



# TURTLE CONSERVANCY

DEDICATED TO THE CONSERVATION OF TURTLES AND TORTOISES AROUND THE WORLD  
BEHLER CHELONIAN CENTER  
P.O. BOX 1289, OJAI, CALIFORNIA 93024  
TELEPHONE: 805.640.9747



## TURTLE CONSERVANCY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Turtle Conservancy Behler Chelonian Center (TC-BCC) is a not-for-profit scientific and educational organization dedicated to protecting the most endangered turtles and tortoises and their habitats worldwide. The TC-BCC was established in 2005 and is certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The Turtle Conservancy is committed to promoting *in situ* conservation and field research of threatened and endangered chelonians. We target our limited resources on a small number of projects that include innovative and strategic conservation, biome protection, training, education, field research, and collaboration with local and international stakeholders.

Along with the TC's efforts, BCC cares for an assurance colony and maintains a conservation breeding program in Southern California. We establish detailed protocols for husbandry and breeding by combining natural history data with extensive husbandry experience and active research. Species at BCC include founder animals of the Radiated Tortoise (*Astrochelys radiata*) Species Survival Plan, the first recorded Spider Tortoise (*Pyxis arachnoides*) hatchlings in the United States, and the first legally imported Ploughshare Tortoises (*Astrochelys yniphora*) since CITES was enacted in 1973. We currently care for over 700 chelonians representing more than 30 taxa, and our success includes breeding and hatching of numerous threatened species with highly specialized needs. Animals at BCC benefit from peaceful surroundings and minimal human contact, living in habitats that simulate their native environment.

### INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTION

Interns are an integral part of BCC's Husbandry Team. We offer the opportunity to develop individual skills and talents in a conservation-oriented zoological setting. This experience will, of course, look great on your resume, but more importantly, you will help save some of the world's most endangered chelonian species, learn cutting-edge reptile husbandry and veterinary medicine, and live the life of a zookeeper. This internship is an immersion in conserving biodiversity.

### WHAT BCC INTERNS DO:

- 1) **Animal handling:** Learn and demonstrate proper handling techniques for the species at BCC.
- 2) **Biosecurity:** Learn and practice methods that reduce disease transmission.
- 3) **Zookeeping:** Work alongside zookeeper staff. Clean and maintain turtle and tortoise enclosures. Prepare diets and distribute feed. Compare and contrast differences and similarities in husbandry needs among unique chelonians. Make observations to learn how to describe normal healthy behavior and daily patterns of the animals in our collection. Maintain records of husbandry and health.

- 4) Other duties: Depending upon individual interests, skills, and abilities, interns may participate in maintaining the museum specimens, paper records, and computer database. Additional responsibilities will be assigned by BCC staff.
- 5) Natural history: Gather information about the species housed at BCC. Summarize data on the native microhabitats, diets, and natural cycles.
- 6) Assess enclosures: Understand environmental relationships in captive environments (i.e., temperature, humidity, lighting, substrate, water, cover, and edible browse). Design and create an aesthetically pleasing, functional enclosure that meets the needs of an individual species. Identify risks and hazards in enclosures for different species (e.g., inappropriate substrate, height of heat lamps, obstacles that may fall, structures that may collapse, and exposure to predation).
- 7) Conservation management: Evaluate threats and pressures to wild populations of turtles and tortoises in their native habitats. Discuss methods to mitigate these threats.
- 8) Lecture/Presentation: Present a brief seminar on a topic related to turtle husbandry or conservation to the BCC staff and invited guests.
- 9) Complete a mandatory project: Organize, assist, or complete an administrative or research project.
- 10) Research: Interns that stay for 4 weeks or longer may develop a research question, design a study to answer the question, and implement a research project.
- 11) Scientific contribution: Interns that participate in research may produce a peer-reviewed publication or a non-referred manuscript (conference poster, proceedings article, or article for TC annual report).

#### REQUIREMENTS:

Must be a high school graduate at least 18 years of age. Interns need a strong work ethic and love of the outdoors including tolerance to bugs, heat, snakes, lizards, rodents, cactus, and long days. Progress toward a degree in Biology, Zoology, Animal Science, Conservation, or other field related to the Natural Sciences is preferred.

#### DURATION:

Internships at BCC are a minimum of 3 weeks and may last up to one year. Start/end dates are flexible, ideally overlapping with at least one other intern. Full time work with evenings, weekends, and holidays required.

#### YOU PROVIDE:

Clothing to work in hot/humid indoor environments and varying outdoor weather conditions. Groceries and toiletries to meet your needs. Your own portable computer and cellular telephone. Transportation outside of the BCC grounds.

#### TC/BCC PROVIDES:

Equipment and supplies. Wireless access to the Internet.

**HOUSING:**

Housing may be available on a limited basis, but cannot be assured, so it is best to be prepared for off-site housing and transportation.

**COMPENSATION:**

This is an unpaid (volunteer) internship.

**TO APPLY:**

Please complete the application form and provide a cover letter of interest, current resume, up-to-date transcripts, copy of driver license, and letter of recommendation from a college professor.

