



VOLUNTEER/ INTERNSHIP MANUAL

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Mission Statement

To conserve through education and research.

To locate, propagate and relocate rare and endangered reptiles, amphibians and arachnids.

To establish viable captive populations of rare and endangered reptiles, amphibians and arachnids.

Welcome and thank you for joining our volunteer program.

The following is a breakdown of information that you will during your stay.

Introduction to the Centre

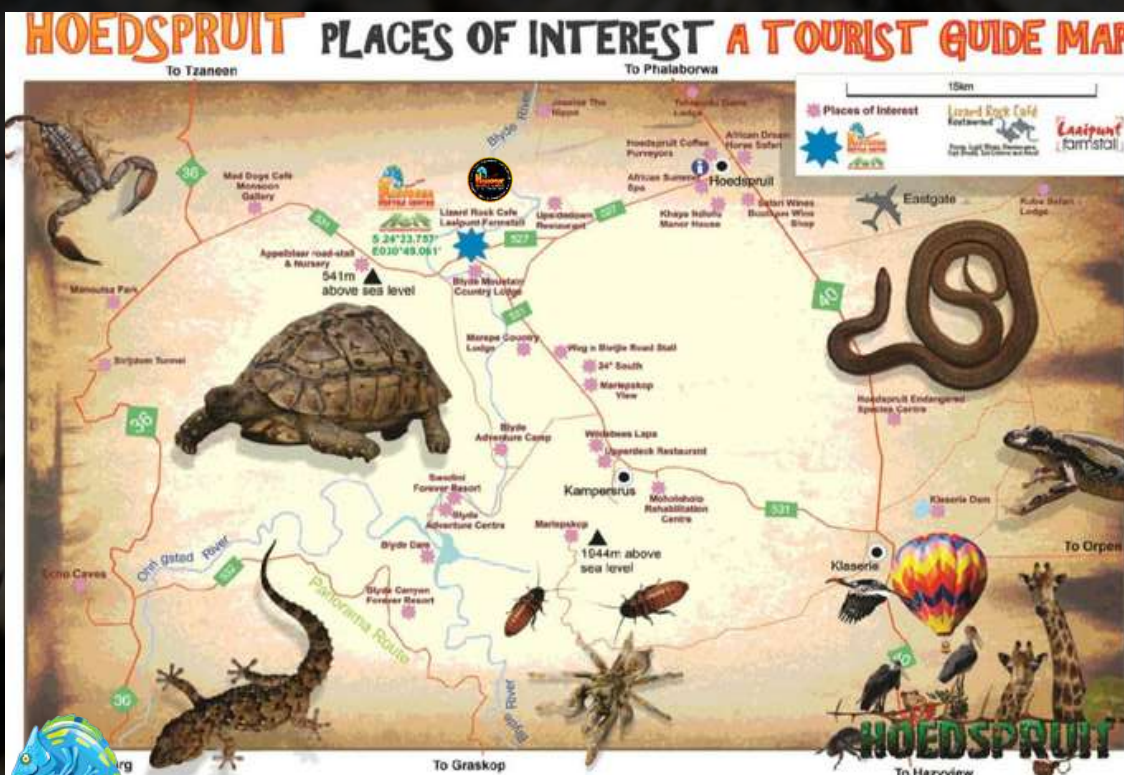
Hoedspruit Reptile Centre would like to take this opportunity to thank you for joining the team to help us with the conservation work that we do. We all hope that you are going to enjoy your stay and learn lots more about reptiles and other animals while you are here.

Please take the time to carefully read through this manual. We are a small reptile center but a large organization, well known throughout the world. We do our best to save reptiles, amphibians, and arachnids. All revenue remains in house. We do not have any outside investors. We do not buy or sell animals and 90% of our animals have either been donated or were abandoned pets.

Location

Hoedspruit Reptile Centre is situated in South Africa's Limpopo province, 15kms outside of the nearest town, Hoedspruit. Hoedspruit and its surrounds are one of the most pristine parts of the country in terms of natural heritage.

This area has a particularly high concentration of snakes and as a result there is a high frequency of interactions between snakes and people, making it a prime location for reptile related research and public education.



Background on the Centre

Hoedspruit Reptile Centre, formerly the Swadini Reptile Park, was established in 1984. The Centre was officially opened on the 9th of November 1984 by Mr. S.J. Schoeman. It has, over the years, proved itself to be center for research, education and conservation, and has become a well-known South African landmark.

The Centre is open to the general public and plays a very important educational role for all age groups. Hoedspruit Reptile Centre has a variety of animals on display, both indigenous and exotic. These include crocodylians, snakes, lizards, chelonians, amphibians, and arachnids.

Educational work at the Centre involves giving lectures to various groups: including schools of all grades, medical/veterinary students, conservationists, emergency services, medical and para-medical practitioners, corporate groups, ranger groups and general public. These talks and demonstrations are sometimes conducted at various venues away from the Centre. These activities occur on a regular basis throughout the year.

Hoedspruit Reptile Centre is also actively involved in conservation and research programmes involving herpetofauna both *in situ* and *ex situ*. The Centre only affiliates itself with accredited institutions and universities with appropriate ethical clearances. In addition to its work with research and conservation, Hoedspruit Reptile Centre also participates in other activities promoting and upholding the policy to conserve through education and research. Such as film production, educational book development and publishing, local community talks and enrichment, radio talks and shows and public presentation and demonstrations.

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUNTEERING

Why Volunteer at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre?

Hoedspruit Reptile Centre is a unique facility that is dedicated solely to the preservation and conservation of reptiles.

By volunteering at the Centre you play an active role in helping us achieve this goal. You will have the opportunity to learn and work with a whole range of different reptiles at a world-renowned reptile center.

You will get practical, hands-on experience in the day to day running of the Centre as well as the chance to work with a variety of indigenous and exotic reptiles. You will also play an invaluable role in helping us educate people about reptiles.



What is Expected of Volunteers?

Students assist with the general day to day care, husbandry and maintenance of all the animals in the Centre. This will include tasks such as feeding the animals and maintaining enclosures.

Students are also expected to interact with guests at the Centre, and to help educate them on the importance of reptiles in a natural ecosystem. There is very infrequently a dull moment at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre; as exciting new challenges present themselves on an almost daily basis.

Whilst students are encouraged to have fun, they must remember that during their time at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre they are not on holiday. They are volunteering at the Centre to educate themselves and benefit from an excellent facility and program.

Volunteers are expected to shower EVERY DAY and wear appropriate clothing to work. Our dress code is professional work wear and closed toed shoes. For example - no crop tops, hot pants, no sandals/flops etc. Volunteers represent Hoedspruit Reptile Centre and we require that you look professional and presentable at all times when at work.

Wifi & Connectivity

WiFi is available free of charge. Please just note that the free WiFi is a 2Mb up and 2Mb down line per person (each student receives their own wifi code). You will be able to send and receive whatsapps. But video calling and streaming will not be possible. We recommend that you purchase a Vodacom sim card for your stay at the centre. You can easily buy one at the airport on your way to us. You will be able to load affordable South African data on this sim card and you will have stable and fast(ish) internet when you need it.

Loadshedding

As a result of power plant issues throughout South Africa students must be aware that load shedding (unexpected electrical outages) may occur during their stay.

There is an app that you can download called Eskom Se Push. This app will give you an accurate load shedding schedule for our area.

Please bring a decent flash light for use during load shedding at night.

Cleaning the house & Breakages

There is cleaning staff that help maintain communal areas in the house however students are expected to clean up after themselves (dishes, rooms etc.).

Please respect the permanent residents of the volunteer house and keep the kitchen clean!

We do have laundry facilities at the volunteer house that you are welcome to use free of charge. We provide volunteers with a set amount of detergent as well.

If something at the house needs repairing please report it to the relevant person so that we can attend to it asap.



Accommodation and Meals

All students are housed in the Volunteer House on the Centre's premises. The accommodation is shared and has a fully equipped kitchen, pool, braai (BBQ area) and lounge.

Students will follow a set menu. Ingredients will be provided for each meal, and you will be responsible for preparation of the meals according to the recipe.

Responsible usage of ingredients is required. Ingredients are supplied on a weekly basis. Do not waste your ingredients.

Deviation from the set menu will be at the centre's discretion and will only be considered if there are less than 2 students at the house.

Meals

There is a set menu for meals.

If you have any specific dietary restrictions, please let us know and we shall try our best to accommodate you. Nevertheless, students must understand that the menu provided is balanced but basic and as such certain special requirements or desires may not be met. Students will be offered the opportunity to attend the weekly shop where they can purchase any additional luxuries/needs at their own expense.

Special dietary requirements other than vegetarian

There is a health shop in Hoedspruit town that caters for any kind of special dietary requirement. Please make an arrangement with us if you need to get your supplies from this shop - prior to your arrival.

Some of the items that we do not provide for students:

- Condiments
- Spices other than the basic salt and pepper and various stocks
- Snacks (other than the fruit we provide)
- Luxury items such as olive oil, apple cider vinegar, real butter, a variety of breads and cheeses etc.

The below are example meal options provided for your stay.

Breakfast

- Cereal and milk, tea and coffee

Lunch examples

- Ham and cheese sandwich
- Peanut butter and jam sandwich
- Hot dog roll
- Wrap
- Russian & Chips

Dinner Examples- All dinner options can be easily converted to vegetarian meals

- Mac and cheese
- Spaghetti bolognaise
- Chicken a la king
- Braai (bbq)
- Cottage Pie
- Fajitas

Examples of fruit include apples, bananas, oranges, mangoes and pears

Examples of vegetables offered include mushrooms, peppers, corn, tomatoes, butternut, gem squash, carrots and sweet potatoes.



Duties of a student/volunteer include but are not limited to the following:

- Animal husbandry, care and enrichment
- Food preparation and feeding
- General maintenance and cleaning of enclosures
- General maintenance and cleaning of work spaces
- Interacting with the public
- Reptile demonstrations
- Assisting on reptile call outs
- Helping with fundraising and marketing exercises
- Helping with and or initiating research projects

Working Hours and Time Off

Volunteers are expected to work every day from 8am to 5pm.

Lunch is an hour long and is usually taken between 13:00 and 14:00. However due to the varied nature of the work at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre, lunch may be taken at almost any time of the day.

Time off must be pre-arranged with management and the curators. Please note that any activities or excursions that you might want to book on your off days will be for your own account. You will also be responsible for making the arrangements of these excursions. We do have a list of trusted service providers that we can supply you with when making your arrangements.



LAB RULES AND PROCEDURES

The lab is the heart of Hoedspruit Reptile Centre. The lab is where a great deal of work is done looking after and maintaining the animals and their enclosures. The lab is a biosecure environment and only authorized persons are allowed entry.

The procedures and protocols explained below need to be followed when carrying out tasks. Please ensure that you have read over and understood these. Please take these rules seriously as they are in place to keep people and animals as safe as possible.

The lab is not a playground: it contains many highly venomous and sensitive animals which need to be handled in a responsible manner. If you have any queries, please ask relevant staff.

- Only persons authorized by management are allowed in the lab
- Make sure all cages are closed when you have finished working with them and never leave a cage that is open unattended for any length of time.
- Ensure that all daily records are kept strictly up to date (i.e. defecation, shedding, feeding, urination etc.).
- Always sterilize hands and equipment with F10 before and after working with any animals or lab equipment.
- Ensure that after any job the tools, equipment and surfaces are cleaned, sterilized and packed away appropriately.
- If you are unsure of anything (i.e. cleaning, feeding, mixing of solutions etc.) do not hesitate to ask management or the curator
- Do NOT do anything in the lab without explicit instruction from management or the curator.
- Working with any venomous animals can only be done under strict supervision from experienced park staff.
- When working with any venomous snakes, ensure that the correct safety pre-cautions are taken and that the correct equipment is used responsibly.
- Ensure that the dustbins in the lab are emptied at the end of the day.
- Do not open any cage or container (even if you think they are empty) unless instructed to do so by a curator.
- Ensure that the footbath at the entrance to the lab is maintained appropriately. Keep lab doors closed at all times unless instructed to otherwise by a curator.
- Handling of ANY animals, venomous or non-venomous is NOT allowed without permission.



FEEDING PROGRAM

All animals at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre have specific dietary requirements that need to be adhered to. Our curators will help with information as to which types of food certain animals can eat as well as the preparation instructions for the different species. Each individual animal has a diet plan recorded and this must be followed.

PROTOCOLS

At the Centre we do several different tours for various groups of people. Most of our tours include a slideshow presentation in the auditorium followed by a tour through the Centre and a live reptile demonstration. As a volunteer you will need to familiarize yourself with the protocols for these tours. Volunteers are encouraged to interact with guests and help educate them on reptiles and reptile conservation. Volunteers may be able to give tours and even do live reptile demonstrations themselves should they show an adequate level of knowledge and skill handling the animals.

REPTILE CALL OUTS

When a reptile needs to be removed from someone's property, a curator from the Centre will assist in capturing and removing the reptile. This is referred to as a reptile call out. A number of important safety procedures need to be followed when on a call out.

Important data also needs to be recorded at the collection site. If a curator declares a volunteer competent, they may assist or even capture the reptile themselves under supervision. During any call out students must strictly adhere to instruction from park staff.



FIRST AID

If you injury yourself during your stay report it immediately to the manger/manager on duty and fill out an appropriate incident report. If any additional measures are to be taken this will be determined by the health and safety officer.

There are several venomous snakes at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre as well as other potentially dangerous reptiles. The first aid procedures for snake bites and other emergencies will be explained to you by the curators on your arrival. Snake bites are to be taken seriously. In the event of a snake bite from any snake report it immediately so that staff can manage the situation appropriately. In the event of a venomous snake bite, secure the snake and report the incident and emergency protocols will be followed. There are roughly 172 species of snakes in South Africa of which only about 16 are potentially dangerous to humans. Snake venoms can be categorized into three basic groups:

Venom	Fangs	Snake
Cytotoxic Affecting tissue and cells	Front hinged	Most ADDERS
Neruotoxic Affecting nerves	Front fixed	Most COBRAS & MAMBAS
Haemotoxic Affecting blood clotting	Back fixed	BOOMSLANG & TWIG SNAKE

What NOT to do in a bite

- Do NOT keep quiet
- Do NOT wait for symptoms
- Do NOT cut, suck or tie off the site using a tourniquet (a tourniquet is only used in the event of a positive identification of specific snake species and can only be applied by qualified individuals)
- Do NOT run or exert yourself
- Do NOT try and catch the snake again for identification unless it is safe to do so (you may get bitten again in trying to catch the snake) – doctors can treat you by looking at your symptoms
- Do NOT drink alcohol Don't use home remedies as non are known to work effectively and some can be dangerous



HOUSE RULES

Accommodation is shared. Therefore, students are expected to be considerate of each other.

The following house rules are not exclusive but serve as a guideline for communal living:

- Do not waste water and electricity
- Make sure that taps, lights, stoves and fans are turned off when not in use.
- Remember to close windows and doors when lights are on at night as mosquitoes are attracted to lights
- Every now and then there will be medium sized, well behaved dogs in the house, please contact the management in case you have any sort of questions regarding them.
- Although water from the taps is clean (perfect to shower and brush your teeth with) we recommend that students drink the refined water provided in water canister.
- Please let management know if you break anything as it will need to be replaced or fixed. Please note anything you break will be replaced/fixed at your own cost.
- Let management know should something not work properly in the house. We will try and fix it as soon as possible, do not try and fix it yourself.
- As a result of power plant issues throughout South Africa students must be aware that load shedding (unexpected electrical outages) may occur during their stay. Download the app Eskom Se Push for accurate load shedding schedules for Hoedspruit.
- Please wash and pack away your own dishes and make up your own bed.
- Please keep your room tidy



The following house rules are not exclusive but serve as a guideline for communal living:

- The house is a “NO ANIMAL KILLING” zone, please do not kill any geckos, scorpions, spiders, ants, rats etc. in and around the house. Ask for assistance from one of the curators if an animal is bothering you.
- No excessive loud music will be tolerated.
- No smoking in the house.
- There is WiFi connection throughout most of the house. Please see the details earlier in this document re WiFi.
- Two bins are provided in the kitchen please separate perishable waste from nonperishable waste.
- Save any old fruits and vegetables, apple cores etc. for the animals. Give these to one of our curators.
- Do NOT leave the Centre’s premises at any time without first having informed management.
- Please let management know if you have any suggestions and ideas to upgrade the house.

Ablution facilities

- Please do not leave your personal toiletries, towels, clothing in the ablution area.
- Clean up after yourself in the ablution facilities.
- Do not flush non-biodegradable items down the toilets, use the sanitary dustbin provided for this.
- At least three people can shower with hot water immediately after each other.
- After which you will have to wait 15 minutes for the next warm shower.
- Please do not waste precious water.

Snooker table

- The snooker table is to be used only to play snooker (ie it is not a dining table or a work bench).
- Please do not place anything but the games equipment on the table.
- Keep the snooker table covered with the cloth provided if it is not being used.
- Do not drop balls onto the green cloth material as this will.
- irreparably damage the surface.
- Do not sit on the table.
- Enjoy your game.

Lounge:

- The lounge is a communal space, please treat it with respect and keep it tidy.
- Please do not leave any personal items lying around in the lounge.
- Books found in the house can be read at your discretion but under no circumstances may they be taken out of the house.
- If you decide to read or watch something late at night, please do so in the lounge to not disturb the people who might need more sleep than you and are sharing your room.



VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

Whilst at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre you will be representing the Centre. Please remember this and act accordingly:

- Volunteers need to act professionally and prudently while at work or in public as you are representing Hoedspruit Reptile Centre.
- Treat all volunteers, employees and community members with respect, courtesy and dignity.
- Avoid insensitive or offensive language – abhorrent behavior will not be tolerated.
- No physical or emotional violence towards others will be tolerated.
- Make efforts to understand and honor the local culture.
- Avoid physical relationships with other volunteers and staff.
- Follow all rules and policies set forth by any staff member.
- Herping can be done around the house after hours but no venomous snakes or dangerous animals are to be handled – if you do not know what it is do NOT pick it up

DRINKING AND DRUGS POLICY

- Drink responsibly – volunteers found with alcohol on their breath or impaired by the effects of drinking will not be allowed to work and may be asked to leave the program
- Herping is not permitted whilst under the influence
- The use of any illegal substance will not be tolerated and is grounds for disciplinary action and your expulsion from the program

PICTURES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Volunteers are not permitted to produce or post any pictures, videos etc on any platform without consent from the owner of Hoedspruit Reptile Centre.

Any pictures or videos taken at the park must be done so in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Centre – these will be explained to you on your arrival. If you wish to take any photographs or videos for any advertising, self-promoting or any other non-Centre related activity you will be required to sign our photographic/film agreement and may be liable for an extra fee.



BEFORE YOUR ARRIVAL

Please note there is a minimum age to work at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre. Volunteers must be 18 years or older. You must also be in good physical condition as the work is fun but strenuous.

Personal characteristics such as commitment, flexibility and teamwork are key to joining the Hoedspruit Reptile Centre team. A proper understanding of the English language is vital. Volunteers that are unable to communicate appropriately will not be allowed to work with dangerous animals due to the associated risks.

Please ensure you have an appropriate visa before your arrival. Most countries are visa exempt for entry to SA.

See a full list of these on <http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services/exempt-countries>

Visa regulations change regularly, and we recommend you ask your local embassy or an agent regarding which visa will be best for your stay with us.

Please meet with your GP or a travel doctor prior to your trip to us to ensure that you are up to date with any/all required treatments. If you are on any medication, please ensure to bring enough for your stay. Please also let us know in advance of any medical condition you may have so that we can make any necessary provisions should there be a requirement to do so.

The park does not provide insurance for its volunteers. Please ensure you have your own medical and travel insurance before arrival.

Packing list:

We look forward to welcoming you at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre soon

- Any prescription medication you are on
- Personal medication (and doctor's note)
- Travel toiletries
- Adapter if your electrical plug is different to that of South Africa
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle
- Mosquito net
- Insect repellent and itch soothing cream/ointment – we recommend buying mosquito repellent in South Africa if in doubt as it is more effective than some foreign products head torch
- towel
- First aid kit (whilst the Centre does have a first aid kit we do recommend bringing your own basic supplies in case you need them)





Ruby

Bookings, admin and survey sender.



Dr. Jess
Animal Repair Expert.



Chris
Owner/Director and protector of the realm



Senior Curator Jess

Senior Curator and your supervisor. Jess is your go to for anything while you are here (except food - that's Sharlene 🍷)

WHO IS WHO IN THE ZOO



Dean

Maintenance wizard. Tell him if something needs fixing



Sharlene

Orders your things!!



Curator Given

Second in charge of the zoo department and your supervisor when Senior Curator Jess is away



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VOLUNTEER INTRODUCTION FORM

This form is to certify that I, _____, being of sound mind have read and understood the contents of the Volunteer/Internship introduction pack.

I will adhere to the rules and regulations of Hoedspruit Reptile Centre throughout my stay and strive to uphold its policies and vision.

This form is deemed to be an official legal document and is fully understood by me the undersigned.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Names: _____

Next of Kin: _____

Next of Kin contacts: _____

Signed at: _____

NB: Please return this signed form to Hoedspruit Reptile Centre at least one month prior to your intended arrival at the Centre.



VOLUNTEER INDEMNITY FORM

Notice:

All persons entering these premises, or using any amenities or facilities on these premises, do so entirely at their own risk and subject to the following conditions:

1. Right of admission is strictly reserved.
2. These premises are monitored by Audio and Visual surveillance.

The owner, manager and/or operator of Hoedspruit Reptile Centre as well as its directors, officers, employees, agents, service providers and representatives do not accept any liability whatsoever for any injury or death of any natural person or the loss or destruction of or damage to any property that might occur, through/by the involvement/participation and/or use of its facilities and/or amenities, whether arising from natural causes, including animal bites/envenomation/scratches, theft or any other cause whatsoever caused and by whomsoever caused or arising from the negligence or gross negligence or wrongful acts or omissions of the owner, manager and/or operator of Hoedspruit Reptile Centre as well as its directors, officers, employees, agents, service providers and representatives.

Disclaimer:

The owner, manager and/or operator of Hoedspruit Reptile Centre as well as its directors, officers, employees, agents, service providers and representatives do not accept any liability whatsoever for any injury or death of any natural person or the loss or destruction of or damage to any property that might occur, through/by the involvement/participation and/or use of its facilities and/or amenities, whether arising from natural causes, including animal bites/envenomation/scratches, theft or any other cause whatsoever caused and by whomsoever caused or arising from the negligence or gross negligence or wrongful acts or omissions of the owner, manager and/or operator of Hoedspruit Reptile Centre as well as its directors, officers, employees, agents, service providers and representatives.

Indemnity:

I the undersigned being of sound mind, take full responsibility for my actions, regarding handling, caring for and working with reptiles and other animals whilst I am at Hoedspruit Reptile Centre. I understand that the handling, caring for and working with the animals will only be conducted under strictly controlled supervision, by the Centre's qualified staff members and that handling, caring for and working with the animals is done by me on a purely voluntary basis. I also understand that training and information will be given, by qualified staff at the Centre, to conduct the afore said actions, regarding the animals, in the correct and proper manner. I fully understand the risk and implications involved in my handling, caring and working with the animals, as well as other involvement and/or participation in activities on or off the property. I also take full responsibility for my conduct and actions when I am away from the Hoedspruit Reptile Centre, working with or on behalf of the Centre. I will not hold the Hoedspruit Reptile Centre responsible for any injuries incurred whilst involved with projects at or away from the Hoedspruit Reptile Centre. In the event of injury or death occurring, no legal action will be taken against the Hoedspruit Reptile Centre nor its affiliated entities, agents, service providers, members or staff whatsoever. This indemnity is deemed to be an official legal document and is fully understood by me the undersigned.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Names: _____

Next of Kin: _____

Next of Kin contacts: _____

Signed at: _____

Hoedspruit Reptile Centre

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signed at: _____