**Holly Ringer**

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing in response to the zookeeper position. I was extremely pleased to hear about this great opportunity, as I am currently looking for a new challenge within my field of study and area of passion.

My drive to develop my knowledge and work with animals has only expanded over the years throughout my education and work experience. The first extensive observational experience was at Shuttleworth College where I completed Level 3 Animal Management Extended Diploma. Shuttleworth College have a large number of species within their animal care centre and I could work in this centre weekly.

Studying BSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare at Chester University provided experience in my first year of my course as it was at Reaseheath College which had great similarities to my time at Shuttleworth College. This was due to each week working within Reaseheath Zoo and carrying out tasks such as cleaning enclosures, helping with enrichment and preparing food for various animals. My university degree has also allowed me to improve my communicative skills by having several assessed presentations both in a team and as an individual. Similarly, the knowledge in which I have gained from my years of animal education can allow me to work with the highest standards to sustain and improve animal welfare.

My degree also gave me the opportunity to do work-experience in Costa Rica. The two weeks spent there consisted of mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian surveys. The measures in which we carried out to record the data included: point surveys, transects and scan sampling. We researched and identified many species*,* as well as setting out camera traps to capture the range of animals. I love to keep up with any volunteering or work experience I can, to not only gain experience but also for my enjoyment as it is something I am extremely passionate about.

I first started as a volunteer at The Big Cat Sanctuary. I came in one day a week to help the cat team working with the cats also take guests out on tours. I was trained up to have a green key (enabling me to take myself and guests into ‘stand-off’ areas where you are only a small distance away from the cats with just the enclosure mesh in-between us), and I could also carry out tours and handfeeds. Eager to do more I became their intern in July 2019.

Due to already being able to interact with the guests and having my green key, I was able to first start my training on small cats. This included being able to clean enclosures and feed the cats without supervision, and also being trusted to go into the enclosures with the small cats. I have also become a cheetah second, enabling a keeper and I to go into the cheetah enclosures to clean, feed and do training sessions. There are 14 species of cats at the sanctuary and I have been fortunate enough to train on units containing 11 of these species. Each unit is different, from the way you must work with that specific cat, to the way you can shut in each cat. This therefore challenges you to be constantly using your brain to figure out the safest and stress-free way to work around the cats in your care. I am extremely grateful to have started training a tigress called Narnia who is 15 and took to positive reinforcement training very quickly. I was able to get her target trained, and also desensitize her to being touched on her thigh with the other end of the target stick, in hope that vaccinations can one day be given without any stressful stimuli (see pictures below).

The reason for applying to volunteer at The Big Cat Sanctuary and then intern, was due to the immediate experience with carnivores that I would be able to get. This allowed me to quickly witness what a carnivore keeper is like and get the hands-on experience I was so eager to have. There are zoos in which I have grown up around and that were closer to home, however I was willing to travel and eventually move for my career. Carnivores are the order I am most interested in working with, therefore taking these opportunities has helped me get closer to the career I am keen to be involved in. I believe I am ready for the next challenge and step in my career from the experience I currently have, and the work I am willing to put in.

My time at The Big Cat Sanctuary has also allowed me to learn and teach our visitors about CCF and what it is the organisation does. Being a conservation organisation that we work so closely with and seeing the work done by CCF, it has encouraged me to look further into my career with carnivores and conservation. Working in a zoo environment during my education and my internship has shown me how much I would enjoy a permanent keeper role.

Due to working with and having an interest in a variety of exotic species I am keen to learn more about their husbandry and behavioural needs. My previous education has allowed me to gain extensive knowledge in behaviour and welfare of many species, however, I am always learning and willing to learn further to broaden my knowledge for animals in zoological collections and conservation. I am extremely driven and passionate about working within this industry.

Within my previous roles, I have always taken the initiative to carry out tasks that need completing. My jobs have allowed me to engage with customers in several situations. I am confident and willing to delve into any responsibility that is put in front of me and become a valued member of a team. I believe that throughout my work experience, five years of education and years during my employment, I have gained invaluable skills and confidence to work with both animals and people.

From both working and throughout my education, I have had to use many IT systems and databases. I am very organised, enjoy being busy and keeping active, therefore working in a physical environment with animals and people has been natural to me for many years now. Similarly, my experience has allowed me to be a confident speaker and able to work in changing environments within a team and independently when needed.

I believe I would be ideal for this role as it not only suits my personality, but it would align perfectly with my previous work experience and studies, allowing me to practice all that I have learnt in the last seven years. I am confident that with my background, skills, and enthusiasm I can provide the Cheetah Conservation Fund with the candidate you are looking for.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards,

Holly Ringer

A person standing next to a fence

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