your ability to meet the requirements of the job. If you have not been in paid employment, one reference must be from a School/College/University and one from someone who can comment on your ability to meet the requirements of the job.

Name:	Name:
Job Title:	Job Title:
Address:	Address:
Tel(:	Tel(:
Fax Number:	Fax Number:
Email Address:	Email Address:

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING DECLARATION CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING THIS FORM

I declare that the information given in this application is to the best of my knowledge complete and correct. I understand that the Society reserves the right to seek verification of any information provided. I understand that if it is discovered that I have given false information I may be dismissed from the Society's employment. I suffer no legal impediment to taking up appointment.

The Society complies with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I agree to the Society using the information contained in this form for the proper administration of the recruitment process and should I be successful I agree that the information will be used as part of the employment relationship.

Signature.....**Date**.....

Name (Print).....

Covering Letter

Preparing for Your Job Interview

Congratulations! You made it to the interview stage.

Please attend a formal interview with our HR department at 10:45

What would you wear for a formal interview at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo?

The zoo opens at 10:00am and your interview is at 10:45am. The X31 bus timetable can be found below:

ARRIVES Whipsnade Zoo	0740	0930	1130	1330	1530
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Which bus, if any would you catch for your interview?

How would you get to your interview if you decided not to take the bus?

What items would you need to take with you for your interview? *E.g. A mobile phone and telephone number for the zoo in case I am running late*

Job Interview

Your interview is at 10:45am and you will be asked some questions and asked to complete a comprehension exercise about an animal that you may be working with.

Hello. Please introduce and tell us a little bit about yourself.

Which three words would your friends use to describe you?

Give an example of how you have worked as a team to achieve something

Job Interview Continued:

Give an example of a time when you had to act responsibly

What would you expect to be your job responsibilities as a Trainee Zoo Keeper at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo?

Tell us why you think that ZSL Whipsnade Zoo should offer you the position of Trainee Zoo Keeper

Zoo Keeper Comprehension

When you see him leading nine of them on a constitutional along the top of the Downs, it's hard to believe that assistant curator Lee Sambrook hasn't always been an elephant enthusiast. But his career as a keeper began with some considerably fiercer creatures. After leaving school at 16, he landed a job at his local zoo, and within two weeks was working with a lion. His desire to build his knowledge of big cats led him to move from zoo to zoo, grabbing as much as possible in the way of hands-on experience, until he ended up at ZSL London Zoo.



He was unimpressed when, several months in, he was told he needed to leave cats behind. 'I was being moved to work with the Asian elephants, whether I liked it or not,' Lee recalls. 'It wasn't really for me.'

At that time, ZSL had one elephant, and the transition of working with a mellow Nellie rather than ferocious felines wasn't one Lee found easy. But after the Zoo acquired three more elephants, and a twist of fate made him second in charge at just 24 years old, his feelings began to change.

'I saw that you could nurture a relationship with the elephants, and that really struck me. The fact that you're always sharing the same space with an animal, rather than just looking after one through a barrier, was the biggest difference to working with the big cats.'

It was also the biggest challenge. 'Stepping in with something means you have to be aware of lots of different things going on around you,' says Lee. 'The bond is very important between you because of the potential risk.'

Since the herd moved to ZSL Whipsnade Zoo from ZSL London Zoo in 2001, it has grown considerably. There are now three 32-year-old cows; baby Max, born at Whipsnade last October; and teens, toddlers and lone bull Emmett in between – and the challenges facing the ZSL team have increased accordingly. It's fortunate Lee has the support of seven other keepers. From vast amounts of cleaning (the elephants' barn takes two hours a day to muck out) to baths and enrichment, there's a lot to do.

Personality Traits

Training isn't just for the young calves – it forms an important part of each elephant's routine. Lee and his team dedicate time each day to teaching them new behaviours, such as lifting their trunks or opening their mouths for dental check-ups. It's not just a practical necessity, but a way of keeping the animals stimulated – and helps the keepers foster bonds with the elephants and get to know each as an individual. 'You learn their

Secondary Resource: ZSL Whipsnade Zoo

personalities and what makes them tick,' says Lee, 'as well as their learning capacity and quickness of thinking. After working with quite a few, you know how long it should take to train each one. As with people, you have some that are very clever and some that are perhaps not quite as bright.'

Regular visitors to ZSL Whipsnade Zoo will know that one of the ways the keepers boost enrichment is with a daily walk around the Zoo. Once they've had a bath and the barn has been cleaned, the keepers round up the elephants – usually in groups of up to five, although sometimes as many as nine go together – for a lap of the grounds. 'Nine elephants is probably the most walked at one time in any zoo in Europe,' says Lee, 'which is quite something.' Admitting he may be biased, he suggests the walks are one reason the elephants 'are perhaps the most popular animals at Whipsnade. I don't think there are many zoos that walk their elephants with the public.'

The walk culminates with a spectacular view, and the elephants stop to graze on the side of the Downs. 'It's one of the most positive things we can do for them,' says Lee. 'Getting them out and giving them access to different areas of the Zoo is really, really good for them. I think they're one of the smartest animals in the world. They're really very curious and quite challenging – they're constantly testing boundaries and seeing what they can get up to.'

It's the moments of one-on-one interaction that Lee enjoys most. 'You can get into the habit, particularly with the restriction of time that we have, of everything being purely business, whereas I like quality time with the elephants. I might have a moment where I think, "Let's have a kick around – or play with the babies".'

But which of the herd is the apple of Lee's eye? Does he have a favourite? Like a diplomatic dad, he says not. 'I like them all equally – even though some are more of a pain than others!'

However, he adds: 'I do like the bull, Emmett, a lot. I think he's a great animal. I have a good relationship with him and just like the way he is.' He also has a long association with Azizah, who came to ZSL London Zoo when she was about one. She's now 30, but Lee can remember bottle-feeding her for the first few months.

Rich in experience

With 30 (or is it 31? Ironically for an elephant keeper, he can't remember) years of pachyderm proficiency under his belt, it's no wonder Lee's expertise is in demand. As well as helping out on research projects, he spends a significant amount of time passing his knowledge on to others. He's lectured in Thailand on a collaborative course with the Royal Veterinary College and holds elephant schools at Whipsnade, teaching keepers from around the UK. He has also become the go-to guy for zoos around the world, whenever they face challenges with their elephants.

'It's nice, having worked with elephants for so long, to be able to say, "I've been through that, this is how you deal with it",' Lee says. 'We really try and push the sharing of information because the elephants, wherever they are, will benefit.'



Secondary Resource: ZSL Whipsnade Zoo

Call him an expert at your peril, though. 'I'm not a lover of that term because there's always something that comes up where I think, "Jeez, how do you deal with that?" Plus there are people out there who have worked with elephants for nearly 50 years. They're the guys I turn to.'

The biggest 'jeez' moments Lee has faced have been during births. 'It's quite a challenge to get a live calf out of an elephant,' he says. 'It should be the most natural thing in the world – but it is quite difficult.' There have now been eight calves born at Whipsnade, and Lee's welcomed almost all of them into the world. 'I think I missed two by just five minutes because I was catching up on some sleep after waiting up all of the previous night,' he recalls. 'But it's nice to be part of the team that reared ZSL's first calf.'

Lee's move to the elephants may not have been something he volunteered for, but he's now incredibly grateful to have had that push. 'It's probably the best thing that's ever happened to me. It's given me so many opportunities, and the skills I've gained are immeasurable.'

Is it an easy job? No – but it's certainly rewarding. 'Unless you're really passionate about it and want to learn as much as you can,' says Lee, 'you will never be that good at it. You can't do half a job with elephants, you have to throw everything into it.'

Fortunately, no one could accuse him of doing anything less.

Questions

In what year did the elephants move to ZSL Whipsnade Zoo?

How many zoo keepers work on the Elephant section at ZSL Whipsnade Zoo?

Why does Lee Sambrook believe it is a good idea to take the elephants for a walk?

In your opinion, do you think that you would enjoy working with elephants?

Give examples from the article to back-up your opinion.

Useful Weblinks

Learn more about ZSL:

www.zsl.org

Discover sessions and resources for schools at ZSL:

www.zsl.org/zsl-whipsnade-zoo/schools

Information about Zoo Academy, a hands-on introduction to zoo careers for 15—17 year olds:

www.zsl.org/education/careers-and-courses/zoo-academy-15-17-year-olds

Zoo Keeper Job Profile:

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/planning/jobprofiles/Pages/Zookeeper.aspx

Information about careers, volunteering and courses in zoos and aquariums in the UK:

www.zsl.org/about-us/jobs

www.biaza.org.uk/careers/careers-in-zoos

www.abwak.org

Careers advice for 13—16 year olds:

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/youngpeople/Pages/Youngpeople.aspx