

## **Turtle Survival Center Chelonian Husbandry Internship Program South Carolina**

### **Description:**

The Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) is offering a unique opportunity for self-motivated people to gain hands-on experience with the day to day operations of a non-profit chelonian conservation center. The TSA is seeking applicants for full time internships at the TSA's Turtle Survival Center (TSC) in Cross, South Carolina. *Introductory course for those focusing on chelonian husbandry and conservation.*

### **About the Organization:**

In 2013, the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) centralized its base of operations by opening the Turtle Survival Center (TSC) in South Carolina. The TSC has since become recognized as a world-class turtle conservation center, complete with a greenhouse, veterinary clinic, quarantine facility, and multiple indoor/outdoor enclosures. This center is the TSA's first and only U.S.-based conservation center, and is home to a growing collection of more than 800 turtles and tortoises, representing more than 25 of the world's critically endangered species.

**Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes:** Interns will understand the fundamental principles of chelonian husbandry and conservation.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** As a result of taking this internship, students will:

1. Demonstrate high standards of animal husbandry to a diverse group of critically endangered chelonians
2. Gather and critically evaluate animal health and behavior
3. Identify and explain the basic concepts of chelonian care, terminology of chelonians and their basic anatomy and natural history, and theories of in-situ and ex-situ conservation
4. Apply knowledge of chelonian exhibit design and maintenance

### **Internship Prerequisite:**

High School Diploma

### **Meeting Times and Location:**

Turtle Survival Center (Cross, SC), Intern House (Cross, SC). Times will vary

**Instructor:** Clinton Doak, Rachael Harff & AJ Fetterman

Instructors may vary due to staff changes and visiting Chelonian experts.

- Telephone: (843) 753-2159

**Responsibilities and Expectations:**

Interns are expected to work independently and with TSC staff in a team setting to fulfill the operational needs of the center. All interns will assist with the general day to day operations of the TSC. Responsibilities can include, but are not limited to:

- Providing high standards of animal husbandry to a diverse group of critically endangered chelonians
- Monitoring animal health
- Keeping accurate records
- Maintaining cleanliness of animal areas
- Propagating chelonians, including assisting with egg care and incubation
- Observing veterinary care procedures and basic animal medical treatments
- General maintenance of facilities, upkeep of grounds and buildings
- Horticulture/gardening, particularly in animal areas
- Assisting with enclosure design and construction
- Interacting with other interns, volunteers, students, visiting biologists, and guests
- Participation in outreach events as well as guest tours of the facility
- Ensuring security of the facility
- Completing reading assignments
- Formulating a presentation to give to other interns and staff on a specific species of chelonian and their natural history

**Qualifications:**

- A positive and flexible attitude, strong work ethic, and willingness to adapt to a changing work environment
- Hold or be pursuing a degree in biology, ecology, conservation, zoo keeping, exotic veterinary medicine, or related field
- Demonstrated interest in wildlife and conservation
- Experience with animal husbandry (particularly reptiles) preferred
- Applicants are encouraged to live in on-site housing throughout the duration of the internship and follow house rules
- Must hold a valid driver's license and a personal vehicle is required
- Must be able to pass a background check
- Must be in good physical shape (capable of lifting 50 pounds and spending most working hours on your feet)

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance is mandatory to complete your internship. All interns are required to meet 300 hours of training within a maximum period of 90 days. The schedule will be roughly 7-8 hours per day, 5 days a week.

**Work Environment:**

- Team oriented environment in a remote location (35-40 minutes from the closest town)
- Expect an irregular work schedule consisting of days, weekends, and holidays. Although rare, some workdays may exceed 8 hours.
- Ability to work outdoors in heat, humidity, and around biting insects
- On-site housing is available, which may be co-ed, and which may require sharing a room with another intern or guest of the same gender. No pets are allowed.

**Evaluation:**

Reading assignments will be handed out at the beginning of the internship. After each assignment is completed a small quiz will be given to evaluate your understanding of the material. One final exam will be given at the end of the internship. This exam will consist of multiple choice and potentially a few true/false questions. This exam is to gauge your understanding of what you have learned throughout the internship.

**Tentative Schedule of Lectures and reading assignments (subject to change):**

**Week One:** Learn the day to day routine of working at the Turtle Survival Center.

What is a turtle?

- Anatomy: variation, sexual dimorphism
- Evolutionary history
- Physiology
- Geographic distribution/zoogeography
- Diversity – review of extant families

**Week Two:** Husbandry and Captive management

- Diet and nutrition; feeding techniques; browse; diversity of food items
- Habitat/exhibit/enclosure design: diversity of captive habitats; public vs non; mixed species
- Temperature requirements
- Habitat quality; substrates and natural plants; lighting (natural vs artificial)

**Week Three:** Husbandry and Captive management cont.

- Water quality and monitoring
- Animal welfare and enrichment
- Social structure and stress: groups vs individual housing
- Identification techniques
- Restraint and handling

**Week Four:** Reproduction

- Sexing techniques

- Mating encounters; strategies for management
- Nesting sites and egg laying; finding eggs
- Egg detection prior to laying
- Incubation; effects on offspring; egg logs
- Diapause
- Juvenile husbandry

**Week Five:** Conservation

- Threats and exploitation
- Regulation: CITES, USFWS, Lacey Act
- IUCN Red List ranking
- Role of turtle conservation organizations
- In situ vs ex situ management
- Role and types of captive management
- AZA SSP program
- Conservation breeding, assurance colonies and reintroduction

**Week Six:** Veterinary Management**Week Seven:** Outreach (subject to change due to scheduling)**Week Eight:** Field Research

- Goals
- Data collection
- Trapping techniques
- Marking techniques
- Radio-telemetry

**Availability:**

The TSA is seeking interns to start in May through August! Dates can be flexible but applicants must be able to apply for a minimum of 90 days. Extensions for internships are on a case by case basis.

**Costs:**

This is a volunteer internship position. Successful applicants will pay their own travel expenses to and from the Turtle Survival Center. If there are any special requirements for an applicant to receive academic credit for an internship, please let us know in your application so we may determine if the TSA can accommodate any requests. All interns are eligible for a monthly stipend of \$1,500 a month if they are not receiving support from their institution or receiving school credit.

**Application Process:**

Please email a letter of interest and CV or resume, with references, to Rachael Harff, [Rharff@turtlesurvival.org](mailto:Rharff@turtlesurvival.org)

Applications will be reviewed, and if selected, we will contact you to arrange an interview.