



Volunteer, Internships and Research Opportunities TACUGAMA CHIMPANZEE SANCTUARY, SIERRA LEONE, WEST AFRICA

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary operates dynamic volunteer, internship and research programs to national and international volunteers and students. Volunteers are required to commit to a minimum of 2 weeks and have a passion for wildlife conservation and aspects related to running a wildlife sanctuary. Interns are required to commit to a minimum of 4 weeks. Researcher stay duration will vary depending on the type of study being undertaken.

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary currently house 79 chimpanzees rescued from commercial hunting, human-wildlife conflict, and the pet trade. Our rescued chimpanzees graduate through 5 different stages, the last being large diverse forest enclosures, with the eventual goal of release into the wild. Western chimpanzees are critically endangered and are constantly under threat in Sierra Leone, which contains 15% of the global population. As the only organization in the country actively committed to their protection, our mission is incredibly important to the survival of the Western chimpanzee, and chimpanzees globally.

Tacugama also aims to conserve wild chimpanzees in Sierra Leone via outreach education, field research, law enforcement and alternative livelihood implementation. Teaching communities to make sustainable uses of their natural resources is incredibly important in the success of wildlife habitat conservation projects. Field research in these communities allows Tacugama to focus its efforts in areas with high concentrations of vulnerable species.

Volunteering:

Volunteering at Tacugama will give you the opportunity to develop your skills and expertise, understand more of the challenges facing wildlife and habitat conservation, and learn much about the history of Sierra Leone.

Volunteers participate in all aspects of our work and the volunteer role is varied. Volunteer activities include: assisting with chimpanzee husbandry activities such as preparing food, cleaning and enriching enclosures (but no direct contact with chimps); assisting our community outreach team with education and reforestation activities; assisting our rangers on forest anti-poaching patrols; assisting with behavioural data collection and research; marketing and administration; and maintenance tasks.

In order to ensure you get the best experience here at Tacugama, we try to match your skill set with our needs whilst ensuring you get the opportunity to conduct a wide range of activities to increase your personal development. Tacugama staff members provide training and supervision but we also encourage you to use your initiative to further your personal and professional development.

Volunteers also get plenty of opportunities to explore Sierra Leone. It is a very safe country and has many beautiful beaches, fun nightlife, interesting culture, and wonderful wildlife. We endeavour to ensure that volunteers get lots of opportunities on their days off to enjoy these activities.

Tacugama provides volunteers with on-site shared accommodation, three meals per day and transport for a weekly supermarket run. We also help volunteers to arrange activities on their days off with trusted local tour operators. Volunteer fees can be seen in the table below.

Volunteers are required to commit to a minimum of two weeks and must provide certificates for an up-to-date tetanus vaccination, yellow fever vaccination and a negative TB test result. Volunteers are also required to bring evidence of their personal health/travel insurance.

Internships:

Students studying conservation biology, wildlife conservation, environmental science, zoology, education, veterinary science, or a related degree will benefit from participating in our tailored internship programs. The minimum recommended duration for an internship is 4 weeks but ideally students will stay for 8 - 12 weeks. We offer students the opportunity to do a *Wildlife Conservation Internship*, or a *Veterinary Internship*.

Wildlife Conservation Interns will learn about the different aspects of operating a wildlife conservation organization. Interns will split their time between the different sections of the organization, including the chimpanzee sanctuary, the education and outreach department, the veterinary department and the administration department. Interns will learn about and assist with many aspects of chimpanzee husbandry provisioning i.e. cleaning, feeding, enrichment provision, enclosure maintenance and animal welfare assessment. Additionally, interns will actively participate with community education, wildlife sensitization, and reforestation projects on and off site with the Tacugama Community Outreach Program (TCOP).

Veterinary Interns (for students studying vet medicine, vet nursing and vet technicians) will learn about all aspects of chimpanzee veterinary care. Under the supervision of our veterinary staff, interns will learn about chimpanzee medicine including: aspects as physiology, anatomy, pharmacology, and physiopathology; laboratory and diagnostic tests; nutrition; ethology; mental health; anaesthesia; preventive medicine; one health aspects; and in some cases surgery. Interns will also learn about handling and restraint such as dart preparing for blow pipes and dart gun. Interns will attend weekly academic discussions and twice monthly presentations (case reports/specific topics relating to the species). Veterinary Interns will also assist with other sanctuary tasks as and when required, such as: chimpanzee husbandry (food preparation, den cleaning and enrichment preparation); record keeping; community outreach and education; anti-poaching patrols with forest rangers, research, administration, and maintenance tasks.

Please Note: Veterinary interns are required to have evidence of the following vaccinations: Tetanus, Yellow fever, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Rabies, Polio, HIV, and a negative TB test result. Extra vaccinations may be required depending on the country of origin. Vet interns will undergo a 2-week quarantine period before direct contact with the chimps is allowed. Following that, surgical face masks will be provided and must be worn at all times.

All Internship Students will be provided with regular reviews and feedback reports as required by their affiliated University. Students do not have to be affiliated with a university to do an internship but must have an appropriate background/experience in their chosen internship subject.

Research Opportunities:

Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary offers scientific research opportunities to national and international university students studying conservation biology, wildlife conservation, environmental science, veterinary science, education studies, communication, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) or related degrees. We encourage students to conduct their bachelor, master's and PhD thesis research with Tacugama. We have opportunities for on and off-site research in some of the following areas: chimpanzee behavioural studies; community perception research; disease investigation; diet analysis; anti-poaching activities; biology of threatened species (such as pygmy hippo, colobus monkey, Diana monkey, timneh parrot, African manatee, pangolin, hooded vulture); and canopy cover and habitat use research.

Specific Research Projects:

Mystery Chimpanzee Disease: Tacugama has an ongoing seasonal mortality that has been named the "Mysterious Disease". The sanctuary's resident veterinarian and conservation manager require volunteer assistants to study this disease which presents either as sudden death or a neurological syndrome and always results in death. It is seasonal from February to April (height of the dry season) and location specific to animals with access to the forest (animals in non-forested enclosures are not affected).

Volunteers with the following expertise are needed:

- Epidemiology
- Virology
- Forensics
- Bacteriology
- Microbiology
- Neurology
- Toxicology
- Entomology
- Botany

Specific surveys needed include

1. A comprehensive survey of the botanical composition of the forested enclosures (5 in total, 3 of which chimps inhabit at any given time). Ideally this would include identification of all the leafy plants, trees, fungi, lichen, etc to determine if any of the above are known toxic entities. Of course, the chimps could be restricted from these enclosures during the survey. So, we would be looking for experts in West African plants/fungi (e.g. PhD students, or experts in the field). This has been done once before but was not done to a comprehensive level in all the enclosures.
2. A comprehensive survey of the insect life during March/April in these specific enclosures, with follow-up information, if any, on the identified invertebrates that are potentially dangerous/toxic. Again, we would be looking for experts/individuals well versed in West African entomology. This has never been done before and therefore would be a priority to rule out entomological components to this mystery disease.

White-necked rockfowl research within the Western Area Peninsular National Park:

This species is listed as vulnerable by the IUCN and populations continue to decline. This research aims to identify the nesting sites and plan conservation strategies to protect them from disturbance while managing eco-tourism activities accordingly.

Mobondah Conservation Site: off-site (6-7 hour drive from sanctuary)

Western chimpanzee research. Monitor diet, human-chimpanzee interactions, interactions with other chimpanzee groups, habitat use and identification of new wildlife corridors.

African manatee research. To estimate density, study movement patterns and any other information that can help us to plan conservation strategies for this species and its habitat.

Timneh parrot research. Monitor a translocated group of parrots for potential release.

At Jaibui Island Site: off-site (5-hour drive from sanctuary)

Studies on the density, movement patterns, habitat use of key species to help plan conservation strategies.

Key species include:

- Western chimpanzee
- Pygmy hippo
- Red colobus
- Black and White colobus
- Diana Monkey

- Zebra duiker
- Tree pangolin

Vegetation surveys on the abundance, distribution and phenology of the vegetation that are significant to the key wildlife species of the Island.

Update/develop a fish species list and estimate abundance to help determine which species need protection and to develop sustainable practices for fishing in the area.

Volunteer/Intern/Research Fees:

Fees include accommodation, cooked lunch and dinner, breakfast provisions, use of the laboratory (where appropriate), moderate internet usage and weekly transport to the supermarket.

Fees	2 weeks (\$USD)	3 weeks (\$USD)	4weeks (\$USD)	5 weeks (\$USD)	6 weeks (\$USD)	8 weeks (\$USD)	12 weeks (\$ USD)
Volunteers/ Interns	700	950	1100	1350	1500	1750	2250
Researchers	N/A	N/A	850	1050	1175	1400	1900

Accommodations:

On-site Volunteer House: the volunteer house has 4 single rooms and 2 bathrooms (with flushing toilets and cold showers), a comfortable living room, kitchen with cooker and fridge, and balcony overlooking the forest with a hammock and eating area. The house provides full electricity during office time (9-13 and 14-17) - outside these hours the electricity runs on solar panels and is limited to lights and charging phones.

On-site Research House: the research house has 2 single rooms each with on-suite 2 bathroom (with flushing toilet and cold shower), a comfortable living room, kitchen with cooker and fridge, and balcony overlooking the forest with an and eating area. The house provides full electricity during office time (9-13 and 14-17) - outside these hours the electricity runs on solar panels and is limited to lights and charging phones.

Mobondah Conservation Site: the accommodation is more basic – you will sleep in tents, the toilet is a latrine and shower is a bucket-shower.

Jaibui Island: the accommodation is a small round house with kitchen and solar energy for lights and phone charging. There is a generator available for other uses (laptop or battery charging). The toilet is an outside latrine and the house is located near the shore of the Moa River. The shower is either in the river or bucket-shower.

Support:

Tacugama provides a sanctuary liaison to meet the researcher/student at the airport and assist with the transfer to the ferry to Aberdeen. From Aberdeen, a sanctuary driver will collect the driver and take you directly to the sanctuary. All volunteers/interns/researchers will begin their stay at the sanctuary.

Tacugama can help organize research logistics and field assistants or ranger/guides (depending on researcher needs).

All volunteers, interns and researchers must pay for their own flights, visas, transfers to/from sanctuary, vaccinations and health insurance. Depending on the research being conducted, equipment may be provided.

Interested?

Please email your (1) CV, (2) relevant experience, (3) two letters of reference from academic referees to Sue Orloff, Biologists without Borders (Sue@biologistswithoutborders.org).