TAYLOR ASHE ANTIVENOM FOUNDATION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

WWW.TAAF-EASTAFRICANREPTILES.ORG

ABOUT US

The Taylor Ashe Antivenom Foundation (TAAF) oversees the running of the Watamu Snake Farm, a reptile research and education center based in the little town of Watamu, on the Kenyan coast. We don't just work from behind a desk, but are in the field and working with (venomous) snakes on a daily basis. Our work includes:

- Housing of rescued and captive bred snakes for the purpose of milking venom and education of local communities to raise awareness.
- Milking snakes for (medical) research and the preparation of antivenom.
- We offer a 'remove-a-snake' service for people in Watamu and the surrounding area. But wherever you are in Kenya, we will try our best to help out, we have a network of ambassadors across the country.
- The Watamu Snake Farm is open to visitors daily for guided tours around the farm to help raise awareness about reptiles and encourage their conservation. There is a wide range of venomous and non-venomous snakes and reptiles at the centre.
- TAAF holds an annual snake-bite conference which is attended by experts from all over the world.
- We promote an educational scheme to teach people the correct procedures when faced with a snake-bite, the importance of snakes and why they should not necessarily be killed on sight.
- We organise different snake research expeditions and we plan and guide snake safari's for tourists.

Our work has always been driven by compassionate people who want to make a difference to the lives of ordinary Kenyans. It was founded by James and Sanda Ashe and together with Royjan Taylor they have been raising money locally to buy antivenoms to treat snakebites in the local community, and to educate the community about snakebite prevention and treatment.

Kyle is the curator of the Watamu Snake Farm. He originally came to the snake farm as a 12 year old boy to learn about snakes and how to handle them. He was a part of the youth wing program and later became an associate of the farm. He is now permanently based in Watamu and running the reptile education center with lots of passion and dedication. His favorite snake is the Gaboon viper (Bitis gabonica) due to their amazing color and sheer size. He loves what he does because he helps to save snakes and educate people on the importance of them and how to live with them.

THE TEAM

The Watamu Snake Farm team is 14 strong. Boniface is our farm manager and makes sure the day-to-day operations are running smoothly. We are very happy to employ two ladies; Christine is our receptionist and financial support and Njeri is known as ‘Mama Nyoka’, which means ‘mother of snakes’. She takes care of our hatchlings and young snakes. The other guys are: Alex, Zakaria, Guyo, Ngombo, Benson, Kitsao and Godana. Festus is the driver, and Kiraga the maintenance man.

They are all professional venomous snake handlers and are all dedicated to saving both snakes and people. They all have their personal stories of how they got involved with snakes and why they love their jobs. They can’t wait to tell you all about it in person!

We also have great support from our network of associates around the country and are fortunate to work with some of the most respected scientists and toxicologists worldwide.

SNAKEBITE

Sub-Saharan Africa is the epicentre of a global shortage of quality-assured, safe, effective and affordable snake antivenoms. 435,000 and 580,000 cases of snakebite envenoming occur here annually, with 20,000-32,000 deaths, and 60,000-96,000 disabilities. Snakebite envenoming accounts for 44.8% of all human animal conflict cases in Kenya, resulting in 43.1% of all fatalities and 76.9% of all the injuries[1]. There are an estimated 15,411 cases of snakebite in Kenya each year, resulting in 719 deaths and at least 4,022 snakebite-related amputations and psychological disabilities[2]. In historical studies 68% of snakebite victims were found to rely upon traditional medicine rather than allopathic medical services[3].Combined analysis of hospital- and community-acquired data suggest that snakebite envenoming in Kenya results in the loss of at least 60,072.5 Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYS)4. The majority of victims are the poorest people living in harsh environments – usually hand-to-mouth.

n 2017 the World Health Organization (WHO) recognised snakebite envenoming as a high priority neglected tropical disease. Kenya was one of the key countries that proposed and supported this resolution.

WHO launched a comprehensive strategic plan for improving the prevention and control of snakebite envenoming in May 2019[5]. This strategy prioritizes efforts to improve community engagement and empowerment as a key pillar of its road map to reduce deaths and disabilities due to snakebite by 50% before 20302. By focusing upon education, training and facilitation combined with research on the socioeconomic, cultural, geophysical and other aspects of the problem, the strategy aims to influence positive health-care seeking behaviours, improved prevention and risk mitigation. This aims to provide communities with tools and the capacity to prevent snakebites and to improve the outcomes for those who are affected.

There is a lot of work which has been done to get this far and there is even more work still to be done. We hope to be able to continue but to do so we need as much help as we can get! Below you find some of the projects we offer and need help with, but we are happy to look into more tailor made projects.

INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

HUSBANDRY

You will learn everything about how to safely and responsibly keep snakes and other reptiles. You will learn how to identify snakes, handle non-venomous species, clean cages, and feed the animals. In this project we especially focus on how to keep snakes in a stress free environment and making cage displays to mimic the snake's natural habitat.

AWARENESS & EDUCATION

An important part of our work is educating local people about the importance of snakes, what to do when they encounter a snake and how to handle the unfortunate event of a snakebite. You will learn more about setting up education programs for both children and adults and teach local people about the importance of snake conservation.

DIGITALISATION

Help us digitalise years of research and make our organisation more efficient by putting up a digital organisation structure. We have collected years of data about snakes and their natural habitats that is of crucial value to the herpetological research field.

SOCIAL MEDIA & MARKETING

Our team is all about hands-on and safely working with snakes. Keeping our phones close is not always on our mind. You can imagine, when you're handling a deadly cobra with one hand, you can't take pictures with your other. You can help us to gather and create exciting content to share with the world through our social media handles.

INTERNSHIP COSTS

COSTS:
1-3 MONTHS - $200/WEEK
3-6 MONTHS - $175/WEEK

Included: 6 days (Monday to Saturday) per week internship including guidance from Kyle and the other snake handlers

.

Excluded: All meals, accommodation, all travel expenses to and from Watamu or transport to the farm.

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

Bush snake cottage: $ 30 per day, per person based on self catering. Your room will be attended to every other day, this is included in the price (excl cleaning products). We have two rooms available, shared bathroom and kitchen.

PACKAGES:

The package includes the internship fees and accommodation and all extras as mentioned 'included' above.
Up to 3 months = $ 1,600 per month
More than 3 months = $ 1,400 per month

REQUIREMENTS:

There is a minimum stay of 1 month, no maximum stay. The minimum age of interns is 18, but we are willing to be flexible in individual circumstances. As we work with venomous snakes, we will screen all participants for this project carefully. Do you know that you are allergic to venom? No problem! But let us know. Please keep in mind we will not be teaching you how to handle venomous snakes as part of any program. This is purely up to the judgement of our curator and professionals and can be taken into consideration for any participant staying longer than three months.

CONTACT:
info@taaf-eastafricanreptiles.org
KYLE: +254723386558
ALI: +254720441487