

Job Title: Senior Keeper	
Managed by: Zoo Manager & Curator of Birds	
Department: Aviary	Location: Waddesdon Manor
Salary: £28,000 – £30,000 per annum depending on experience	Contract Type: Permanent, Full-time
<p>Hours: A minimum of 37.5 hours per week (exclusive of breaks), worked over a 7-day rota. You will be required to work one weekend in every three, together with occasional shifts outside your normal working pattern to meet operational needs and visitor expectations. Participation in an on-call rota is also required and may include evenings, weekends and public holidays. Reasonable notice will be provided wherever possible, and time off in lieu (TOIL) will be given</p>	
<p>Accommodation: This role is expected to be a 'key representative' position for the Rothschild Foundation, therefore onsite accommodation will be provided as a benefit of employment</p>	

The Role:

Waddesdon Aviary is a unique, historically significant and protected structure dating from the 1880s, forming an integral part of the estate's heritage. The Senior Keeper will support the Curator in the management and development of the public bird collection, ensuring it reflects taxa historically associated with Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's original vision.

This is a rare opportunity to work within a living historic collection, where traditional heritage and modern zoological standards come together. The role requires a strong focus on animal welfare, alongside a commitment to delivering an engaging and meaningful experience for visitors.

The collection must balance historical authenticity with high standards of animal welfare and strong visitor engagement. As a licensed zoo under the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, the Aviary operates in accordance with the Secretary of State's Standards of Modern Zoo Practice.

What you will do:

The Senior Keeper plays a key role in supporting these standards, helping ensure the collection not only remains compliant but continues to strive for best practice in all areas. You will report directly to the Curator of birds and in their absence, take responsibility for the health and welfare of the collection. This is a hands-on animal management role, combined with administrative and supervisory responsibilities.

Key responsibilities include but are not limited to:

Aviary & Collection Management

- Support the Curator in strategic decisions relating to species selection and collection planning
- Assist with breeding programme coordination, including participation in EEPs and other managed programmes
- Coordinate and manage transfers of taxa with other zoological collections, ensuring all movements meet legal, welfare, and biosecurity standards.
- Contribute to ethical review processes and animal welfare assessments
- Support implementation of the Aviary's conservation strategy
- Maintain high standards of enclosure presentation, biosecurity, and environmental enrichment
- Oversee procurement of feed, veterinary supplies, PPE, substrates, and operational equipment
- Monitor stock levels and manage ordering within agreed budgets

Leadership & Team Support

- Provide day-to-day supervision and guidance to keepers, trainees, and volunteers
- Allocate tasks and ensure work is completed to required standards
- Support staff training and development of team members
- Deputise for the Curator when required.

Animal Welfare & Husbandry

- Maintain the highest standards of animal welfare at all times
- Take responsibility for daily monitoring of bird health, behaviour, and condition
- Assist with veterinary treatments, preventative healthcare, and quarantine procedures
- Respond appropriately to emergencies involving animals or enclosure infrastructure

Records & Compliance

- Support compliance with all legal, licensing, and institutional requirements
- Assist with inspections and audits as required
- Support reporting requirements linked to EAZA programmes and other collaborations

External Relations & Professional Contribution

- Support collaboration with UK and international zoological institutions
- Contribute to EAZA programmes including EEPs, TAGs and studbooks where appropriate
- Represent the Aviary through professional engagement, publications, or presentations where applicable
- Take part in visitor engagement activities such as talks and public demonstrations

Keeper Duties

You will take an active role in all routine husbandry tasks, including:

- Diet preparation and distribution
- Cleaning and maintenance of enclosures
- Enclosure maintenance reporting and minor repairs
- Bird handling, restraint, and ringing
- Administering medications and treatments
- Provision of enrichment, furnishings, and nesting materials
- Hand-rearing when required
- Safe animal transport
- Pest control
- Waste disposal
- Humane euthanasia in line with best practice and ethical guidelines
- Provision of additional animal care and support activities beyond the normal routine as required.

Key Representative Responsibilities

On-site accommodation is provided with this role and carries additional responsibilities, which may include:

- Provision of animal care outside standard working hours, including chick feeding and monitoring
- Liaison with veterinary staff and delivery of basic nursing care when required
- Availability to respond to animal escapes or other urgent incidents
- Coordination and support of animal transfers outside normal hours
- Acting as an on-call point of contact for emergencies and operational issues
- Annual leave to be coordinated within key cover requirements for the department
- Participation as required in Disaster Recovery planning
- Trained as first aider and fire warden (provided by the organisation)

You will be a great fit if:

You are the kind of Aviculturist who enjoys really knowing your birds – not just managing a routine, but understanding behaviour, noticing change, and taking pride in the detail that underpins excellent welfare.

You are confident and experienced working with Passerine, Galliform and Columbiform taxa, including incubation and hand-rearing when required, and you are comfortable taking responsibility for the daily care and decision-making that comes with a senior role in a live collection.

You work with calm confidence, whether independently or as part of a small team where everyone relies on each other. You do not wait to be told – you see what needs doing, you take ownership, and you follow things through properly.

You are motivated by high standards of animal care and by working in an environment where your judgement, experience and attention to detail genuinely matter – not just to the animals, but to the wider conservation and visitor experience of a unique historic collection.

This is not a standard zoo senior keeper position. Waddesdon Aviary combines a living historic collection with modern zoological standards, meaning your work directly shapes both conservation outcomes and the preservation of a nationally significant heritage site.

Your areas of knowledge and expertise that matter for this role (used for shortlisting)

To help us select candidates for interview, we will be looking for evidence of the following experience and skills within your application:

- Minimum of 5 years' experience working within a zoological collection
- Significant experience in avian husbandry, particularly with Passerine, Galliform, and Columbiform taxa, including artificial incubation and rearing
- Demonstrable experience working within a licensed zoo environment including an understanding of animal welfare standards, biosecurity and record keeping
- Experience contributing to or working within managed breeding programmes
- Experience supervising, supporting or guiding staff, trainees or volunteers
- Strong knowledge of bird health, welfare, and behaviour
- Ability to work independently, prioritise workloads and take responsibility within a small team environment

Additional Requirements:

The safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults are of the utmost importance for any role at the Rothschild Foundation, Waddesdon Manor. This position may require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to uphold the safety and security of all our visitors, staff and volunteers.

Rewards for working with us:

- We are proud of where we work and want to share Waddesdon Manor with family and friends by offering a number of complimentary tickets to the house and grounds.
- **Waddesdon Discounts** – 50% discount in the food-to-go outlets at the Manor. 20% in the Manor gift shop and restaurant, Stables Café, Five Arrows Hotel, and The Bow Pub. 20% discount on special event tickets made available to staff.
- **Staff Card** – A National Trust staff card entitles two adults and children under 18 years of age free admission to all National Trust properties and 20% discount in NT retail and catering outlets.
- **Annual Leave** – On starting with us, you will receive 25 days annual leave per year plus 8 public holidays pro-rata. Stay with us for 3 years and this rises to 28 days, 30 days after five years and 32 days after 10 years.
- **Sick pay** – If you become ill, one week of sick pay during your first 3 months. This rises to a maximum of 3 months full pay within a rolling 12-month period. After four years you also receive a further 3 months at half pay in the rolling 12-month period.
- **Pension** – We will top up your pension by matching any contribution you make, up to 10% of your basic salary.
- **Income Protection** – on completing one year of continuous service, income protection may be available at 50% of basic salary for a maximum of 5 years.
- **Life Assurance** – a lump sum of 4 times basically annual salary is payable upon death in service.

- **Long Service Awards** – every 5 years of service, you are invited to a celebration to recognise your contribution to the organisation. A cash sum is awarded as a thank you.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Support** – access to a wellbeing platform and fully funded 1:1 counselling service.
- **Enhanced Maternity Pay** – after 12 months of continuous service, you can choose 13 weeks of maternity leave at full pay followed by 26 weeks statutory pay.
- **Enhanced Paternity Pay** – after 12 months of continuous service, you may take 3 months of paternity leave at full pay.
- **Eye Care** – eye care vouchers for employees who are DSE users.
- **Flu Jabs** – free flu jabs in October.
- **Travel** – Cycle to Work Scheme, Season Ticket Loan for train or bus, Octopus Electric Vehicle Scheme.
- **Deposit Loan Scheme** – financial support to go towards a private rental deposit.
- **Access to Perk at Work** – access to exclusive discounts from hundreds of retailers, and up to 55% off cinema tickets.
- **Memberships** – 20% discount on new Nuffield gym memberships. 15% off Hartwell Spa Memberships and treatments, and 15% off food in the restaurant.

Workplace adjustments

We work closely with employees to help them work at their best, including making adjustments such as flexible working, compressed hours, providing equipment or changes to the workplace, where possible.

EDI

At the Rothschild Foundation, we place Equality, Inclusion and Diversity at the core of our values. We strive to be an organisation that actively addresses inequality and prejudice while fostering a truly anti-racist culture. Our approach is centered on meaningful and equitable support and development for you and others throughout your time with us. We are committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, where every team member feels valued, respected and has a true sense of belonging.

Application

The vacancy advert may be taken down from job boards earlier than the stated deadline if a high standard of applications is received.

We welcome applications from everyone and particularly encourage applications from people from an ethnic minority background, and people with a disability to help us achieve a balanced representation in our workforce, especially at senior grades.

To reduce bias in our shortlisting process, we operate an anonymised application process.

All candidates invited to interview have the opportunity to request adjustments to the recruitment process when scheduling your interview, for example accessible parking, communication support or breaks. To support all candidates to perform their best at

interview, we send the interview questions 24 hours in advance of the round 1, in-person interview.

To apply, **please send a current CV and covering letter** explaining how your experience and skills match those outlined above to application@waddesdon.org.uk.

Closing Date: Friday 5 June 2026

Interview Date/s: w/c 22 June 2026

If you apply for this role and are selected to interview, here is what you can expect:

- Round 1: In-person question and answer interview with the Zoo Manager & Curator or Birds, and the Senior Aviculturist
- Round 2: TBC