

Name: Suzanne Thomas

Age: 25

Background:

Suzanne grew up in Wales and took A-levels in Biology, Chemistry, English and Business Studies. She then went on to study a degree Plant and Animal Biology at Newcastle Upon Tyne University. After her degree Suzanne travelled to Cameroon and did voluntary work for a charity caring for orphan chimpanzees and gorillas. She then worked for two years as a keeper on the carnivore section at Chester Zoo before going on to be a lecturer in Animal Care for one year. Suzanne currently works at Chester Zoo as an Education Officer.



What sort of work do you do?

I have always had an interest in animals and conservation. I enjoy a job that includes some practical work. My work in the Education Department involves teaching children of all ages, and the topics include a variety of biology-based subjects from classification to animal behaviour. I try to use as many artefacts as possible in the classes. For example, pupils love to hold skulls and snakeskins, and I also use some live animals such as cockroaches and snakes.

I think these help people to remember information much more easily. I also write the information signs that you see by the animal enclosures. This is great because it involves in-depth research into lots of different animals. The department is also involved in conservation outreach work abroad, which provides lots of scope for officer exchange trips and travel.

What do you like about your work?

I love walking into work every morning past the lions and orangutans. I enjoy the fact that each day is different. I really like seeing the reactions from children in lessons when they get to touch the artefacts, and knowing that many zoo visitors will read my signs and learn something new about animals.

What's the worst bit?

The pay is not very good and sometimes it can be difficult working with so many other departments. In general I believe the job is what you make it and my determination to help conserve animals means that every day is rewarding.

What do you want to do in the future?

I would really love to do some more outreach work to learn what other organisations around the world are doing for conservation. I would also like to improve my interpretation design skills and carry on working closely with animals in the future.