



Job Title: Aviary Intern	
Managed by: Pathways Manager/Zoo Manager and Curator of Birds	
Department: Aviary	Location: Waddesdon Manor
Salary: National Living Wage & subsidised accommodation on site	Contract Type: One-year fixed term from 14 September 2026
Hours: 37.5 hours per week over a 7-day rota. Some weekend and evening work will be required, which you will be notified of in advance and TOIL will be granted	

An overview of what you will be doing

It was not uncommon for country houses and châteaux across Europe to be home to a menagerie collection of exotic captive animals kept for display that were precursors to the modern zoo. Waddesdon Manor's Aviary is a unique and protected building constructed in the 1880s, filled with colourful and exotic birds. It was considered a 'must-see' for Baron Ferdinand's guests touring the garden in the 1890s. Beautifully restored, it now plays an active role in important conservation breeding projects for endangered species, blending late 19th-century traditions with modern zoo practices.

Walter, second Lord Rothschild (1868–1937), was a renowned zoologist who assembled the largest private collection of animal and bird specimens, displayed in a purpose-built museum at Tring that remains open today. The Rothschild mynah (*Leucopsar rothschildi*), a striking snowy white bird with a vivid blue eye mask native to Bali, was named in his honour.

Today, the Aviary at Waddesdon Manor is home to nearly 200 birds, around one third of which are of conservation concern, with many species at risk of extinction. Waddesdon participates in captive breeding programmes aimed at reintroducing birds into their native habitats and manages five European ex-situ programmes through its membership of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), earning recognition for breeding excellence.

Preserving heritage and protecting biodiversity are deeply interconnected, both involving the safeguarding of what is rare, irreplaceable, and vital to our shared future. Maintaining historic sites like Waddesdon Manor not only honours the legacy of those who championed a love for the natural world but also provides a platform for modern conservation efforts. The Aviary stands as a remarkable example of 19th-century design

that now supports breeding, education, and research, contributing directly to the survival of endangered species while upholding the Rothschild legacy. It offers a unique opportunity to be part of a place where tradition supports innovation and where care for the past actively shapes a better future for wildlife.

Through the Pathways internship, individuals can gain hands on experience in a modern Aviary environment. As an Aviary Intern, you will work closely with a knowledgeable team within a licensed zoo, contributing to daily operations while developing practical skills in bird husbandry and conservation. You will gain experience across all areas of avian care, including preparing and delivering tailored diets, cleaning and maintaining enclosures, enhancing habitats with natural furnishings, and assisting with bird handling, restraint, ringing, and administering medications.

You will also learn to use professional record keeping systems such as ZIMS, support breeding efforts by providing nesting materials, and may have the opportunity to help hand rear chicks. In addition to behind-the-scenes work, you will engage with the public during “Meet the Keeper” talks, sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for birds. This immersive role offers valuable experience for anyone looking to build a meaningful career in animal care or conservation.

Who are we looking for?

We’re looking for someone with a genuine interest in birds, conservation, and the natural world, who is keen to develop their knowledge through hands-on experience. No prior experience is required, but curiosity, a willingness to learn, and a proactive approach are essential.

You’ll be part of a small team in a busy visitor environment, so you should be reliable, adaptable, and able to contribute to a range of daily tasks. Attention to detail and a calm, consistent approach are important when working with animals and maintaining high standards of care.

An understanding of animal welfare and responsible husbandry is key. You should be thoughtful in your work and able to follow guidance carefully, with the welfare of the birds always a priority.

You’ll also have opportunities to engage with visitors, so you should be comfortable communicating with others and sharing information in a clear and approachable way.

Basic IT skills will be helpful for record keeping and data entry. The role includes weekend and bank holiday working, so flexibility is required.

Skills you will gain

Once completed, you will have developed the confidence and practical skills to care for and manage a diverse range of bird taxa, including Passeriformes, Galliformes,

Columbiformes, Musophagiformes, and Piciformes, with increasing independence. You will also become proficient in the use of ZIMS for record keeping, gaining an understanding of its importance in modern animal management.

Alongside this, you will build a broader awareness of how zoos and bird gardens work collaboratively to manage and safeguard captive populations and begin to develop the knowledge and hands-on skills involved in successfully breeding a variety of species. Together, these experiences will form a strong and well-rounded foundation for a future career within bird gardens and the wider zoo community.

Additional opportunities

We offer to cover membership fees to the Association of British and Irish Wild Animals (ABWAK) and encourage participation in their events. We also aim to facilitate a keeper exchange with another bird collection. If you're passionate about birds, wildlife, and conservation, this is more than just an internship; it's a gateway into the world of modern zoological work, all set against the stunning backdrop of a historic Rothschild estate.

As part of the Pathways Internship, you will have the opportunity to participate in a three-day Intern Skills Workshop, designed to support your personal and professional development. This workshop will cover a variety of topics aimed at enhancing your skills, broadening your knowledge, and preparing you for future career opportunities.

In addition, you will be able to take part in staff and intern events throughout the year, providing valuable networking opportunities, insight into different roles across the organisation, and a chance to engage with the wider team. You will also have access to a training budget to support your learning and development, allowing you to attend relevant courses, workshops, or conferences.

To ensure you make the most of your internship experience, you will receive full one-to-one mentor support from the Pathways team. Your mentor will guide you through your projects, help you set and achieve personal development goals, and offer advice and encouragement as you explore potential career pathways.

You might be looking for a future career in...

This internship is specifically tailored to developing your skills in bird keeping, although after the year you might be looking for a future career in the wider world of zookeeping. You will have the opportunity to develop many transferable skills that will be relevant in other zoo professions, for example other taxa, record keeping, administration, and zoo education.

Roles you might look to move on to include, Trainee or Assistant Zookeeper, Conservationist, and Animal Care Assistant.

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