

INTERNSHIPS

Throughout the year we accept a small number of interns and volunteers to Save the Elephants in Kenya. If you are interested in applying for an internship please read this document carefully to understand your options. Please contact Lucy King to apply or for more information at lucy@savetheelephants.org.

In a nutshell:

Internships: 2-3 month professional placements with a specific research project in Kenya, designed for university students or graduates pursuing a career in conservation and science. Intern costs are heavily subsidised by STE, we ask for a minimum donation of US\$25 per day to cover your food, water, accommodation, and internet usage. You are required to do your own laundry.

Interns are required to cover the costs of international flights, full medical insurance, country visas, internal flights/transport and personal spending money.

Save the Elephant Professional Internships - Kenya

Who can apply for an Internship?

Our interns are over 18 years of age and are selected by their academic qualifications as listed on their CV's and cover letters explaining why they want to work for STE and, in particular, what skills they can offer our organisation. We normally expect our interns to be studying a degree at a reputable university in the fields of zoology, biological sciences, environmental sciences or geography and to be intent on pursuing a career in this field. Most of our interns come to us during the long summer university holidays. We do accept postgraduates and career-break interns who are trying to get more experience in the field of conservation biology and ecology. We do accept interns in our Nairobi Head Office who can help us with fundraising, marketing, website and office based projects such as managing our African Elephant Library. Interns have come to us from all over the world including Kenya, USA, UK, Australia, Netherlands and Germany.

How Many Internship positions are there each year?

We have 4 internships positions available at Save the Elephants every year. The most competitive internships are the 2 positions we have available between June-September each year. Potential candidates should apply for the summer internship program before the end of April but earlier applications are considered and good applications will be accepted before the end of April. We accept applications all year round and can be fairly flexible on start dates.

How long is the STE Internship?

We prefer interns to commit to at least 2 months of work. Depending on the project work assigned to you, this may be spent in either Nairobi or our Samburu research camp. Most Nairobi interns will have an opportunity to visit the Samburu research camp during their time in Kenya. The longest intern we had worked for us for 6 months. The most common length is 7-10 weeks.

What will I be doing?

STE internships are highly competitive and therefore we are able to select the best candidates. We would put you onto at least one main project that fits your experience, interest and skills base. This varies enormously from year to year and from intern to intern. Have a read of our website and past intern's experiences to learn more about the project work conducted at STE of which you could be a part of.

Can I do a Masters project as an STE intern?

Yes, we have managed to work with MSc students in the past to help them complete a discrete project in the time available. MSc students should provide us with their course details, the structure needed for their research project and the topic area. We are not able to accommodate all applications from MSc students so you should apply to us in plenty of time if you wish to complete your own project during your internship. Please note that the biggest constraint is an MSc student who needs to use our research vehicles to collect their data. This is very difficult to accommodate around all our other research commitments and we recommend that MSc students fundraise to hire their own 4x4 from Nairobi for the duration of their fieldwork data collection. This enables greater flexibility to conduct your research and we can help you to find a personal field assistant to assist you with data collection. Please note that we will only support MSc projects that fit within STE's mission and research aims.

How much do I have to raise for an Internship?

Overseas interns will have to raise funds to pay for their international flight to and from Kenya and for a return flight from Nairobi to Samburu. This internal flight is 1.5 hours and usually costs around US\$250. Interns working at the Samburu Research Camp need to raise a minimum of US\$25 per night that they stay at the camp. This is a heavily subsidised contribution towards your food, drinking water, accommodation, laundry, security, internet access and any equipment that is used to collect data. Interns usually manage to raise an extra donation on top of their daily camp fee to support the ongoing work of STE but this is not compulsory. US\$5 from your daily camp fee is put into a fund to support the costs of Kenyan interns who apply to Save the Elephants but who are not able to raise the funds. This fund enables us to fully subsidise one Kenyan intern for every 2-3 overseas interns that we accept. Kenyan applicants who are financially unable to pay our subsidised camp fee should apply in the usual way with a CV and cover letter but explaining your financial constraints.

What should I bring?

We will send you a more comprehensive list of equipment once you are accepted as an intern. However, you should expect to bring a laptop with wireless internet capabilities, a good camera with zoom lens, a pair of binoculars, a GPS and a comprehensive first aid kit.

What happens after my Internship is over?

Every intern is responsible for writing a brief report to the wardens of Samburu and Buffalo Springs Reserve describing the activities undertaken. This should be submitted before leaving the reserves. In addition we ask each intern to prepare an **A1 poster** on his or her project work and to submit a small paragraph for our Annual Report, which is published every September. Any MSc interns should post us a full copy of their complete thesis with appropriate acknowledgements. Interns often help our long-term researchers with data analysis or collection. Occasionally we will publish papers or reports on this data and there may be a chance for exceptional interns to be listed as authors or acknowledged on research papers. Several interns have returned for a second year after successful completion of a first internship. We are very grateful for interns who go on to help us with fundraising activities in their own countries once they return home.

A Few Case Studies of Recent Interns and Volunteers

Internship Case Studies:

Patrick Kabatha: Between April and October 2009 I have been undertaking a GIS internship with Save the Elephants. One of my assignments involved assessing elephant damage to vegetation along the Ewaso Ngiro river in Samburu using tree survey data collected by STE over the last 8 years. In the last decade or so, the riparian ecosystem of Ewaso-Ngiro River has been greatly impacted on by a multiplicity of factors. Among these factors are persistent drought, an intensification of elephant debarking and browsing plus human development and encroachment from local population increase and settlements. This has resulted to a drastic decline in vegetation cover alongside the riverbed, thus escalating the rates of soil erosion which in the long run have created more pressure on the already stressed ecosystem. My research concentrated on analyzing four randomly selected plots (50 x 100 meters) along the river line over a 10 year period. They revealed an appalling rate of vegetation degradation. The survival trends derived from data collected over a span of 10 years clearly shows a significant reduction of major plant species at an alarming rate. The plant species of interest were mostly of Acacia trees which provide the bulk of food material for elephants. This is a typical type 2 survival curve which suggests an almost constant probability of mortality at any cohort or age size. The trends indicate a 12% annual acacia tree decline. A progressive analysis predicts an incredibly low Acacia population leading into the year 2012 if no mitigation measures are put in place. This phenomenon will possibly have a catastrophic effect on the elephant population since Acacia provides one of the main sources of nutrition. Possible remedies to the ongoing degradation would include protecting the remaining Acacia tree species by the use of wire mesh stapled around the trunk to prevent de-barking of the largest trees. This has already been tested with great effect and has proved to be a success in protected trees. In addition it is essential that no more lodges are build within the riverine environment within the reserves as this will only result in a concentration of elephants in the remaining wooded areas.

Charlene Ngoka: is a second year biology student at the University of Nairobi who interned with STE for two months in 2009. She says: *“My name is Charlene Ngoka and I have completed my second year of Biology at the University of Nairobi. I have been working as an intern at Save The Elephant since August 2009, helping with the administrative work and also accompanying Lucy King to Tsavo to learn more about her project on Bees and Elephants which she introduced to the local community. I hope to gain more knowledge and exposure as I complete my two month internship here”*.

Toby Aisbitt: *My name is Toby Aisbitt and for two months over this summer I have been an intern with the Save the Elephants field team in the Samburu reserve, Kenya. My time here has been governed by the fact that I have been present during the worst drought in living memory. I have witnessed a reserve in turmoil, overrun by livestock and almost entirely devoid of greenery or water. The many projects that the team is working on have been altered dramatically by the desperate situation. It has, however, been the experience of a lifetime. I am a philosophy and literature student at the University of Warwick in England. Traditionally save the elephants have only had volunteers studying in the fields of Biology and Zoology. Anyone who is interested in the cause should, however, get in contact. I am sure that everyone has a skill that they can offer. I personally have been writing a blog for the save the elephants website. I have also been updating the elephant ID files. This has involved using my love of photography to capture the individual characteristics of the elephant’s ears and tusks. It is very hard to understand the work of a conservation organization without witnessing their fieldwork first hand. The reports that are*

published make reference to huge collections of data and it is easy to forget the painstaking work that went in to gathering it. I am very thankful to Save the Elephants for giving me such a life changing experience and I look forward to a continuing relationship with them in years to come.

Sarah White Studying Zoology at Edinburgh University, Sarah White completed a 10 week internship with Save the Elephants during summer 2009, based at the main research camp in Samburu. Sarah undertook the enormous task of analysing the performance of all the GPS radio tracking collars used by Save the Elephants since 1998, incorporating data from over 200 collars deployed in Kenya, Mali, Central and South Africa. The results of her analysis are soon to be published to help inform other scientists hoping to collar elephants across Africa.

Emma Knott completed three 3-month internships with Save the Elephants during each of her summer holidays from Durham University. She finally achieved a 2:1 in BSc Zoology, which included submitting a dissertation based on the drinking behaviour of elephant families in Samburu. She has also helped us analyse the performance of our elephant tracking collars.

Caroline Mullins, also studying Zoology at Durham University, completed a 5 month internship with Save the Elephants and focused primarily on helping our elephant team update the huge elephant identification files. This was a mammoth task converting all our photos to power point files and getting new files printed off of all 700 elephants.

Mailie Ross came to us from Australia on a gap year after finishing her degree in Biology from Melbourne University. Mailie's internship lasted 6 months and was based primarily in the Nairobi headquarters helping Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton with project administration. She visited Samburu 4 times during her internship and helped co-ordinate logistics from Nairobi.

Peter Tomiak spent 7 weeks on his internship with Save the Elephants after succeeding in getting a first class degree from Bristol in Zoology. Peter helped us clean six years of data collected on dead elephants for MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants project).

Lucy King spent 6 weeks at Save the Elephants conducting a short MSc project in Samburu for her degree at Oxford University, UK. On the back of this successful project she raised funds to continue the research (looking at the use of honey bees as an elephant deterrent) with Save the Elephants to DPhil level linked to the Animal Behaviour Research Group at the Department of Zoology.

Volunteer Case Studies:

Henry and Oliver Klingenstein were American volunteers for Save the Elephants for 3 weeks and helped our research staff conduct mammal censuses and elephant monitoring. They also spent time inputting data from the long term elephant monitoring into our database.

Becky Walter was a volunteer with Save the Elephants from America. Becky helped to scan all of Iain's old photographs from his African research expeditions from slides and prints into digital format. This has provided an invaluable digital record of elephant research of over 4 decades.