

# BILLABONG SANCTUARY VOLUNTEER MANUAL.



## **Congratulations on becoming a volunteer at Billabong Sanctuary!**

G'day! All the staff and animals here at Billabong Sanctuary would like to extend to you a very big welcome and we hope that your volunteer experience is rewarding.

Billabong Sanctuary's continued success in the zoo industry is founded on a commitment by all staff to deliver to the customer a unique experience or in our words to give the customer a 'WOW of a day'. To do this we believe that the best way to share our conservation message is through interaction. What this means for you is that Billabong Sanctuary offers a unique volunteer program that has you working shoulder to shoulder with our Rangers.

This manual outlines the volunteer program at Billabong Sanctuary and the relevant policies and procedures. If you have any questions or queries please do not hesitate to ask.

### **What's in a name – a short history but a long legacy.**

Billabong Sanctuary is a privately owned zoo that was established in 1985 by Bob and Del Flemming, turning what was 11 hectares of cattle grazing land into lush tropical bushland that now features a permanent billabong. From humble beginnings, Billabong Sanctuary has become the recipient of numerous tourism awards and holds 'advanced ecotourism' certification.

Today, Billabong Sanctuary is home to over 50 species of bird, reptile and mammal as part of our captive collection and many more species that simply call the Billabong home.

### **Where do I fit in and what will I be doing?**

Billabong Sanctuary is open from 9:00am to 5:00pm, 7 days a week. A typical day for a Ranger begins at 7:30 or 8:30 am and finishes at 4:00pm or 5:00 pm. As a volunteer **you will be expected to work the same hours**. There are two breaks per day, one at 9:30am the other at 12:15pm. These breaks are timed so that they do not interrupt the show schedule, and should be taken at these times.

A normal workday follows this basic format:

7:30am -9:30am – Animal husbandry (Koala Run, Back Run, Leaf Cut & Reptile Run)

9:30am-9:45am – Morning Tea

10:00am-12:15pm – Shows and other duties

12:15am-12:45pm – Lunch

12:45pm-4:00pm – Shows and other duties

Duties that you can be expected to be performing from day one are;

- Assisting with the Koala Run & Back Run
- Backing up the Ranger delivering shows to the public
- Assisting with the preparation of food inc. bagging seed
- Backing up a Ranger taking private tours
- Assisting a Ranger in other animal husbandry duties
- Assisting a Ranger in grounds/enclosure maintenance

### ***The Koala and Back run.***

The first 2 hours of every day give the Rangers a chance to clean enclosures, feed and water the animals and prepare the park grounds for the arrival of the public at 9am. To do this efficiently that park is divided into two 'runs', the Koala Run and the Back Run. Within each of these runs is a specific set of enclosures and common areas.

The Koala run consists of:

- Koala enclosures
- Wombat enclosures
- Echidna enclosure
- Black Cockatoo enclosure
- Frill-Necked Lizard enclosure
- Photo hut and main show area
- All pathways from 'Cassowary' gate to Jolly Jumbuck eating area

The Back run consists of:

- Cassowary enclosures
- Bird of Prey aviary
- Emu enclosure
- Dingo enclosure
- Eclectus Parrot enclosure
- All pathways from Eclectus parrots to the Macropod yard gate including Estuarine Crocodiles

### ***Animal Enclosures – What to do, Where you can and can't go***

For the majority of enclosures that you will encounter as a volunteer the basic procedure is to remove all faeces (poo) and debris, put food bowls in designated spaces, change water and water any plants. This basic procedure does vary for some animals and these will be pointed out to you when the situation arises. Every enclosure requires an 'enclosure' key to open it. These keys are not given to volunteers, and therefore you will not be able to enter an enclosure unless accompanied by a Ranger.

There are some animals at Billabong Sanctuary that have the potential to do you some harm, or the animals inside need specialist attention. These enclosures are not to be entered under any circumstances. These enclosures include but are not limited to;

- Estuarine and Freshwater Crocodiles
- Cassowary
- Snakes (venomous and non-venomous), display and off display
- Black Cockatoo (when nesting)
- Eclectus Parrot (when nesting)
- All Food prep aviary birds
- Dingos

### ***Animal Handling***

Under no circumstances are volunteers to attempt to handle or remove any animal from their enclosure. Some animals need to be handled in specific ways to prevent injury and others have the potential to inflict serious injury. Some animals e.g. Koalas and Wombats will attempt to come over to you when you are inside their enclosure. In this event **leave the enclosure immediately** ensuring that the animal does not follow you and ask for assistance from a Ranger. Failure to do this may result in immediate termination of your volunteer experience. There will be heaps of opportunities to handle animals at other times, so please resist the urge!!

When you are required to handle an animal, you will be given explicit instruction on how to do this to limit the potential for injury to you and the animal. If you do not feel comfortable at any stage, speak up and we will not force you to continue. Remember prevention is better than cure!

### ***Volunteer roles during public shows.***

From 10:00am to 4:40 pm Billabong Sanctuary provides the public with an opportunity to watch an interpretive show about an Australian native animal. The show timetable is as follows:

9:15 am – Koalas and Kangaroos are fed; public invited to watch

10:00am – Cassowary Feeding

**10:30am – Turtle and Barramundi Feeding**

**10:45 am – Wombat Experience\***

**11:15am – Koala Experience\***

**12:00 noon – Reptile Experience\***

1:00pm – Crocodile Feeding

**2:00pm – Free Flight Bird Show\***

**2:30 pm – Turtle Feeding & Turtle Races\***

**2:45 pm – Dingo Experience\***

3:15 pm – Crocodile Feeding

**3:45 pm – Wombat Experience \***

**4:00 pm – Koala Experience \***

**4:20 pm – Reptile Experience \***

4:40 pm – Kangaroo Feeding

\* indicates that there is an option for the public to purchase a souvenir photo

The shows that are in **bold** require a volunteer to assist as follows;

- ***Wombat show requires a volunteer to sit with our Common Wombat Tonka, whilst the Ranger talks to the public.***
- ***The Koala show requires a volunteer to supervise Ray Charles (a blind male Koala) whilst the public pats him.***
- ***The reptile show requires a volunteer to hold a croc, snake or lizard and facilitate the public in handling that animal. You will be given a demonstration on how to do this properly.***
- ***The Turtle show requires a volunteer to hold a turtle and release it for the turtle races.***
- ***The Dingo show requires a volunteer to take a dingo around to the public for patting whilst the Ranger presents the show or on***

***quieter days to simply play with the other dingoes and keep them in view of the public.***

These duties are subject to change based upon crowd sizes and staffing levels. In any instance always follow the instructions given to you by a Ranger.

If you feel uncomfortable performing any of these back up roles then all you have to do is speak up and you can be given other duties. We will not force you to participate beyond your capabilities or comfort level.

Assisting a Ranger with a private tour requires the same duties as backing up the Wombat, Koala and Reptile shows. A private tour in essence is a condensed version of those three shows and a crocodile feeding.

***Assisting with the preparation of food.***

A major task each day is to prepare the food for all the animals at Billabong Sanctuary. The preparation of food is done in advance, that is, the food prepared today is fed out tomorrow. Billabong Sanctuary has over 50 species many of which require special diets (herbivores, frugivores, foliovores and carnivores) and therefore a variety of food products are required. To meet this requirement Billabong Sanctuary grows out rats, mice and chickens to feed our carnivores (birds of prey, crocodiles and snakes). All our fruit, vegetables and grain are delivered fresh on a weekly basis. Assisting with food preparation is as simple as following a recipe and then cleaning up afterwards. Some aspects of food prep' are not for the faint hearted. Preparing the meat diets for the birds of prey can be a little 'messy' but this is all part of providing the very best for our animals. Once again we will not ask you to perform duties that are beyond your capabilities or comfort level and you will always be supervised by a Ranger.

***Other animal husbandry duties***

At certain times during the week there are other duties that need to be completed to ensure that are animals are in the very best of health and their enclosures are up to standard e.g. weekly mammal health check, cleaning reptile enclosures, re-perching aviaries etc. Assisting a Ranger with these duties may be required of you and detailed instructions will be provided at that time.

***What we expect from our volunteers.***

- A positive attitude.
- A fair day's work.
- Honesty.

- Be polite and courteous to all staff and patrons
- To be informed of matters of concern which you may encounter in the workplace.
- Commitment and the best effort in undertaking the work required.
- Maintenance of confidentiality and respect of Billabong Sanctuary's interests.
- Performance of lawful and reasonable instructions.
- To ensure you are not in breach of any legislation affecting the operation of the property (i.e. Environmental Health, Townsville City Council, Workplace Health and Safety Act).
- Not to engage in any behaviour which undermines a cohesive staff environment

### **Make the most of it.....**

The volunteer program at Billabong Sanctuary is unique. It provides you with the opportunity of a lifetime! Our volunteers are expected to work shoulder to shoulder with the Rangers performing a range of duties based on experience and competence. The longer you volunteer the more opportunities you will have to increase your skills and knowledge about animals and the business of working in zoo. There will be times where you may be working with other volunteers that have been volunteering for much longer than you and they may be asked to perform duties that you may not. Remember that that this is not personal but simply a reflection of their commitment. You may be given the same opportunities in time.

### **Workplace Policies**

Below are the policies that relate to the Volunteer Program at Billabong Sanctuary. Some statements within some policies are taken from the relevant pieces of legislation and as such the words 'employee' and 'employer' are used. In those instances a volunteer can be considered an unpaid 'employee' in the employ of Billabong Sanctuary.

#### ***Attendance and Punctuality.***

Billabong Sanctuary expects that every volunteer will be punctual in attendance. It is recognised that as a volunteer your personal circumstances may change and you may not be able to attend on a particular day or time. In this event please contact Billabong Sanctuary and inform them of these changes.

### ***Personal Property at Billabong Sanctuary.***

All volunteers should be sure that their own personal insurance policies cover the loss of personal belongings. Do not leave your valuables in view of customers. Billabong Sanctuary assumes no risk for any loss or damage to personal property

### ***Uniforms and Grooming.***

Billabong Sanctuary will provide each volunteer with a green volunteer T-shirt. This shirt is to be worn at all times so that staff and the public can identify you. You will need to supply your own shorts, enclosed shoes and hat. All items of clothing must be neat and presentable without holes, tears or obvious stains. Preferably, shorts need to be a single plain colour. Board shorts and denim shorts are not acceptable.

Hair is to be neat, tidy and long hair tied up.

It is highly recommended that all volunteers wear a watch.

Use of mobile phones whilst in view of the public is prohibited.

### ***Use of machinery and vehicles.***

Volunteers are not allowed to use any power tools or machines and are not allowed to drive any of Billabong Sanctuary's vehicles.

### ***Smoking.***

Smoking on Billabong Sanctuary property by volunteers is strictly prohibited. A designated smoking area is located outside of the side entrance gate near the large industrial bins.

### ***Cohesive Work Environment.***

All volunteers have the right to discuss work related issues with Management. Volunteers will be given sufficient time to air their grievances. However any volunteer who attempts to divide the work force or causes dissent amongst other volunteers or employees will be dismissed.

### **Competency Check List**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Competency Achieved</b>
Can enter enclosures with Ranger	
Tonka Handling	
Ray Charles	
Reptile Handling	
Turtle Handling	
Can complete Food Prep: Rats/Mice/Chickens	

<b>Activity</b>	<b>First Session Date</b>	<b>Second Session Date</b>	<b>Third Session Date</b>	<b>Date Competency Achieved</b>	<b>Supervisor Signature</b>
Tonka handling					
Yala handling					
Koala arming					
Koala handling					
Ray Charles					
Juv croc handling					
Python handling					
Lizard handling					
Turtle races					

Competency must be achieved before any volunteer can undertake these tasks without the direct supervision of a ranger. To achieve competency the level of information known about the animals must be adequate not just the handling skills. Once you can answer customer questions accurately and interact in a professional and warm manner, you will be able to back up shows.

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If you have read this Manual and are keen to get started, please fill out the Expression of Interest Form, available as a .pdf file from the Volunteer Opportunity page.

Scan it and email to our Volunteer Coordinator at [curator@billabongsanctuary.com.au](mailto:curator@billabongsanctuary.com.au) or post it to the address on our website. You will then be contacted for an interview and a site visit.