



Volunteering

Environmental Education Coordinator for the Elephant Outreach Program,
in the wilderness area of the Okavango Delta, Botswana

Position Title: Elephant Outreach Program Coordinator

Short Description: Environmental & Conservation Education Program coordinator – running of the project both in the bush and in town – developing Environmental Education activities – liaising with the various actors – Participating in communication and fundraising – participation in daily operations.

Dates: From November 1st 2009 to April 15-30th, 2009. The volunteer will have a space of 4 to 6 weeks between end of December and February free to travel. She/he would be welcome to visit attractions such as (Victoria Falls, Moremi Game Reserve, Chobe National Park).

Detailed Description:

-- The successful candidate would, for 5-6 months (November to April), be one of the two Elephant Outreach Program coordinators for our non-profit organization "Living With Elephants Foundation". Living With Elephants is a small NGO based in Botswana founded by Doug and Sandi Groves and their three elephant ambassadors. One of its primary projects is the Elephant Outreach Program, a conservation education project, which brings local children to LWE's camp for a two-day excursion. LWEF's overall mission is to encourage harmonious relationships between people and elephants. LWEF is also charged with securing the long-term future of the elephant trio. LWEF is closely linked to Grey Matters, a business enterprise owned by Doug and Sandi Groves which is responsible for the daily upkeep of the elephants through high-end tourism, providing the main attraction for two up-market safari camps, owned by a worldwide travel company.

-- The Elephant Outreach Program's, (ie "Bana le Ditlou" in Setwana*), main objective is to improve the Human-Elephant relationship one child at a time. In our fast developing world, wildlife has less and less space. However, Botswana hosts the biggest elephant population of the world. This presents many problems. Underprivileged villagers who rely on subsistence agriculture compete for space, water and natural resources with elephants. The perception of elephants by the local inhabitants of the Okavango Delta is thus often negative. Our program aims to offer Botswana youth the opportunity to see the elephants from a fresh perspective. We try to impart the understanding that elephants are a keystone-species in the fragile Okavango Delta ecosystem, as well as an economic asset to Botswana, bringing tourists to the country. (Tourism today is the fastest growing sector in Botswana and the second source of income for the country). The highlight of our bush program is "The elephant activity", an interactive educational experience that takes place in the wilderness of the Okavango Delta with LWE's three African elephant ambassadors. During this activity, groups of local children have a chance to approach and interact with our elephant trio. They learn about elephant biology, natural history and Human-Elephants relationships. The rest of the excursion is spent playing educational games, doing a game drive and bush walk and visiting the neighboring eco-tourism camp. It is hoped that through this program the participants will have a better perception and knowledge of elephants, that they will have increased their environmental awareness and that they will consider career opportunities on offer to them in the conservation friendly sectors (e.g. Tourism).

-- The elephant trio consists of 3 African Elephants: 1 bull and 2 cows. Jabu (male) and Thembi (female) are 18 years old and have been with us for 16 years. Morula is the 27 years and we have had her for about ten years. Jabu and Morula are fairly easy going. Jabu is big for his age, over 3 meters at the shoulder but extremely well natured, curious and mellow. Thembi is very clever and likes to be the centre of attention! Morula is generally very wise and sweet. During the "elephant activity", the group of children are expertly introduced to the elephant Trio by Living With Elephants Foundation elephant handlers.

-- Our bush camp is based in the southern part of the World famous Okavango Delta, in a Community Based Natural Resource Management Area called Ng 32. This area is officiated by a Trust, which represents six villages and which works in joint-venture with eco-tourism operator. Our base camp is 2.5 - 3 hours drive from Maun, the main town of the region, or 10 minutes by air. The scenery of this area is typical of the Okavango Delta in the drier southern part, that is to say beautiful and rich in plants and animals. Large mammals like wild elephants, buffalos, lions, leopards, hippopotamus, giraffes, wild dogs and even sometimes rhinos are to be found around our camp.

-- The two day excursion of the Elephant Outreach Program is offered to the children of the six villages of the Okavango Kopano Mokoro community trust, to the environmental clubs of the Primary schools of Maun (pupils in standard 5-6; aged 8-12) and to other groups like the children of the Bana Ba Letsatsi Trust (street children of Maun). The visits to camp by the environmental clubs, is followed up by a short program at the schools. Given we cannot host all the members of the environmental club, it is a way to

* "Children with Elephants"

share the experience with the entire club. This follow-up program usually lasts 2 hours during the club afternoon (which is usually on Wednesday)

-- Volunteering for Living With Elephants Foundation requires living and working in our elephant camp in the Wilderness of the Okavango Delta (30%) as well in Maun (70%). The bush lifestyle is difficult to articulate and really needs to be experienced to be understood. However it involves living in a basic camp surrounded by wildlife, periods of limited social contact, and requires an ability to self entertain and a fairly easy going disposition. However, working in the bush as the EOP coordinator does not imply a total absence of human contact. In fact you will have lots with the group of children you will be working with. When the children are not in the camp, a lively team of 5 permanent people remain. On top of that, the neighboring tourist camp, only 5 kms away, hosts over 40 permanent local staff members. The bush lifestyle can be really enjoyable but depends on what the individual makes of it. Maun is a lively town which offers access to most city facilities and offers a lot of social happening. It is an African small town with most of the western facilities (food, bottled water...). Malaria occurs rarely in Maun. The tourism industry is its main economic activity and the NGO's sector is also well represented. However, be aware, Maun is not the world capital for art or entertainment!

-- In camp, facilities are fairly basic. We have limited electrical power generated by a small solar system. We run lights, a laptop and charge various batteries from it. We have a basic communal shower with wood heated water. We do laundry by hand (we generally do our own) and you would be expected to help with communal chores like washing dishes, cleaning, and cooking. You will have our own 2.5m * 3m tent with comfortable basic bedding and equipment. We also have a fairly large library that you will be free to tap in to! There are two simple rules: no smoking and no drinking in the bush.

-- In Maun, we will help the volunteer to arrange her/his own accommodation. During the quiet months for tourism (which the six months fall in), finding a reasonably priced accommodation is not difficult. House sitting is also possible. The volunteer will have a vehicle to work with in town.

Responsibilities:

--Organization and running of the project (preparation of visits, logistics, liaising with the groups and running the project in the bush).

--Research and development of the educational content of the program. Supervision of short-term volunteers.

--Helping in general camp maintenance and daily operations

Requirements:

The four first requirements are essential:

--Must be ready to live in the conditions described above (especially in camp).

-- Must be motivated by outdoor environmental education (EE) and interested in EE project development. Must enjoy working with and teaching children aged 8-15 and of

course must enjoy elephants! Teaching skills and experience in outdoor Environmental Education with children will be highly appreciated.

--Must be physically quite fit and heat tolerant and must have his/her drivers license and be prepared to drive quite a lot while in town to organize the trips.

--Must have good cross-cultural communication skills for working with Batswana, adults and children. Must speak fluent English.

The following abilities would also be helpful:

--A comprehensive knowledge of elephant behavior and ecology. Any related degrees or coursework in mammal biology and ecology and in natural history would be appreciated.

--Mechanical skills, off-road driving experience

--Bush survival skills, first aid training; tolerance for insects, spiders and snakes.

--General interest in botany and zoology

Stipend:

-- Part of living expenses will be covered by Living With Elephants Foundation. Transportation in Maun is provided. Volunteers are invited to fund-raise to finance their volunteering in the name of the Foundation.

-- The volunteer is expected to cover the costs of the transportation from home to Maun, Botswana.

Application deadline:

31th May 2009

Contact Information

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In order to apply, candidates should send by e-mail or mail (please keep e-mail relatively light as connection in Botswana is not as good as in western countries) the following documents:

- detailed CV with accurate dates
- cover letter
- photo

and in a latter email:

- as many letters of reference as possible and as many reference contacts as possible
- any other relevant documents