**Wildlife Volunteer Opportunities**

The Macaw Society, formerly Tambopata Macaw Research Center

Peruvian Amazon

<https://www.facebook.com/macawsociety/>

Monitoring wild macaws

For this project you are expected to learn to climb trees on a one rope system, with the help of the project leaders. You will climb ancient trees to the top of the forest canopy where you will handle macaw chicks in their nests so that the vets can monitor their growth. Sometimes the parent macaws are present when you get the babies from the nests which can be quite an adventure. It is very difficult work climbing trees and hiking in rain boots everywhere you go. You will also do bird census on some mornings, counting the dozens of species that come to the clay lick for minerals.

You will need to take a very good mosquito repellent as they are rampant and you must be aware of the tiny sand flies which can cause serious illness. I had no problem with them myself.

This project is deep in the amazon which can only be accessed by boat, 6 hours from civilization. It is a lodge that hosts environmentalist tourists. The restaurant feeds all of the volunteers wonderful meals. The lodging is in a large one story structure with open walls to the forest and mosquito netting over each bed.

Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society

Sri Lanka

<https://www.slwcs.org/>

Elephant observation

Most volunteer days you will be out with your group watching the elephants from a large safari truck to make sure they are safe and in good health. This project has been around for 20+ years and has developed numerous successful programs to help with the human and elephant conflict, protecting them both.

Mostly the only thing to be cautious of here is the snakes, spiders and scorpions that inevitably make their way into the lodging.

This project is on land in a beautiful forest surrounded by lakes and mountains with wild peacocks roaming free. The meals are healthy and traditional to the region. There is one building which houses all of the volunteers, with bunkbeds for sleeping, and some open-air spaces. It can get quite hot but its worth it.

Vervet Monkey Foundation

<https://vervet.za.org/>

Limpobo, South Africa

Here you help to care for about 600 monkeys, feeding, watering, repairing enclosures and rehabbing monkeys with health issues. For this project I was blessed to be able to work in the nursery with infant monkeys, which was a dream come true. Inquire first about if this is still an option if you are interested. I was surprised to find out that none of the monkeys can be rehabilitated and released into the wild again due to the complexity of how monkeys live in troupes in the wild.

This project is on private land and volunteers sleep two to a cabin. It can get very hot during the day making napping difficult in the cabin. The meals are all vegan. You can also buy your own food in the market to prepare for additional snacks and meals but no animal-based products are allowed, including honey.

Batu Kapal Orangutan Project

Upper Sumatra, Indonesia

<https://batukapalconservation.com/>

Here you are volunteering to monitor orangutans in the wild. Each day you go out to observe the solitary animals, living alone or as small families of mother and adolescents. If you are lucky you will see them frequently, known as “the forest people”, but not typically daily. You may also go out to plant native trees and do other work helping in the local community.

It can be very hot and humid here. You will have to wear clothes that always cover your feet and ankles to avoid getting bitten by leeches. Motor bikes are the only mode of transportation here besides walking.

This project is in a two story house with sleeping quarters on matts on the second floor. The meals are all traditional food and are delicious.

Amaru Bioparque/Zoo

Cuenca, Ecuador

<https://www.zoobioparqueamaru.com/>

This zoo is home to rescued animals, so none are taken from the wild. Here you help with feeding the animals, cleaning the enclosures and educating the public about the wildlife.

The animals include monkeys, snakes, deer, capibara, condors and numerous species of parrots, among others.

The volunteer quarters are in a building with rooms with two bunkbeds per room. You are expected to buy and cook all of your own food. Sometimes the other volunteers do not clean up the kitchen too well and the water can be low for cleaning and washing. Still all worth it. The altitude is quite high so takes some getting acclimated to.

Mahouts – Mae Sot, Thailand

Great homestay program for three days. Friendly tribal community and Mahouts staff.

<https://www.mahouts.org/>

Ethical Elephant Projects- List of vetted elephant projects in Asia

<https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/elephant-friendly-tourist-guide>