

JENNIE ANIMAL CARE THE HAWK CONSERVANCY TRUST

"I am finally fulfilling my dream and it has been so worth the wait."

Tell us about yourself..

Hi, my name is Jennie and I am a level 2 Animal Care apprentice at The Hawk Conservancy Trust working alongside all sorts of interesting birds of prey

Why did you choose an apprenticeship?

I chose to do an apprenticeship as I have always preferred vocational learning over the usual education style of classroom learning as I feel that I benefit more from being hands on.

How did you find out about it?

After visiting The Hawk Conservancy in the Summer of 2021, I was having a look on their website and saw an advert for the apprenticeship and decided to go for it and see what happens, now here I am 3 months in to it!

How long have you been in the industry?

Before joining the Hawk Conservancy, I was working in a supermarket so this is a completely different and exciting new adventure for me. I did have some previous experience in the industry in a couple of voluntary roles at Whipsnade Zoo, one was in the education department, mainly working with school groups that were visiting, and the other was a bird keeper volunteer (but not with birds of prey, so it is fun to be doing something completely different!)

How do you feel you have benefitted from doing an apprenticeship?

Since being on this apprenticeship I have been able to play a part in all the awe-inspiring bird displays. It is quite surreal to me that I used to be one of the members of the public sat in the audience watching and now I am one of the people helping to create that magical experience.

What is the most interesting thing that has happened since being on this apprenticeship?

I love that I have been able to get hands on and involved in many aspects from day one, even on my very first day I was involved in the Wings of Africa show, I was handed a bit of food and told to go over to a rock and call Cavalli the Verreaux's Eagle owl to it, I never thought I'd be doing that on my first day! Another highlight for me is being part of the Winter Woodland Light shows, they were really beautiful and enchanting evenings where I got to fly owls during a light show and the reactions from the audience made the late nights worthwhile!

What advice would you give to someone looking to come into the industry or looking to start and apprenticeship?

My advice to anyone who thinks that an apprenticeship is the right path for them is to persevere as the right opportunity will arise and you will gain so much from learning on the job. I have been on the lookout for an apprenticeship since 2016 and I am finally fulfilling that dream and it has been so worth the wait.

What would you say to someone who is thinking of doing an apprenticeship?

I would recommend getting relevant experience as and where you can, volunteer work has been so helpful to me, as it made me realise which pathway I wanted to follow and whether or not I actually wanted to pursue it as a career. I can't wait to see what opportunities arise once I finish my apprenticeship!

