



ZOO, AQUARIUM, BOTANIC GARDEN, AND TINGLEY BEACH BIOPARK VOLUNTEER TEACHER JOB DESCRIPTION 2015

The goal of Albuquerque Biological Park (BioPark) Education is to teach about the diversity and interdependence of life and inspire a sense of stewardship for the earth. Volunteer teachers, called **docents**, enable the BioPark to fulfill its education goal.

Docents utilize the Aquarium, Botanic Garden, Zoo and Tingley Beach as a teaching resource by focusing on all the habitats represented and species exhibited. Docents are critical to the mission of the BioPark and goal of BioPark Education because they bring a knowledgeable and personal connection to thousands of people each year, both on-grounds and through community outreach.

REQUIREMENTS Anyone over 18 years old is eligible. Skills needed include enthusiasm, a commitment to teaching conservation, a sense of responsibility, flexibility and patience. The required knowledge is taught. As a safety precaution, all volunteer applicants are required to submit to a City of Albuquerque background check before they can begin volunteering.

DUTIES Docents perform a variety of duties, depending on personal interest. Examples of BioPark-wide duties are listed below, followed by facility-specific duties. Ideas for other duties are welcome; however, you must be willing to help implement them! Duties are available 7 days a week, unless otherwise noted.

All BioPark docents can:

- Offer BioPark visitors the chance to experience the wonder of nature through on-grounds Discovery Stations. When doing a Discovery Station, a volunteer is stationed near an exhibit and uses biofacts to engage visitors in a dialogue. Depending on the facility, biofacts may include education animals, animal pelts, shark skin, urchin spines, tree rings, dried roots, or insect specimens. Through the sense of touch and guided by conversation, visitors are encouraged to discover conservation concepts for themselves. Examples of some Discovery Station topics are Endangered Species, Polar Bears, Elephants, Sharks and Sea Turtles.
- Interpret the BioPark for visitors through guided tours or informal mini-tours. Guided tours are offered to organized groups such as schools, churches, and community clubs and must be scheduled in advance.
- Bring the wonders of the BioPark to local classrooms and organizations. Teaching tools may include biofacts, slides and education animals. BioPark outreach programs are conducted for children and adults.
- Take additional training classes (offered seasonally) to become a Tingley Beach Docent. Tingley Docents teach about local flora and fauna found in Albuquerque's bosque and New Mexico's wetlands. They may participate in fishing clinics, night time guided tours and children's classes.

DUTIES (cont'd)

Sample duties specific to the ABQ BioPark Aquarium include:

- Teach visitors about the natural history of aquatic environments (Rio Grande, Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic and Pacific Coral Reefs and Atlantic Ocean) and their connection and importance to us in the desert. Provide examples to visitors about the importance of animals (i.e., sharks, sea turtles) in marine ecosystems.
- Assist visitors with identification of marine life, including animals found in coral reef and deep ocean tanks, pointing out similarities and differences between species and habitats.
- Teach about tidepool inhabitants at the Touchpool in the Aquarium. (Touchpool training is also available for volunteers wishing to work the Shark & Ray and Invertebrate Touchpools, which allow you to engage visitors in dialogue of the animals' natural history while supervising animal contact.
- Teach visitors about animals in the Ocean Tank exhibit during daily feedings. Narrate the process by which divers feed the Aquarium animals while explaining the natural history of eels, stingrays, porcupine fish and more!

Sample duties specific to the ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden include:

- Teach in the Botanic Garden exhibits, from the Desert and Mediterranean Conservatories to the Japanese Garden and the Heritage Farm. Explain the adaptations of plants that grow in different climates around the globe, and teach about the characteristics and importance of the unique habitats exhibited. Help connect visitors with the plants that provide food, shelter, clothing, medicine, and more.
- Highlight specific plants. Docents with in-depth knowledge about roses, cacti, or other plants represented at the Garden will be encouraged to share their expertise with interested visitors at the appropriate exhibit.
- Involve visitors in hands-on gardening experiences. Choose your own topic or use seed strips, mystery seed kits and seed balls.
- Connect visitors to the land by taking them to the 1920s-1930s era Heritage Farm exhibit. Talk with visitors about traditional crops and farm animals. Demonstrate wool working, canning and cooking techniques.
- Teach about the interdependence of life and the many animals (from bees to butterflies to bullfrogs) that live in the gardens. Teach about invertebrate diversity on grounds and in outreach programs using animals and exhibits like the Butterfly Pavilion and the upcoming BUGarium. Volunteers will have access to a diverse collection of live invertebrates such as Giant Millipedes, Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches, tarantulas, scorpions, and water beetles to help educate people about insect adaptations and how important they are to our environment and the web of life.

Sample duties specific to the ABQ BioPark Zoo include:

- Enhance the Zoo visitor experience by on-grounds educating at various Zoo exhibits, as well narrating keeper-led animal feedings at designated Zoo exhibits throughout the year.
- Enable Zoo visitors to contact a variety of education program animals.

Education demonstration animals include an African crested porcupine, serval, kestrel and macaw, llamas and alpacas. A variety of other birds and small mammals are available for on-grounds Discovery Stations. Animal Handling training and certification will be offered in February 2016.

- Travel around New Mexico on a zoo-mobile teaching about animals and conservation. The Zoo to You van travels for four weekdays at a time and is staffed by two volunteers. The New Mexico BioPark Society (NMBPS) provides funds for its operation and expenses.

The Zoo to You van is free of charge and visits any community in New Mexico that requests it, no matter how small. Site visits include schools, senior citizen homes, libraries and county fairs. Hour-long presentations, consisting of slide shows, education animals and biofacts, are made to groups. Training for new docents on the Zoo to You van will be in March 2016.

- Introduce Albuquerque-area school children to the animal kingdom using local Zoo to You biofacts, education animals and slides. Volunteers present a program developed for Kindergarten through 12th grade and then bring the concepts to life by allowing the children to see Zoo biofacts up-close and interact with the education animals brought into the classroom. Adult outreach programs are also available.

MINIMUM TIME

After successful completion of the required training program (see below), volunteers are able to create their own schedule. They may work anytime the Zoo, Aquarium, or Botanic Garden is open, 9:00am-5:00pm, seven days a week, year round. A regular schedule is strongly encouraged, but not required.

A minimum of 60 hours a year is required to receive annual recognition as a docent. At least 30 hours of these must be spent directly teaching the public; the remaining 30 hours may also be spent directly teaching the public or doing support work such as research, writing, attending monthly meetings, continuing education classes, BioPark lectures and Brown Bags, assisting with general BioPark projects, etc. Volunteers are responsible for tracking their own hours in our digital database.

TRAINING

Phase I Docent training takes place on twelve Thursdays. Phase I includes 12 (twelve) Thursdays, beginning August 6 and ending December 10. Most training days are 9:30am-3:30pm. Phase II is on two Thursdays in January 2016. (Please see the "Pertinent Dates" section on the last page for specific training dates.) In order to be an effective docent, the information taught in the training must be learned. Attendance is required; this includes showing up on time and staying for the duration of the class.

Phase I topics are taught by Zoo, Garden, and Aquarium staff and cover such subjects as habitats, ecology and conservation, basic biological concepts, and natural history of the species on exhibit at each facility. During Phase I, trainees will work on-grounds with experienced docents to practice what they have learned. There are opportunities for individual small groups to work together doing observations, research, and review of material covered in class.

Phase II topics cover such subjects as teaching strategies, how to use biofacts, and logistics of volunteering at the BioPark.

Lunch typically consists of a 45 minute break, so please bring your lunch on training days, and come prepared for indoor and outdoor learning. Wear comfortable walking shoes.

Again, attendance is required; this includes showing up on time and staying for the duration of the class. Trainees are allowed to miss up to three (3) classes, which can be made up by working with staff to cover the missed material.

A final exam is administered and must be passed (if necessary, it can be retaken). BioPark Education has many ways to support and assist trainees as they learn. If requested, staff or experienced docents will provide coaching.

UNIFORM

Docents wear a printed fabric vest worn with the uniform colors. It is the responsibility of the docent to purchase the vest fabric from BioPark Education and get the vest made at the end of the training program.

The identification badge and nametag provided at graduation must be worn as part of the uniform. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to acquire the solid-colored blouse/shirt and pants/shorts/skirt in the uniform colors. Uniform colors are black, brown, tan, or white.

BENEFITS

Volunteers have the opportunity to do meaningful and gratifying education work with thousands of visitors to the BioPark, an important intangible benefit. Tangible benefits are also available. Upon completion of the training and a commitment to give the minimum number of hours, volunteers are given an identification badge, which allows free regular admission to all BioPark facilities (Zoo, Aquarium, and Botanic Garden; Tingley Beach is free and open to the public sunrise to sunset, daily). While on duty, volunteers receive a discount at the food and gift concession stands. After the end of each calendar year, volunteers are awarded recognition items for their service. Volunteers are offered discounts to all fee-based BioPark Education programs and are invited to special volunteer-only events.

SUPPORT

Resources exist throughout the BioPark to help volunteers fulfill their duties. Experienced docents are eager to help new volunteers and are enthusiastic about sharing their own knowledge. Education staff can provide assistance, and small Education Libraries are available. Monthly Education meetings are generally held on the first Thursday and first Saturday of each month, and new volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend beginning in September (Sept. 3 and 5 this year) – this is the best way to learn about upcoming events, trainings, and the latest news on the plants and animal exhibits throughout the BioPark. The Zoo Education Volunteer meetings are at 9:00am in the Zoo Colores Education Building and the Aquarium/Botanic Garden meetings are at 11:00am in the Aquarium/Botanic Garden Education Building. Current BioPark happenings are discussed, as well as facility-specific information. Volunteers are also invited to attend monthly Brown Bag Seminars following the meetings. Mid-month, a written update is emailed to all BioPark volunteers. Information on current happenings is also available on the bulletin boards at both Education facilities.

Another support resource for trainees is the docent mentor team. The mentors

are available to you to answer questions, show you around the BioPark, take you along as they teach so you can observe volunteers “in action,” and offer general guidance throughout your training.

COSTS

Docent out-of-pocket expenses are phased in over the course of training and include a training manual, guidebook, and uniform vest costs, as well as a key deposit for Zoo docents. At the beginning of training, docents are responsible for buying the training manual (\$25), and at the end of training, docents are responsible for buying a guidebook which gives species information (\$25). Docents are responsible for acquiring their own vest uniform (material cost is \$12/yard). Zoo docents need to put a refundable deposit down for the key to the Zoo Education Barn (\$10.00). The deposit for the key will be refunded when the Zoo docent resigns and the key is returned.

ORGANIZATION

Zoo docents report to the Zoo Education Specialist; Aquarium and Garden docents report to the Aquarium/ Botanic Garden Education Coordinator. The BioPark Education Curator oversees all Education programming.

The Education Clerks at the Zoo and at the Aquarium/Botanic Garden are also available to provide assistance.

PERTINENT DATES

A general orientation will be **Thursday, August 6, at 11:00am** in the Colores Education Building at the ABQ BioPark Zoo. The purpose of the orientation is to describe all volunteer teaching programs and other volunteer opportunities, at no obligation to the attendee. The orientation will last approximately two hours.

The specific dates for training are listed below. Dates may be subject to change. You may train for only one facility at a time; however, you are welcome to train at another facility in future years.

The dates below are not concurrent. The “off” weeks are designed to give you time to read, study, spend time on grounds, and attend other events at the BioPark. On most training days, you will meet with your class at your facility. See below for exceptions.

Phase I

Aquarium – August 6*, August 13*, August 27, September 3 (Volunteer Meeting), September 10 (optional Touchpool Training), September 17, October 1 (Volunteer Meeting), October 8, October 22, October 29, November 5 (Volunteer Meeting), November 12, November 19*, December 3 (Volunteer Meeting), December 10

Botanic Garden – August 6*, August 13*, August 20, August 27, September 3 (Volunteer Meeting), September 10, September 17, September 24, October 1 (Volunteer Meeting), October 15, October 22, October 29, November 5 (Volunteer Meeting), November 19*, December 3 (Volunteer Meeting), December 10

Zoo – August 6*, August 13*, August 20, August 27, September 3 (Volunteer Meeting), September 10, September 17, September 24, October 1 (Volunteer Meeting), October 8, October 22, October 29, November 5 (Volunteer Meeting), November 19*, December 3

(Volunteer Meeting), December 10

Phase II (**Zoo, Aquarium, & Botanic Garden**) – January 7 (Volunteer Meeting), January 14*, January 21 (Aquarium), January 28 (Zoo and Botanic Garden)

**All classes meet together, locations vary by date:*

August 6 – Volunteer Orientation @ ABQ BioPark Zoo Colores Building

August 13 – Training Day 1: General Ecology @ ABQ BioPark Aquarium and Botanic Garden Education Building

November 19 – Training Day 9: Conservation @ ABQ BioPark Zoo Colores Building

January 14 – Phase II: Interpretation @ Zoo Colores Building

NEXT STEP

If you want to become a volunteer teacher, you can:

Find out more about docent opportunities by [clicking here](#). Then, fill out an Adult Volunteer Application by [clicking here](#) or visiting the “Volunteers” section of our website www.abqbiopark.com. Please note, you will be asked to provide the names and contact information for three references. Be sure to indicate you are interested in the docent program and why you want to volunteer at the BioPark in the designated sections of the application. **Docent applications must be submitted by Wednesday, July 22, 2015.**

If you are accepted into the Volunteer Docent role at the BioPark, you will be invited to attend the first day of training on Thursday, August 13, 9:30am at the Aquarium/Botanic Garden Education Building. At that time, you will need to have a valid ID in order to fill out the required City of ABQ background check waiver and other paperwork.

If you are not *certain* that you would like to become a volunteer, but are *interested*, please attend the orientation at no obligation to find out more and learn about other volunteer options.

CONTACT

For more information, contact BioPark Education:
505-848-7180 or visit www.abqbiopark.com.



For general information, please call 311 or 505-768-2000 (Relay NM or 711).
Cultural Services Department, City of Albuquerque, Richard J. Berry, Mayor