

Cat Tales Wildlife Academy

ZOOKEEPING & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



Course Catalog – 2026 Edition

17020 N Newport Hwy, Mead, WA 99021

www.zooschool.org | info@cattales.org

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Mead, WA 99021

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ABOUT THE ACADEMY

Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is located on a four-acre wooded site north of Spokane, Washington, in the rural community of Mead. The Academy operates within Cat Tales Wildlife Center, a working wildlife sanctuary and teaching zoo designed to support both public access and real-world training.

The facility includes a walkthrough visitor pathway and naturalistic animal exhibits that support observation and learning. Students spend the majority of their time outdoors, gaining direct experience in animal care, behavior observation, and facility operations.

Instruction occurs both on the Wildlife Center grounds and within the main support building, which includes a computer and animal records room, natural history museum, and dietary preparation areas.

The facility is ADA accessible and equipped with ramps, accessible restrooms, and surveillance systems supporting animal welfare, safety, and security.

Maximum class size is **10 students**, maintaining a **10:1 student to instructor ratio**.

This school is licensed under Chapter 28C.10 RCW. Inquiries or complaints regarding this private vocational school may be made to the: Workforce Board, 128 – 10th Ave. SW, Box 43105, Olympia, Washington 98504-3105; wtb.wa.gov; 360-709-4600; pvsa@wtb.wa.gov

MISSION

Wildlife Rescue • Compassionate Care • Education Ambassadorship

We promote the highest standards of animal welfare, enhance the wellbeing of individual animals, and contribute to the conservation of endangered species and their ecosystems. We advance the science and practice of animal care through experiential learning, research, and collaboration with zoological institutions.

VISION

Our vision is to be a premier center of excellence in zoological training, research, and education. We aim to develop skilled animal care professionals equipped with the knowledge, tools, and techniques needed to support animal welfare and conservation worldwide.

LICENSING

Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is licensed by the **Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board**.

Cat Tales, Inc. holds a **USDA Class C Exhibitor License** under the Animal Welfare Act.

Cat Tales Wildlife Center operates under **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)** oversight for native species and WDFW placed animals.

OWNERSHIP & CORPORATE STRUCTURE

Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is operated by **Cat Tales, Inc.**, a Washington nonprofit corporation. As a nonprofit entity, Cat Tales, Inc. does not issue equity shares; therefore, **no individuals hold 10% or more ownership interest**.

Parent Corporation: None.

Corporate Officers:

- Randy Grey — President / Board Chair
- Rhiannon Walthers — Vice President
- Deborah Wyche — Treasurer
- Janae Carrothers — Secretary

Board members serve annual terms and provide governance and oversight for Cat Tales, Inc. and the Academy.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE & AUXILIARY FACILITIES

Administrative Office

Cat Tales Wildlife Academy

17020 N Newport Hwy

Mead, WA 99021

(509) 2384126

info@cattales.org

Auxiliary Facilities: None.

All instruction and administrative functions occur at the above address.

INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM, SUPPORT STAFF & QUALIFICATIONS

Lisa Grey — Executive Director & Lead Instructor

- Executive Director of Cat Tales Wildlife Center & Academy since December 2018, overseeing program operations and instructional delivery
- Lead instructor and curriculum developer for the Zookeeping & Wildlife Management Certification Program
- USDA Class C licensed exhibitor with extensive hands-on experience in carnivore and wildlife husbandry
- Background in animal behavior, safe capture techniques, and exhibit management
- Experience in staff supervision, regulatory compliance, and development of educational and community-based programs

Randy Grey — Operations & Facility Instructor

- 25+ years in zoological & facility operations
- Specialist in enclosure design, equipment safety, and infrastructure maintenance
- Instructor for tools, equipment, and facility management practices

Debbie Wyche — Director of Wildlife Education (Administrative Oversight)

- 35+ years in wildlife management and sanctuary operations
- Founder of Cat Tales Wildlife Center
- Oversees curriculum integrity and regulatory compliance

Instructional Support Staff (Instructional Aides)

The instructional team at Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is supported by designated Instructional Aides who assist in maintaining a structured, hands-on learning environment within the working wildlife facility.

Instructional Aides support the delivery of the Zookeeping & Wildlife Management Certification Program through supervised, hands-on assistance in daily animal care, facility operations, and student skill development. Working under the direction of approved instructors and program leadership, they assist in reinforcing established curriculum, procedures, and safety protocols during practical training activities.

Responsibilities include supporting students in the application of animal husbandry techniques, enclosure maintenance, enrichment implementation, and operational tasks within the facility. Instructional Aides also assist in maintaining a safe, structured, and professional learning environment consistent with real-world workplace expectations.

Instructional Aides may bring experience in animal care, facility operations, customer service, and team coordination, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the training environment.

Instructional Aides do not provide independent instruction, develop curriculum, or deliver formal classroom teaching. All formal instruction and curriculum delivery are provided by approved instructors, and Instructional Aides support and reinforce student learning through guided, in-field application consistent with program standards and regulatory requirements.

Faculty Changes:

Any changes to instructional staff after catalog publication will be documented on a catalog errata sheet.



OUR UNIQUE EXPERIENCE

Pursuing a career in animal care, wildlife management, or conservation often requires practical training experience. The Cat Tales Wildlife Academy provides an immersive training environment where students develop the skills and knowledge needed for a variety of careers working with animals and wildlife.

The program is built on more than 40 years of combined instructional experience and has trained over two hundred students in professional animal care, wildlife management, and conservation-related fields.

Our campus is unique. Cat Tales Wildlife Academy operates within a functioning wildlife sanctuary and teaching zoo that is open to the public year-round. This setting allows students to participate in the daily operations of a working facility while gaining experience in animal care, facility management, and public education.

Training emphasizes practical skill development across multiple areas, including animal husbandry, behavior observation, safety protocols, and conservation education. While the program includes a strong focus on carnivore care, students also gain experience that is applicable to broaden wildlife and animal care settings.

Students participate in structured, direct-care training (within protected contact protocols) using the current animal population and are expected to work outdoors in a variety of weather conditions. This approach prepares students for real-world expectations in animal care, wildlife management, and related professions.

Instruction is delivered through a combination of in-person training and supplemental coursework, including online modules, webinars, and group instruction.

Small class sizes support individualized instruction and allow students to work closely with faculty and peers in a collaborative learning environment. Emphasis is placed on teamwork, communication, and professional conduct.

The program also provides opportunities for students to engage in applied learning experiences that support animal welfare and observational research. These experiences reinforce critical thinking, attention to detail, and the ability to work effectively in dynamic environments.

THE ANIMALS

For over 30 years, Cat Tales Wildlife Center has provided long-term sanctuary and care for non-releasable wildlife and animals requiring permanent placement. The facility has cared for over 100 felids, including lions, bobcats, tigers, cougars, servals, caracals, lynx, leopards, clouded leopards, jaguars, and a liger (a hybrid offspring of a male lion and a female tiger). Cat Tales Wildlife Center also provides long-term sanctuary and care for coyotes, foxes, wolves, raccoons and bears.

Animals at the facility are acquired through a variety of sources, including wildlife agencies, private relinquishments, and situations involving illegal ownership or animals that cannot be safely maintained in domestic environments. Many animals are non-releasable due to injury, habituation, or other factors.

The animal population provides the foundation for the Academy's training environment. Students gain practical experience through observation and participation in daily care routines, including feeding preparation, enclosure maintenance, behavioral observation, and enrichment implementation, all conducted within established safety protocols.

The collection includes a limited number of domestic animals, including guardian dogs and rescued domestic cats, which are maintained as part of the facility's operational and educational environment.

Students are assigned responsibilities for the daily care and management of these animals as part of their training. This includes feeding, cleaning, behavioral observation, basic health monitoring, and participation in routine care procedures.

These responsibilities are integrated into the program to develop essential skills in animal husbandry, health awareness, and veterinary support practices within a structured and supervised setting.

All activities involving domestic animals are conducted under the direction of instructional staff and in accordance with established safety and care protocols.

Animal care practices emphasize welfare, safety, and consistency. Students learn to work within a structured environment that prioritizes animal well-being, staff and student safety, and professional standards in wildlife and animal care settings.

The animal population may change over time based on rescue needs, transfers, and long-term care considerations.

OUR CAMPUS

Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is located on a four-acre wooded site north of Spokane, Washington, in the rural community of Mead.

Cat Tales Wildlife Center is designed to provide safe and accessible pathways for visitors, with animal exhibits arranged to support both public viewing and educational observation. Exhibits are designed to reflect natural environments and support species-appropriate care.

Students and staff spend the majority of their time outdoors on the Wildlife Center grounds, where training emphasizes animal observation, daily care routines, and facility operations. Training activities are conducted within protected contact protocols appropriate to each species.

In-person instruction is conducted on the Wildlife Center grounds and within the main support building, which includes a computer and animal records room, a natural history museum, and animal care support areas such as dietary preparation.

The maximum class size is 10 students, maintaining a student-to-instructor ratio of 10:1. All practical training and evaluation are conducted under the supervision of qualified instructional staff.

The facility includes:

- Reception and administrative area
- Computer and animal records room
- Multi-purpose instructional space
- Student break room equipped with a microwave, refrigerator, sink, tables, and seating.
- Restroom facilities

The Academy operates within a functioning zoological environment that houses large carnivores and native wildlife. Students are provided access to the tools, equipment, and materials necessary for animal care, facility maintenance, and operational support within established safety protocols.

The facility is ADA-accessible and includes ramps and accessible restroom facilities. Audio and video surveillance systems are in use throughout the property to support animal welfare, safety, and security.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Begin Your Career in Animal Care, Conservation, and Wildlife Education

The **Zookeeping & Wildlife Management Program** at Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is a comprehensive training program designed to prepare students for professional careers in animal care, wildlife management, and conservation.

The program provides students with technical skills, foundational knowledge, and applied training experience needed for work in zoos, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation organizations, and governmental wildlife agencies.

Program Highlights

- **Animal Care Expertise:** Develop skills in animal husbandry, enrichment, and health management to support animal welfare.
- **Wildlife Management & Conservation Knowledge:** Build an understanding of biodiversity, species preservation, and the role of zoological institutions in conservation.
- **Public Education & Conservation Messaging:** Learn to communicate conservation topics effectively and serve as an ambassador for wildlife and ecosystems.
- **Nonprofit Operations:** Gain insight into the operational and financial structure of nonprofit animal care organizations, including funding, community engagement, and program support.

Through a curriculum that emphasizes animal welfare, public education, and conservation strategies, the program prepares students for entry into the fields of animal care and wildlife management.

Instructional activities are conducted by qualified instructional staff. Designated staff may assist with operational support and student coordination under direct supervision but do not provide instruction.

The Zookeeping & Wildlife Management Certificate of Achievement is awarded for completion of:

Part One: Introduction to Zookeeping & Facility Operations and

Part Two: Advanced Zookeeping & Wildlife Management

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO ZOOKEEPING & FACILITY OPERATIONS

This foundational course introduces students to the core principles of animal care, facility operations, and conservation education. It provides a strong foundation in animal husbandry and welfare practices, preparing students to perform daily responsibilities in a structured and professional environment.

Key areas of study include:

- **Animal Care & Husbandry:** Feeding, cleaning, behavioral observation, and enrichment practices for a variety of species.
- **Facility Operations:** Safety protocols, enclosure maintenance, and record-keeping
- **Nonprofit Operations & Funding:** Structure and financial considerations of nonprofit wildlife facilities
- **Public Education & Conservation Messaging:** Communication of conservation concepts to diverse audiences

This course consists of 24 weeks at approximately 30 hours per week, for a minimum of 720 hours of training. Primary instruction takes place at Cat Tales Wildlife Center within a working animal care environment. Supplemental instruction may include online modules, webinars, and group instruction. All training is conducted under the supervision of qualified instructional staff and within established safety protocols.

PART TWO: ADVANCED ZOOKEEPING & WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Building on Part One, this course focuses on advanced skills in wildlife management, conservation strategies, and public education. Students apply learned principles to support animal welfare and engage the public in conservation-focused messaging.

Key areas of study include:

- **Wildlife Management Techniques:** Population management, habitat considerations, behavior monitoring, and health support
- **Conservation Strategies:** Captive management practices and broader conservation principles
- **Nonprofit Management:** Leadership, operations, fundraising, and community outreach
- **Public Outreach & Educational Ambassadorship:** Development of effective communication and education strategies

This course consists of 24 weeks with a minimum of 720 hours of training.

Students participate in structured training activities involving animal conditioning, geriatric care, habitat enrichment, and conservation-related projects in coordination with facility operations.



CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Graduates of the Zookeeping & Wildlife Management Program are prepared for entry-level opportunities in animal care, wildlife management, and conservation education.

Potential career paths include:

- **Zookeeper:** Provide daily care and enrichment in zoological and sanctuary settings
- **Wildlife Management Support Roles:** Assist with habitat management, population monitoring, and conservation programs.
- **Conservation Educator:** Communicate conservation principles and engage the public.
- **Animal Rehabilitation Support:** Assist in the care of injured or orphaned animals under appropriate supervision.
- **Nonprofit Operations:** Support organizational functions related to animal care, education, and outreach.

While the Academy does not guarantee employment, the program provides students with the skills and experience necessary to pursue opportunities within the field.

ENROLLMENT & FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Total Program Costs

- **Registration Fee:** \$50
- **Part One Tuition:** \$750
- **Part One Books & Materials:** \$250 (nonrefundable once issued)
- **Part Two Tuition:** \$750
- **Part Two Books & Materials:** \$250 (nonrefundable once issued)

Total Program Cost: \$2,050

Additional Student Expenses (not paid to the school)

- Required work clothing and footwear (\$150–\$300 estimated)
- Personal computer and internet access
- Optional personal supplies (notebooks, gloves, weather gear)

Financial Aid

Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is not authorized to offer federal financial aid.

Nonfederal opportunities may be shared when available.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY

Refund Before Entering Class

1. A full refund of all money paid will be given to applicants if they are not accepted into the Wildlife Academy.
2. Applicants who withdraw no later than midnight on the fifth business day (excluding all Sundays and holidays) after signing the contract or making an initial payment will receive a full refund of all money paid, provided that they have not commenced training.
3. After five business days (excluding all Sundays and holidays), the school may retain an established registration fee equal to ten percent of the total tuition cost, or one hundred dollars, whichever is less. "Registration fee" refers to any fee, however named, covering those expenses incurred by an institution in processing student applications and establishing a student record system.

Refund After Entering Class

If training is terminated after entering classes, the student is obligated to the school according to the following formulas or maximum charges:

4. If you terminate during the first week or 10 percent of the contracted instructional time, whichever is less, the school may retain 10 percent of the tuition cost plus the registration fee (equal to 10 percent of the tuition cost or \$100, whichever is less).
5. If you terminate after the first week or 10 percent of the contracted instructional time, whichever is less, but before completion of 25 percent of the contracted time, the school may retain 25 percent of the tuition cost, plus the registration fee (equal to 10 percent of the tuition cost, or \$100, whichever is less);
6. If you terminate after completion of 25 percent and up to 50 percent of contracted instructional time, the school may retain 50 percent of the tuition cost plus the registration fee (equal to 10 percent of the tuition cost, or \$100, whichever is less).
7. If you terminate after 50 percent of the contracted instructional time, the school may retain the full tuition cost plus the registration fee (equal to 10 percent of the tuition cost, or \$100, whichever is less).

ADMISSIONS

Admission Procedures

New Students

8. Obtain and complete an application from Cat Tales Wildlife Center, 17020 N Newport Hwy, Mead, WA 99021, by phone at (509) 238-4126, or through the website.
9. Submit the completed application and a current photo to the admissions office by mail, email (info@cattales.org), or online submission.
10. Submit documentation of secondary education completion (high school diploma, GED, or equivalent) and transcripts from any previous college coursework, if applicable. Relevant technical or practical experience may be considered.
11. Submit two to three (2–3) letters of recommendation from employers, instructors, or professional references.
12. Provide proof of a recent physical examination confirming the ability to participate in the program.
13. Participate in an admissions interview (in-person, virtual, or by phone) once all required materials have been received.
14. Applicants will receive written or electronic notification of acceptance or denial. Any additional requirements or conditions of acceptance will be included in this notification.

Former Students

Students reapplying after an approved leave of absence or a non-passing evaluation must submit a petition for re-entry to program faculty. Following review, the student will be notified of approval or denial.

Admission Requirements

- Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and possess a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent documentation of secondary education completion. Relevant technical or practical experience may be considered where appropriate.
- Applicants must be able to safely and effectively perform the physical and practical tasks required of the program. This includes, but is not limited to, lifting up to 50 pounds, maintaining situational

awareness, and demonstrating the coordination and mobility necessary to work in an environment with live animals.

- Applicants must provide proof of a recent physical examination confirming their ability to participate in the program's physical and environmental demands.
- Due to the nature of the training environment, applicants are strongly encouraged to be up to date on routine vaccinations, including tetanus. While not required for admission, students may be advised by a medical provider to receive appropriate medical care, including tetanus vaccination, in the event of an injury.
- Tuberculosis (TB) testing is not required for admission. Students are responsible for maintaining their own personal health and should consult with a healthcare provider as needed.
- Students may be required to seek medical clearance to continue participation if a health or safety concern arises during the program.
- Cat Tales Wildlife Academy is committed to equal opportunity and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, or disability. Reasonable accommodation will be considered for qualified applicants in accordance with applicable laws. All determinations are made on an individual basis, considering both safety requirements and reasonable accommodation.
- Applicants should carefully review all program materials prior to enrollment. Training takes place in a working wildlife facility with inherently dangerous animals. The Academy reserves the right to limit participation in certain activities or areas if a student's involvement may pose a risk to themselves, others, or the animals. Such limitations may affect a student's ability to fully participate in all aspects of the program.
- Students are responsible for maintaining their own health care and are encouraged to carry personal health insurance.
- Applicants who own personal pets must provide proof of current health certificates and vaccination records. Personal pets are not permitted on the premises.
- Due to the nature of the training environment and the presence of potentially dangerous animals, service animals may be restricted from certain areas of the facility where safety risks cannot be mitigated.

Attendance Calendar

Programs start in **September, November, March, and May**. Additional or alternate start dates may be offered based on program demand or operational considerations.

Training schedules are established at the start of each program and may vary based on seasonal conditions, animal care needs, and facility operations. Students are typically scheduled to begin training at approximately 7:30 a.m., with variations depending on weather and program requirements.

While students are not required to be on-site outside of scheduled training hours, additional participation may be requested in response to animal care needs or special circumstances. All training activities are conducted under the supervision of qualified instructional staff.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Hours of Operation

- **Administrative Office:** Tuesday–Friday, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
- **Training Hours:** Typically begin at 7:30 a.m.; schedules vary based on weather, animal care needs, and operational requirements.

Holidays & Closures

The Academy does not follow a traditional academic holiday schedule.

Closure dates, if any, are published annually.

Enrollment Periods

Applications are accepted year-round.

Deadlines for each cohort are published annually.

Program Start & End Dates

Programs begin in **September, November, March, and May**.

Specific dates are published annually.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

The Zookeeping & Wildlife Management Program is a hands-on, safety sensitive training environment. Reliable attendance is essential for student learning, animal welfare, and operational continuity.

The program consists of:

- **Part One:** 720 hours over 24 weeks
- **Part Two:** 720 hours over 24 weeks
- **Total Program:** 1440 hours over 48 weeks

Students typically train **three (3) 10hour days per week**, with schedules that may include weekends, holidays, and peak operational periods.

Absence Limits

To remain in good standing, students must meet the following attendance standards:

Excused Absences

Excused absences include illness, medical appointments, family emergencies, or other circumstances approved by instructional staff.

- **Maximum excused absences per 24week part: 6 days**
- **More than 6 excused absences** may require a review and an attendance improvement plan.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences include missed days without prior communication or without acceptable justification.

- **Maximum unexcused absences per 24week part: 2 days**
- **3 or more unexcused absences** may result in probation or dismissal.

Tardiness & Early Departures

- Arriving **more than 15 minutes late = tardy**
- Leaving **more than 30 minutes early = early departure**
- **Three (3) tardies or early departures = 1 absence**

Chronic tardiness may result in probation.

Makeup Work

Makeup work may be permitted for **excused absences only** and must be completed within **10 business days**. Makeup work cannot replace required hands-on training hours and may be limited based on operational and safety requirements.

Attendance Probation

A student may be placed on attendance probation if they:

- Exceed absence limits
- Accumulate excessive tardiness
- Fail to communicate schedule issues
- Demonstrate inconsistent participation

A written improvement plan will outline expectations and timelines.

Failure to meet the plan may result in dismissal.

Attendance Related Dismissal

A student may be dismissed if they:

- Exceed **8 total absences** (excused + unexcused) in a 24-week part
- Accumulate **3 or more unexcused absences**
- Fail to meet probation requirements
- Miss required safety critical training days

Dismissed students may petition for reentry after one full program cycle (six months).

Scheduled Time Off

Scheduled time off may be granted based on operational needs, animal care requirements, and staffing levels. Requests must be submitted in advance and are not guaranteed.

GRADING SYSTEM

The Academy uses a **competency-based Pass/Fail system**.

Pass

A student receives a Pass when they demonstrate:

- Safe and appropriate animal care practices
- Competency in required husbandry and facility tasks
- Professional conduct and teamwork
- Reliable attendance and engagement
- Ability to follow instructions and safety protocols
- Completion of required assignments and evaluations

Fail

A student receives a Fail when they:

- Do not meet required competencies
- Demonstrate unsafe or inconsistent practices
- Fail to follow protected contact protocols
- Exhibit unprofessional conduct
- Fail to meet attendance requirements
- Do not complete required assignments

Probation

Students may be placed on probation with a written improvement plan.

Failure to meet the plan may result in dismissal.

Re-Entry

Students dismissed for unsatisfactory progress may reapply after **one full program cycle (six months)**.

Progress Reports

Students receive written evaluations at regular intervals.

CONDUCT REQUIREMENTS

Grounds for dismissal include:

- Safety violations
- Harassment or abusive behavior
- Chronic absenteeism
- Disruptive conduct
- Failure to follow staff instructions
- Behavior endangering animals, staff, or the public

Required WAC Grievance Statement

Nothing in this policy prevents the student from contacting the Workforce Board (the state licensing agency) at 3607094600 at any time with a concern or a complaint, workforce@wtb.wa.gov.

OFFICIAL TERMINATION DATE

The official termination date is the last day the student attended class.

PROGRAM COMPLETION

Students who successfully complete both Part One and Part Two receive the **Zookeeping & Wildlife Management Certificate of Achievement**.

STUDENT RECORDS

Student records and grades are maintained permanently and are available upon request.

PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE

The Academy provides **limited job placement assistance**, including:

- Résumé guidance
- Interview preparation
- Access to job postings and professional networks

Employment is not guaranteed.