

Volunteer Role Description: Small Mammal Skull Rehousing Project



Skulls housed within boxes in a drawer (left); skulls loosely stored in a drawer (right)

About the opportunity

Although space-efficient and safe from pests in its current storage, the Museum of Natural History's collection of small mammal skulls (think moles, voles, bats, and cats) needs to be re-boxed before moving to a new location. This is part of a large-scale project that will bring all of the Museum's mammal bones together in one place, making them easier to access, care for, and research.

Amo Spooner (Life Collections Manager) is looking for a couple of volunteers who enjoy careful tasks, making lists, and spatial thinking to help with the re-boxing process. This will involve volunteers working their way through existing trays and boxes, and:

- deciding how many specimens will fit into each new, larger box
- using Correx (corrugated plastic) to create dividers (to keep specimens separate)
- transferring skulls and associated labels into the new boxes
- handwriting a label for the front of each new box, stating species, specimen numbers, and other relevant information
- using Excel to create a corresponding list of box numbers, species, and specimen numbers

Volunteers will be based in the Life department's shared work area: a light, accessible (step-free via a lift), quietish space, upstairs in the Museum. Amo will induct volunteers, and either she or another member of staff will be on hand to answer questions and offer support.

We would like volunteers to come in for a **weekly(ish) shift on a Wednesday or Thursday starting in January 2025. This could be for a couple of hours, or up to 6**

hours (including a lunch break), between 10 am and 4 pm. There is no specific finish date, although the project may take a few months, during which Amo will regularly check in with volunteers about their progress and satisfaction.

Who are we looking for?

Because this role is about recording information as accurately as possible, we feel it would particularly suit volunteers who:

- enjoy doing methodical, repetitive tasks, with attention to detail
- are comfortable reading small text (handwritten and typed)
- are accurate typists and already familiar with using basic Excel spreadsheets (or willing to learn)

Volunteers will also be cutting Correx, handling fragile skulls, and working out how to fit them alongside each other, so a sense of care, manual dexterity, and spatial awareness are also important. They should show similar care when handling trays and boxes. They will be able to collect the drawers (various weights up to 5kg) containing the current trays and boxes themselves from a storeroom on the same floor as the workspace, or Amo can have them ready and waiting for them when they arrive.

Finally, prior knowledge of small mammals might make the task more interesting but isn't necessary; Amo can explain what the information on the labels means, and we are happy to meet potential volunteers who would like to develop more knowledge in this area.

Why volunteers might enjoy this opportunity

We hope that volunteers will find the role interesting and fulfilling! It's a chance to:

- spend time doing something a bit different
- connect with the Museum and meet staff and other volunteers
- gain an insight into how the Museum's bone collections are managed and documented
- potentially pursue or develop an interest in small mammals
- help the Museum rehouse its collections in a very practical way, while also making the collections more accessible to people who want to use them
- potentially contribute to the Museum's social media – if you would like to share something about your volunteering

Other practicalities

- We will encourage volunteers to work in a safe and comfortable way, including taking breaks as necessary – volunteers are welcome to get a drink and bring something to eat in the staff room if they would like to.
- This role is open to volunteers aged 18+.



- Volunteers can claim travel expenses up to £5 per volunteering session.
- Volunteers new to onsite GLAM volunteering will need to be registered on the Volunteer Service mailing list (MyImpactPage.com), and the Volunteer Service will need to have received two references and done an ID check before volunteers can start in this role. The role does not require any additional checks.

How to let us know you're interested

If you think you would suit and enjoy this role, then please email Caroline at volunteering@glam.ox.ac.uk by the end of the day on **Sunday 1st December**.

When you get in touch, please:

- confirm your preferred availability on Wednesdays and/or Thursdays
- include a few lines about why you're interested (no more than 150ish words)
- give an example of a task you've done that required you to work with attention to detail and/or manual dexterity; this could be something you've done at work, at home, while studying, as a hobby, etc. (no more than 150ish words)

In addition, because we are advertising more than one volunteer role in the Life Collection at the same time, and because we anticipate these roles attracting more people than we can currently take on, we would like to invite a shortlist of potential volunteers to come into the Department on the following dates:

- Thursday 5th December: 9.30 am - 3 pm
- Friday 6th December: 1 - 4 pm
- Thursday 12th December: 9.30 am - 4 pm

This will be a chance to meet us and see where volunteering happens. We will also set everyone a practical task (involving insects) to help you and us decide if this kind of volunteering is a good fit. **Please let us know which of these sessions you could potentially attend.** If you aren't available at these times, then please still get in touch, and we will arrange another time if possible.

Caroline will forward applications on to the Volunteer Supervisor, Amo, after the deadline, and someone will be in touch as soon as possible after that.