

## **Naturalist/Keeper**

### **Job Classification-Non-Exempt**

**Reports To: Education Lead**

**\$17.00/Hour**

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### **Park Overview**

Wildlife Prairie Park has often been referred to as a jewel in the Midwest. Located just outside of Peoria, Illinois, this 2,000-acre zoological park is home to over 150 animals representing more than 50 species native to Illinois. Our guests come to learn about wolves, bison, waterfowl, black bears, elk, cougar, otters and much more. The park opened in 1978 and since its inception Wildlife Prairie Park has strived to promote its mission of conservation, education, and recreation.

Wildlife Prairie Park continues to grow as a premier destination for wildlife education, conservation, outdoor recreation, and immersive guest experiences. The Park strives to connect people with nature while supporting conservation initiatives and community engagement.

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### **Position Summary**

In this engaging role at Wildlife Prairie Park, the Naturalist inspires curiosity and fosters a deeper connection with nature through interactive public programs, educational presentations, and community outreach.

The Naturalist plays a vital role in connecting diverse audiences with local wildlife and biodiversity through guided hikes, interpretive programs, and engaging educational experiences. This position supports the park's mission of conservation, education, and recreation while helping create meaningful guest experiences.

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### **Essential Duties and Responsibilities**

- Conduct and assist with various interpretive programs for school groups.
- Lead guided hikes for the purpose of identifying and enjoying local biodiversity.
- Maintain animal record keeping systems including utilizing ZIMS Species360 to track animal health, diets, behavior and veterinary care, especially for animals related to lead roles.
- Conduct an ongoing biodiversity project through iNaturalist and bioblitz events.
- Conduct water quality tests on park property.

- Curate and present weekly Critters & Coffee lecture series targeted toward adults with a broad range of topics on wildlife and ecology.
  - Curate and present weekly Critters & Cookies classes and crafts targeted toward elementary-aged children with a focus on local wildlife and conservation.
  - Present educational programs to classes of all ages both at the park and through outreach programs.
  - Participate in monthly appearances on the local news with an animal ambassador to inform the public about upcoming park events.
  - Present daily interpretive programs to the general public.
  - Conduct interpretive programs at special functions.
  - Assist with special events such as Night in the Wild, Wildlife Scary Park, and Santa's Wildlife Express.
  - Assist in certain opening and closing procedures and trail monitoring; research materials and design static education displays; and assist with daily or special activities within the education department.
  - Assist in the care and handling of raptors, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals including animal diets and enrichment.
  - Assist veterinary staff with exams, vaccinations and training.
  - Assist in bison and elk herd management including spring and fall roundups.
  - Perform enclosure maintenance and safety checks.
  - Operate and maintain a variety of related tools, vehicles, and equipment including computers.
  - Participate in relevant meetings, workshops, and conferences to stay current with best practices.
  - Other duties as assigned.
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## **Minimum Requirements**

### **Education and Experience**

- Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science, Wildlife Biology, Ecology, or related field and/or equivalent experience.
  - Minimum 1–2 years of experience in environmental education, interpretation, wildlife, or a related field.
  - 1–2 years of experience caring for and handling live animals.
  - Experience conducting programs for diverse audiences such as school groups, families, and the general public.
  - Valid driver's license required.
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### **Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities**

- Strong understanding of local ecology, wildlife, and biodiversity.
  - Familiarity with conservation principles and environmental science.
  - Demonstrated knowledge of interpretive techniques for engaging diverse audiences.
  - Experience with citizen science platforms such as iNaturalist, ZIMS, or similar systems and coordination of programs such as BioBlitz events.
  - Understanding of public communication techniques including media appearances and public speaking.
  - Ability to build positive relationships with colleagues, volunteers, and the public.
  - Skilled in working cooperatively with other staff members, volunteers, and stakeholders to plan and execute educational programs and events.
  - Capable of managing tasks independently while demonstrating resourcefulness and initiative.
  - Willingness to adjust to changing program needs, weather conditions, or audience dynamics with a positive and solution-oriented attitude.
  - Comfortable serving as a visible ambassador for Wildlife Prairie Park during public events and media appearances.
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### **Interpersonal Skills**

- Skilled in listening to audience questions and feedback, allowing for responsive and meaningful interactions during programs and presentations.
  - Demonstrates a welcoming, positive attitude that encourages visitor interest and creates memorable learning experiences.
  - Sensitivity to cultural differences and the ability to communicate in a respectful and inclusive manner.
  - Willingness to support coworkers and volunteers, offering help and cooperation to achieve shared goals.
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### **Physical Demands and Working Conditions**

This position requires the ability to lift 50–100 pounds (team lift when necessary) and work outdoors in varying weather conditions including heat, cold, rain, and snow. The role requires walking on uneven terrain, leading hikes, and working in outdoor environments.

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### **Benefits:**

- Dental insurance
- Employee assistance program
- Employee discount
- Health insurance

- Life insurance
- Paid time off
- Retirement plan
- Vision insurance