



Position Profile **Detroit Zoological Society** **Vice President – Life Sciences**

Mission: The Detroit Zoological Society creates meaningful connections between people, animals, and the natural world so all can thrive.

Vision: The Detroit Zoological Society will be a force for positive change in a world where animals and nature are valued, understood, and protected by all people.

With over 200 staff, more than 600 volunteers, nearly 50,000 member households, and annual revenues exceeding \$40 million, the Detroit Zoological Society is a community leader across Southeastern Michigan.

The Role

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, the Vice President of Life Sciences is a team-oriented leader, strategic thinker, and zoological expert. The Vice President of Life Sciences leads and oversees the teams in four mission-critical areas across all DZS facilities:

- 1) Animal Care**
- 2) Animal Wellbeing**
- 3) Conservation**
- 4) Learning Programs**

The Opportunity

The Vice President of Life Sciences will play a key role in advancing the DZS's bold vision, with a progressive approach to animal wellbeing and a deep commitment to collaborative and insightful leadership.

This is a key moment in the history of the DZS and a unique opportunity to join a renowned institution at a critical juncture of its evolution. The Vice President of Life Sciences will join the organization as it launches a new strategic plan, master plan and undertakes high-impact projects to expand and strengthen its position as a leader, shaping the conversations about wellbeing, conservation and education locally, nationally, and internationally.

The Vice President of Life Sciences will be responsible for inspiring and modeling the DZS's mission, vision, and core values and providing exceptional leadership in the advancement of institutional objectives in animal care, conservation, science, and education.

As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the Vice President of Life Sciences will participate actively in the management of a large and complex organization to develop and implement plans for the operations, infrastructure, processes, and personnel necessary to promote the DZS mission and ensure the success of its financial and operational objectives.



Position Profile Detroit Zoological Society Vice President – Life Sciences

Candidate Profile

The ideal candidate will embody the following professional and personal qualities, skills and characteristics:

Mission Focus

- A creative thinker with an enthusiastic commitment to the mission of DZS.
- Strong knowledge of progressive animal care practices and a passion for the continual advancement of animal wellbeing.
- An understanding of the critical balance between mission and margin, and a recognition of how the two priorities complement one another.
- Respect for the strong history of the DZS and a commitment to evolving its legacy into the future.

Strategic Leadership

- An approachable, confident, and thoughtful leader who is able to develop and guide diverse teams to build a culture of trust, collaboration, and empathy.
- A ‘big picture’ thinker who encourages partnerships and cooperative relationships to align organizational priorities in advancing the DZS mission and strategic objectives.
- An innovative leader who is able to recognize opportunities to enhance the impact of DZS’s mission and vision.
- A team-builder with a deep commitment to coaching, mentoring, and developing staff to maximize their individual and shared capacity for success.

The leader also must be:

- **Supportive and Inclusive** – Creates an inclusive and welcoming organizational culture and celebrates team diversity and expertise
- **Collaborative and Influential** – Forges mutually beneficial partnerships and relationships within the community and around the world, with AZA, and with other key collaborators and stakeholders
- **Grounded by a Set of Core Values** – Has demonstrated exemplary integrity, ethics, and values
- **Operationally Adept** – Can see, understand, and work through the details to execute on delivering a best-in-class animal and mission experience



Position Profile

Detroit Zoological Society

Vice President – Life Sciences

Principal Duties and Responsibilities

- Provide leadership, direction, and oversight for all Life Sciences operations, including animal care at all DZS facilities; veterinary care; animal records; behavioral management; research; exhibit design; staff training; and guest interaction activities.
- Oversee recruitment, selection, and development of Life Sciences staff.
- Supervise curators, registrar, head veterinarian, nature center director(s), conservation director, and animal welfare director.
- Evaluate employee performance.
- Develop and implement policies and practices to ensure safe, effective, and humane practices and procedures of animal care, management, exhibition, transport, acquisition, disposition, research, and emergency response.
- Maintain Life Sciences operations to AZA accreditation standards, USDA standards, and other applicable local, state, regional, and federal regulations.
- Contribute to strategic and other organization planning.
- Develop and execute animal population management plans in conjunction with animal management staff and institutional master plan.
- Oversee staff participation in cooperative management programs.
- Prepare, submit, and monitor budgets to achieve strategic objectives.

Education and Experience

- Advanced degree in zoology, psychology, biology, animal behavior, or a closely related discipline.
- At least seven (7) years of managerial experience in a zoo or related facility working with a diverse population of animal species and employees at a range of levels of experience.
- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of animal wellbeing and assessment, progressive zoo management concepts, learning and engagement programs, scientific inquiry, guest experience, species and habitat management, conservation, and related disciplines.
- Strong decision-making and problem-solving skills, superior personnel leadership skills, excellent verbal and written communication skills, and effective time management skills.
- Experience with labor unions preferred



Position Profile
Detroit Zoological Society
Vice President – Life Sciences

To Apply

Detroit Zoological Society has retained Canopy Strategic Partners (formerly Zoo Advisors) to manage this search. To be considered for this unique and high-profile opportunity, please forward a single PDF document that includes your detailed resume and a cover letter expressing why you are interested in this role and how your experience can help the zoo become an even greater asset for the Detroit community and a leader in the zoo field.

Kristin Elliott

Project Consultant

Canopy Strategic Partners

kelliott@canopysp.com



Position Profile
Detroit Zoological Society
Vice President – Life Sciences

About the Detroit Zoological Society

The Detroit Zoological Society began in 1911, when three people met to plan a zoo that would be a source of great pride for the people of Detroit. Their efforts were rewarded in 1924 when construction began on the 125-acre Detroit Zoological Park, the first zoo in America to place animals in naturalistic habitats.

Today, DZS operates the Detroit Zoo and the Belle Isle Nature Center, both of which are bustling cultural attractions. DZS's campuses are known for being happy and fun venues full of accessible play areas and innovative habitats. The facilities serve as gathering places for the community, with green spaces where residents have fostered multi-generational traditions of coming together. DZS is a staple of the Southeastern Michigan community and continues to offer an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

The DZS contributes to wildlife conservation efforts on six continents, from working to reverse the global amphibian crisis to rescuing and rehabilitating imperiled gorilla populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In some cases, the DZS has led the revival of species on the brink of extinction. Statewide efforts include conservation programs for the Great Lakes piping plover, osprey, mudpuppy, common tern, and eastern massasauga rattlesnake.

The DZS is recognized for providing sanctuary to animals in need of rescue – a polar bear from a tropical circus, lions from a junkyard and an urban narcotics house, and thousands of animals in the largest rescue in U.S. history, to name a few. As the home of the Center for Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare and Ethics (CZAWE), the DZS is an internationally recognized resource for scientific knowledge and best practices in the wellbeing of animals in human care, providing leadership and training for animal care staff from around the world.

The DZS offers education programs year-round for children, families, youth and scouting groups, classrooms, teachers, and homeschoolers, serving more than 35,000 students annually through education programs and approximately 120,000 more through field trips. The DZS is home to the Berman Academy for Humane Education, which offers a range of programs with the goal of inspiring connection to the natural world with reverence, respect, and responsibility. Programs focus on practicing skills such as inquiry, empathy, critical thinking, and informed decision making.



Position Profile Detroit Zoological Society Vice President – Life Sciences

About the Area

Both the Detroit Zoo and the Belle Isle Nature Center are situated in the Detroit Metropolitan Area, which is home to more than five million residents. Detroit is nationally recognized for reinventing itself with expansive green space, a revitalized downtown district, and a booming arts and food scene. Detroit is a racially and ethnically diverse city, home to one of the largest African American populations in the country. Over 120 languages are spoken across the metropolitan area and the region includes the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the US. Energetic entrepreneurs have reignited an eclectic music scene and brought diverse marketplaces and restaurants to the area. Living in Detroit offers all of the opportunities and amenities of a major city with a low cost of living and a rich cultural environment. DZS remains a key leader in the metropolitan area, partnering with civic leaders and other institutions to serve the city's diverse communities.