



Highlands Nature Center: Naturalists

The Highlands Biological Foundation is recruiting Naturalists to support our summer programming at the Highlands Nature Center. Tucked into a temperate rainforest at the southern edge of the Appalachians, the Highlands Nature Center is part of the Highlands Biological Station, a multi-campus center of Western Carolina University. It is a small facility that reaches both residents and visitors from across the country during the summer. In addition to natural history exhibits, staff offer free daily and weekly programs for the public, weeklong summer camps, and special events. Programs take place in the Highlands Nature Center and adjoining 11-acre Botanical Garden, but can also include sites within the surrounding Nantahala National Forest.

This position is essential to the success of the Highlands Nature Center. Naturalists are responsible for managing daily operations, creating and running public programming, and leading summer camps. They work both independently and as a team under the Education Specialists.

Compensation: \$440/week (\$11/hr) and on-site housing. Naturalists will share living quarters and rooms in our campus dorms. They will also receive First Aid and CPR certifications. Opportunities to develop on-site curriculum and contribute to displays are available.

Hours: Naturalists work an average of 40 hours a week. Days may begin as early as 8 AM or end as late as 10:30 PM. Saturdays and some evenings are required. Willingness to work a flexible schedule is a must.

Position dates are May 17 – Aug 13; however, flexibility with dates is possible.

COVID-19: To protect both our staff and our visitors, the Highlands Nature Center has developed rigorous COVID-19 safety protocols. Staff must be willing and able to follow this protocol. Please note, any offers of employment and specific duties will be contingent on state and university COVID-19 restrictions.

Western Carolina University in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has adopted a “Get Vaccinated or Get Tested” policy effective September 15, 2021. This requires staff to demonstrate evidence of full vaccination upon hire or be subject to regular testing.

Duties:

Primary responsibilities include:

- Opening, staffing, and closing the Nature Center
- Implementing COVID-19 protocols (e.g. mask wearing, social distancing, sanitizing the facility)
- Interpreting the natural history of the southern Appalachians and related exhibits for the general public
- Developing and presenting environmental educational programs for diverse audiences (e.g. garden tours, “neighborhood naturalists”)

- Preparing and leading week-long day camps for youth ages 4 to 12
- Assisting with special events and evening programs for the general public
- Answering questions about local natural areas and recreational opportunities
- Feeding and handling live exhibit animals (primarily reptiles and amphibians)
- Cleaning animal enclosures

Other duties include:

- Handling transactions in the Gift Shop
- Driving state and passenger vehicles
- Setting up and operating A/V systems
- Cleaning and maintaining the Nature Center

Education and Experience:

Preference will be given to candidates with a degree (or enrolled in a degree program) in biology, zoology, botany, environmental science, science education, outdoor recreation, or other related fields.

Ideal candidates should have experience in at least one of the following areas: supervising children; working at a museum, visitor's center, camp, or similar setting; or handling and caring for animals.

Knowledge and Skills:

Proficiency in dealing with the public is a must. Knowledge of the flora and fauna of the southern Appalachians is very desirable. Familiarity with a variety of environmental education programs such as Project WILD is desirable.

Working Conditions and Physical Demands:

Naturalists will spend extended periods of time outdoors in all weather and hike up to three miles on uneven terrain. They may be occasionally asked to assist Station or Foundation employees in the office, maintenance shop, or Botanical Garden. These jobs may include heavy lifting (≤ 50 lbs).

Other Qualifications:

Applicants must be U.S. citizens and possess a valid driver's license. They must also successfully pass a background check.

Application Instructions: Send a cover letter, resume, and list of 3 professional references with phone numbers and emails to Paige Engelbrektsson at paige@highlandsbiological.org. **Applications must be received by March 11th, 2022.** For additional information contact Paige Engelbrektsson or call 828-526-2623.

The Highlands Biological Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race; color; religion; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; national origin; age; disability; genetic information; political affiliation; National Guard or veteran status, consistent with applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations, and policies, and the policies of The Highlands Biological Foundation. This nondiscrimination policy applies to employees, volunteers, participants, and all aspects of our operations.

Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations in the application and interview process please call 828-526-2623 or email paige@highlandsbiological.org.