

Volunteer Role Description: Out of the Deep (Jurassic Seas) Object Handling



About 'Out of the Deep' Object Handling

'Out of the Deep' happens at the Museum of Natural History, **11 am - 1 pm on Saturdays** throughout the year. Volunteers help visitors use real fossils and plastic models to discover more about plesiosaurs (extinct marine reptiles that lived at the same time as dinosaurs). This includes talking about predators and prey in the Jurassic seas and why marine fossils are discovered on land today. The activity is set up in the Main Court, next to the 'Out of the Deep' display case. The aim is to encourage visitors to engage with the displays about local marine fossils and to gain a greater understanding of life underwater during the Jurassic period. Sessions are free, drop-in, and aimed at the general public, and volunteers can expect to have a variety of conversations.

Volunteers usually help in pairs, but may occasionally be asked if they are happy to volunteer alone. The rota is coordinated by Carly Smith-Huggins from the Public Engagement Team, and Visitor Experience staff provide general support on the day.

Training and commitment

Volunteers need to attend a training session **1.30 - 4.30 pm on Saturday 10th October**, followed by a supported practice session, to be arranged at a mutually convenient time in the following weeks. The training session includes information on a set of handling objects, as well as techniques for engaging visitors with the objects. The practice session is a chance for each volunteer to do the activity with a member of staff on hand to model interactions, give support, and offer feedback. Volunteers will receive all of the information they need to get started but will be encouraged to do their own research and further explore the 'Out of the Deep' exhibit.

Volunteers join the team by mutual agreement with staff following these two sessions. They then set up and run the activity relatively independently on the day. They should arrive early so they are ready to start on time and should allow additional time to pack away at the end. They can expect to deliver a session at least once every few weeks – although the rota is

flexible and will depend on the number of volunteers. We hope that volunteers will be available for at least a few months when they sign up.

About Out of the Deep volunteers

Object handling is about having interesting conversations with all sorts of visitors: using questions and different senses to help them learn more, and bearing in mind that visitors may have knowledge of the objects that they would like to share.

We are looking for volunteers who want visitors to have the best possible experience at the Museum, whilst also demonstrating a sense of responsibility for the objects they are using. Our ideal volunteer would be:

- **enthusiastic:** volunteers may or may not already know about the Jurassic period or plesiosaurs but will be keen to find out more and to share that knowledge with others in an interesting, interactive, and accessible way
- **welcoming, engaging, and keen to practise (science) communication skills with a variety of people,** from young children to knowledgeable adults, and tourists to regular visitors (most conversations will be in English, but other languages may occasionally prove useful!)
- **confident managing small groups** of people around a potentially busy table, as well as happy sitting at the table and soaking up the atmosphere during any quieter moments
- **flexible and considerate:** we anticipate pairs of volunteers working together to deliver each session, sometimes using the same objects to have simultaneous conversations with different visitors, sometimes taking turns... always supporting each other to ensure that everyone is involved
- **polite and helpful:** public-facing volunteers are asked a variety of unrelated questions, which they may or may not know the answers to – but remember, Visitor Experience staff are always nearby to help!

Why volunteers might enjoy this role

It's an opportunity to:

- connect with the Museum
- join a friendly, well-established team of volunteers
- share or discover a passion for marine fossils and the Jurassic period, and help bring the exhibits to life
- develop and practise (science) communication skills
- gain experience of learning through objects
- potentially contribute to the Museum's social media – if you would like to share something about your volunteering

Other information

- The space where this volunteering happens has step-free access via a lift, and the volunteering can be done seated or standing. The Museum can get noisy at busy times, and the temperature and light fluctuate with the weather and season.
- This role is open to volunteers aged 18+.
- Volunteers can claim reimbursement of travel expenses up to £5 per volunteering session.
- Volunteers new to onsite GLAM volunteering will need to be registered on the GLAM 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 currently require any additional checks.

Next steps...

Depending on the level of interest, we hope to invite as many people as possible to an informal 'audition' at the Museum of Natural History on **Saturday 26th September**. This will be a chance for us to explain more about the role and for potential volunteers to ask questions and get a better sense of what the role involves. We will also set potential volunteers a task to do together. Each slot should last about half an hour.

If you are interested in getting involved, then please **complete a form by following [this link](#)**.

It will ask you to:

- confirm which time(s) you could attend an audition on **Saturday 26th September** – exact timings to be confirmed, but they will be within the hours of 11 am - 12 noon, 12.45 - 1.45 pm, and 2.30 - 3.30 pm
- confirm your availability to attend training on **Saturday 10th October**
- briefly explain (max 150ish words each):
 - why you would like to be involved, *and*
 - if you could be any marine reptile (alive or extinct), what would you be and why?

If sending a video or voice recording would make it easier for you to apply, then you are welcome to email one to Caroline at volunteering@glam.ox.ac.uk – just make sure you include all of these points!

The deadline to apply is **Thursday 17th September**. Caroline will share expressions of interest with Carly on the 18th, and one of us will be in touch by Tuesday 22nd.

Information will be kept in accordance with our [Data Retention Schedule](#).

For more information about the Out of the Deep display, see:

<https://oumnh.ox.ac.uk/out-of-the-deep>