

MARINELAND'S DOLPHIN CONSERVATION CENTER

CAREERS WITH ANIMALS



CAREERS IN DOLPHIN TRAINING

Looking around Marineland's Dolphin Conservation Center, one could believe that youthful exuberance is the most important quality in a dolphin trainer.

Get to know Marineland's training staff, however, and you'll learn that we are more than that; we are a crew of hard-working, highly educated and truly committed individuals.

Due to the competitive nature of the business, most animal trainers spend years volunteering their time at zoos, aquariums, animal shelters and farms before they ever get their first paid job. This experience adds valuable credibility to a resume and develops im-

portant relationships with people in the field for future references.

Although there is no such thing as a degree in dolphin training, almost all dolphin trainers are expected to have a four year college degree in the behavioral or life sciences. Besides providing a basic understanding of the animals with whom you'll work and the training methods you'll use, a college degree also helps to narrow the field from a large pool of applicants to a smaller, more qualified group.

Beyond being truly dedicated and highly educated, dolphin trainers must also meet some important



A trainer works with a young Atlantic bottlenose dolphin on an aerial behavior.

physical requirements. Swimming, SCUBA diving and the ability to lift heavy objects are all parts of the job.

HOW CAN I GAIN HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE WITH ANIMALS?

Typically, if you're old enough to know you want to be a dolphin trainer, you're old enough to start preparing.

Although the opportunities to volunteer with dolphins may be limited, the opportunities to work with other

animals are vast. Contact your local veterinary clinic, animal adoption facility, farm, zoo or aquarium to find out about volunteer positions available for people in your age group.

While the experience gained through these oppor-

tunities won't be the same as the career you ultimately want, it will help you learn about all that goes into the care of animals, and that is a lesson that will be valuable to you wherever you end up!

SO YOU WANT TO TRAIN DOLPHINS...

- *Earn a 4-year college degree in Psychology, Biology or a related field.*
- *Gain hands-on experience with a variety of animals through volunteer work and internships.*
- *Practice strong swimming skills.*
- *Become a certified diver.*

DOES THE DOLPHIN CONSERVATION CENTER OFFER INTERNSHIPS?

Yes! Marineland offers internship opportunities for college students and recent graduates who wish to gain valuable experience that will be beneficial for anyone pursuing a career involving marine animals.

This competitive program is a fantastic way to learn all aspects of the field so you can decide if you are interested in continuing your pursuit. Read more about this opportunity at:

www.marineland.net

WHAT IS ANIMAL TRAINING?

The method of animal training that you see being used at Marineland's Dolphin Conservation Center is called Operant Conditioning. This is defined as:

A type of learning in which behaviors are altered by regulating the consequences that follow them. This type of conditioning is often referred to as shaping or training. The majority of training that we do with our animals is shaped through operant conditioning.

In laymen's terms, this means that the response that an animal receives after offering a particular behavior (a jump, a vocalization, a flipper shake, etc.) helps to determine whether the animal will offer that behavior again. If the response is positive (fish!), the animal is very likely to repeat the behavior. If the behavior is not positive (lack of attention) the animal is less likely to try this same behavior.

Dolphins are trained not only for the beautiful behaviors you see at Marineland and at other oceanariums, but also for the important veterinary behaviors that allow the dolphins to participate in their own vet care. Examples of these behaviors include blood samples, ultrasounds and urine samples. A well-trained dolphin can voluntarily work with a trainer, allowing for the best possible health care to be practiced.



The trainer's relationship with the animals they work with is crucial to a successful career in training.

IT'S A DIRTY JOB, BUT SOMEONE HAS TO DO IT!

As sought after as a career in dolphin training may be, it can also be very misunderstood. For all the work that goes into obtaining your dream job, it is important to truly understand everything that it entails.

A typical day in a dolphin trainer's life involves hours of scrubbing buckets, sorting fish and vacuuming pools.

Beyond this, there will also be computer work for maintaining animal records and other more typical office duties.

Even during the times in your day when you are enjoying moments with the animals, you may be working in conditions of extreme cold or heat.

How important is it to you to have weekends off? Holidays? Animal care happens 7 days a

week, 24 hours a day and the commitment to the animals' health and well-being is an important priority to keep in mind.

If these aspects of hard work, extreme temperatures and unconventional work schedules don't weaken your commitment to being a dolphin trainer, then this may be the job for you!

"Animal care happens 7 days a week, 24 hours a day and the commitment to the animals' health and well-being is an important priority to keep in mind."

ARE BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN ENDANGERED?

Though bottlenose dolphins are not endangered, they do suffer from negative interactions with people.

Discarded trash in our oceans can be swallowed by or can become tangled around the dolphin.

Feeding wild dolphins is illegal and interacting with them can be dangerous to both the

person and the animals involved.

The most effective method of conveying information about marine mammal conservation is through education.

A career working with animals and people is a wonderful way to communicate knowledge and compassion for these amazing animals

without negatively impacting wild populations.



