

The Herpetology Department

Students will gain valuable insight into the husbandry of a wide variety of reptile, amphibian and invertebrate species, several of which we are keeping in biosecure/quarantine setups as part of our field conservation projects.

Students will spend half of their internship in the Herpetology section, where they will work with a variety of lizard, snake and turtle species. The other half of their internship will be in the Chelonians & Invertebrates section, which manages the zoo's tortoise and invertebrate species, as well as maintaining the large and diverse live food colony of the department.

Students will have the opportunity to learn about the care and biology of a wide range of species, some of which are on show to the public and others which are kept permanently behind the scenes. A student will get to see first-hand how our small but very busy herpetology department is run and get the chance to work within a motivated, experienced team in a conservation-oriented organisation. This training placement is an exciting opportunity to work in a department that has very close involvement and overlap with our field programmes. Students will be able to learn on actual examples how captive programmes contribute to recovery efforts on the ground.

What will I be doing?

Activity	Understanding/Knowledge gained
Daily upkeep of public areas and exhibits as well as daily husbandry routines for off-show enclosures; this includes e.g., changing substrates, spraying, maintaining ponds, cleaning food and drink bowls etc.	Understanding the husbandry needs of a diversity of herpetological species. Improve cleaning techniques and, in general, apply very close attention to detail. Understanding biosecurity protocols and techniques and the importance of good hygiene for preventing spread of disease incl. zoonosis.
Food preparation and feeding	Understanding nutritional requirements of various species and age classes. How to prepare feeds for various species and how to feed different individuals or groups. Monitoring animals as they feed and understanding feeding behaviours.
Care of food insect colonies	Knowledge of breeding and care of a variety of insect species used to feed our reptiles and amphibians. Importance and adjustment of nutritional quality of diets.
Cleaning enclosures, equipment and other materials used daily	Appropriate cleaning and disinfection equipment and methods.
Spraying/watering, checking plants for parasites, monitoring temperatures, humidity, UV radiation levels, lighting etc.	Understanding environmental requirements of different species and how to provide and maintain these with a close attention to detail.
Maintaining and renewing enclosures (e.g., new perching, substrates, plants)	Understanding individual requirements of species, enclosure design and provision of safe environments for species. Might at times include some use of tools and practical skills.

Activity	Understanding/Knowledge gained
Monitoring the behaviour and health of animals	Understanding aspects of the biology and behaviour of species and the signs for identification of potential problems and how to remedy these. How to determine the sex of our animals.
Collection of samples for laboratory testing	How to collect e.g., faecal samples and submit them for testing.
Moving animals between enclosures	Correct capture and restraint techniques.
Observation of veterinary procedures	Various, as and when possible.
Care of eggs, hatchlings, tadpoles	Incubation techniques and husbandry of juveniles

Would I be good for this placement?

You should ideally be studying or have studied a relevant college degree or diploma and/or have some knowledge of working with exotic animals although previous experience is not strictly necessary as all training will be provided. An interest in herpetology is a distinct advantage. Good verbal and written English communication skills are required.

The herpetology team is a small and extremely dedicated group of keepers and they will expect similar levels of enthusiasm and interest in someone working in their department.



A conscientious, constant, and reliable approach to the work is paramount, as would be an active approach to learning anything besides the daily husbandry skills, if you are interested and want to make the most of your stay.

You will need to have a good level of health and fitness and need to be able to work for prolonged periods in hot and humid environments. There will be no work with venomous or poisonous species. You will be expected to work with our insect breeding colonies.

Below is a list of the species that we currently work with. More information on the work we carry out with these species in the wild can be found on our website www.durrell.org. Perhaps look up a few of them on the IUCN Red List and find out how threatened they are <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

AMPHIBIANS (scientific name)	Common name
<i>Dendrobates tinctorius</i>	Blue poison dart frog
<i>Phyllobates terribilis</i>	Golden poison dart frog
<i>Oophaga pumilio</i>	Strawberry poison frog
<i>Ranitomeya vanzolinii</i>	Brazilian poison frog
<i>Ranitomeya amazonica</i>	Amazon poison frog
<i>Trachycephalus resinifictrix</i>	Mission golden-eyed tree frog
<i>Leptodactylus fallax</i>	Mountain chicken frog
REPTILES (scientific name)	Common name
<i>Astrochelys radiata</i>	Radiated tortoise
<i>Astrochelys yniphora</i>	Ploughshare tortoise
<i>Chelonoidis niger</i>	Galapagos giant tortoise
<i>Pyxis planicauda</i>	Madagascar flat-tailed tortoise
<i>Aldabrachelys gigantea</i>	Aldabra giant tortoise
<i>Erymnochelys madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar big-headed turtle
<i>Cuora picturata</i>	Vietnamese box turtle
<i>Rieppeleon brevicaudatus</i>	Bearded pygmy chameleon
<i>Anolis grahami</i>	Jamaican anole
<i>Anolis leachii</i>	Antiguan anole
<i>Cyclura nubila</i>	Cuban iguana
<i>Iguana delicatissima</i>	Lesser Antillean iguana
<i>Laemactus serratus</i>	Casque-headed iguana
<i>Leiocephalus carinatus</i>	Curly-tailed lizard
<i>Lepidodactylus lugubris</i>	Mourning gecko
<i>Lygodactylus williamsi</i>	Turquoise dwarf gecko
<i>Phelsuma guimbeaui</i>	Mauritius day gecko
<i>Phelsuma grandis</i>	Giant Madagascar day gecko
<i>Nactus coindmirensis</i>	Lesser night gecko
<i>Gongylomorphus fontenayi</i>	Orange-tailed skink
<i>Gongylomorphus bojerii</i>	Bojer's skink
<i>Cryptoblepharus boutonii</i>	Bouton's skink
<i>Leiopisma telfairii</i>	Telfair's skink
<i>Heloderma horridum</i>	Mexican beaded lizard
<i>Varanus prasinus</i>	Emerald monitor
<i>Acrantophis dumerilii</i>	Madagascar ground boa
<i>Corallus caninus</i>	Emerald tree boa
<i>Gonyosoma oxycephala</i>	Red-tailed rat snake
<i>Alsophis rijgersmaei</i>	Anguilla racer
<i>Vipera berus</i>	European adder

REPTILES (scientific name)	Common name
<i>Casarea dussumieri</i>	Round Island boa
<i>Sanzinia madagascariensis</i>	Madagascar tree boa
INVERTEBRATES (scientific name)	Common name
<i>Pachnodus fregatensis</i>	Fregate Island Enid Snails
<i>Polposipus herculeanus</i>	Fregate Island giant beetle
<i>Dynastes tityus</i>	Unicorn beetle
<i>Lasiodora parahybana</i>	Brazilian salmon tarantula
<i>Pterinochilus murinus</i>	Mombasa golden starburst tarantula
<i>Sechelleptus seyschellarum</i>	Seychelles giant millipede
<i>Siligofera grandis</i>	Giant hooded katydid
Multiple species	Tropical butterflies