

Guidelines for Student Internships – ReNewZoo

The overall goal of ReNewZoo is to train the next generation of conservation professionals. ReNewZoo graduates will not only have a solid grounding in conservation, ecology and evolution, but will also will understand and be able to navigate the zoo/aquarium context and have additional skills necessary for modern in situ/ex situ conservation. These skills include knowledge of genetic and demographic management of captive populations, population viability analysis, data analysis, animal care, and reintroduction strategies. ReNewZoo students will also gain the skills necessary for the workplace, including internal communication, project management, leadership, proposal writing, employee management, and science communication and outreach.

In order to immerse students in the professional environment and to offer meaningful mentoring, all ReNewZoo graduate students must engage in 4-month internships (1 or 2 internships for MSc's, 2 to 4 for PhD's) at a zoo or aquarium accredited by CAZA, AZA or by EAZA. Students may also work

These internships will serve two main functions. First, they will expose students to the specialized zoo/aquarium environment, giving them an appreciation of professional etiquette and the nature of the work in a professional setting. Second, they will become familiar with the practical aspects of working in a zoo/aquarium setting. In this regard, we encourage all zoos/aquariums to develop an on-the-job program, where ReNewZoo students will (for example)

1. Shadow individuals in key roles for a period of time (e.g. a curator, registrar and/or conservation biologist for a period of time).
2. Work with record-keepers/registrars and become familiar with the various record keeping procedures, including studbooks, ZIMS (Zoological Information Management System) from Species360, and TRACKS.
3. Gain practical experience working with captive populations (e.g. husbandry, behavioural husbandry, nutritional management, welfare, life support systems etc.)
4. Become familiar with various organizational structures associated with species conservation in the zoo/aquarium context, including Species Survival Commission (SSC) committees, and the Species Survival Plans (SSP) produced by Taxon Advisory Groups.
5. Become familiar with software that is used to plan captive breeding programs such as PMx (pedigree analysis), Vortex (population viability analysis), and Outbreak (wildlife epidemiology models for risk assessment of wildlife disease)
6. Assist conservation research or actions that accredited zoo's spearhead in the wild (eg. reintroductions).

In many cases, we expect that internships will also serve as an opportunity to collect data as part of the student's research thesis.