

Animal Care and Conservation Manager

Fota Wildlife Park, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork, Ireland

About Fota Wildlife Park

Fota Wildlife Park is a not-for-profit conservation organisation and part of the Zoological Society of Ireland, set across one hundred acres on Fota Island, 10 km east of Cork City. Welcoming approximately 430,000 visitors each year, Fota is one of Ireland's leading wildlife conservation organisations and an active contributor to national and international species breeding and recovery programmes, with long-standing research and education partnerships including University College Cork, one of its founding bodies.

Guided by a new vision to shape a world where nature is protected, wildlife thrives, and people feel inspired to take meaningful action for the planet, our mission to advance wildlife conservation through exceptional animal care, education and science places Fota in the company of the world's leading conservation institutions, while keeping our work rooted in our communities and landscapes.

With a €5.5 million Education, Conservation and Research Centre recently completed and an ambitious 2026–2030 strategic plan now underway, Fota Wildlife Park is entering one of the most significant periods of development in its history — expanding its conservation science capacity, deepening its community impact, and positioning itself among Europe's leading conservation institutions.

Life in Fota, Cork

Fota Island sits within a stunning special area of conservation in Cork Harbour, one of the largest natural harbours in the world, a few minutes from some of the south of Ireland's finest beaches, lively villages and market towns. Cork City, Ireland's second city, is a walkable and internationally recognised cultural hub, consistently ranked among Europe's most liveable cities, with excellent schools, universities, and direct European air connections. Fota Wildlife Park is directly accessible by train, with a rail station beside the Park gates.

The Opportunity

We are seeking an experienced, dynamic and values-driven Animal Care and Conservation Manager to join Fota Wildlife Park's Senior Management Team. Reporting directly to the Park Director, this is a compelling opportunity for an experienced zoological professional ready to take on operational and strategic leadership of our animal collection at a pivotal moment in Fota's development.

You will lead a team of animal care professionals, carrying day-to-day operational accountability for the collection alongside a genuine strategic brief: shaping Fota's conservation science identity, contributing to European breeding programmes, and helping to define the future of Fota Wildlife Park.

Key Responsibilities

The role spans four interconnected areas of accountability:

Animal Collection and Welfare

- Lead all aspects of animal husbandry, welfare assessment and veterinary liaison to the highest standards.
- Maintain and develop the Institutional Species Collection Plan and drive continuous improvement in welfare outcomes.
- Oversee animal training, enrichment and habitat development in line with the strategic plan.

Health, Safety and Compliance

- Take primary ownership of H&S leadership across all animal care activities, ensuring a robust safety culture and full compliance with Irish and EU legislation and EAZA accreditation standards.
- Develop and maintain H&S policies, risk assessments and safe systems of work, and lead incident investigation and corrective action processes.

Conservation Science and Research

- Lead the development of Fota's conservation strategy and grow the Park's research and conservation science profile.
- Coordinate EEP participation and other international species management programmes and develop research partnerships with academic institutions.
- Provide leadership for Fota's native species recovery work, including programmes with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Leadership and People Management

- Lead, develop and performance-manage a team of 20+staff, including rota management and all people operations within the department.
- Act as Duty Manager on a rostered basis, including weekend cover, providing senior operational leadership across the Park.
- Manage animal care and conservation budgets and represent Fota credibly at regional, national and international forums.

What We Are Looking For

- A master's degree or above in zoology, veterinary medicine or a related discipline; PhD or conservation science postgraduate qualification highly desirable.
- A minimum of ten years' experience in animal collection management within an EAZA accredited zoological organisation or equivalent.
- A proven track record in people leadership and performance management of a substantial animal care team.
- Demonstrable H&S leadership experience in a zoological or complex operational setting..
- Experience in conservation science research, including EEP participation, publications or species recovery programmes.
- Sound financial management skills and proficiency in ZIMS and EAZA accreditation frameworks.
- A genuine, demonstrable commitment to conservation as both a science and a mission.

Practical Details

This is a full-time permanent role of 39 hours per week, including participation in the senior duty manager rota which includes weekend cover. The successful candidate will be required to live within reasonable commuting distance of Fota Wildlife Park. A full, valid driving licence is required. A competitive salary commensurate with experience will be offered.

A full job description is available on request.

To apply, please send your CV and cover letter to recruitment@fotawildlife.ie or via our jobs portal <https://www.fotawildlife.ie/pages/jobs>

Closing Date: Wednesday 25th March 2026