

**Highland Farm & Wildlife Refuge:
William E. Deters Foundation for Gibbon & Wildlife Conservation Projects**

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

We suggest that you read this document carefully before participation in William E. Deters Foundation for Gibbon & Wildlife Conservation Projects (WEDFG).

Who are we? Check out our website:

Our website provides a substantial background about William E. Deters Foundation for Gibbon & Wildlife Conservation Projects (WEDFG) in N.W. Thailand. You will find out who we are, how we got started, as well what our commitments are. You'll also gain a visual idea of the farm, including main house, gibbon sanctuary, staff houses, and surrounding terrain. <http://www.highland-farm.org>

As of this writing we continue to grow beyond the number of gibbons and other wildlife mentioned on our web page. We provide care within the constraints of a limited budget, are private, and do not accept government financial support. This allows us to maintain our independence, and provide the best possible care that we can offer.

Attitudes/Conditions:

Our working sanctuary is devoted to the rescuing, care and protection of any rejected or abused gibbons. It is a haven and reflects our idea of life for them, which represents safety; a world between jungle and zoo. We have Lar, Pileated, and Concolor gibbons reflecting various physical and emotional states. Over one-third of our little ape population is physically handicapped with missing limbs, atrophied bodies, are crippled, or blind. Our farm is a lifetime refuge that provides the gibbons with love, good shelter, excellent diet, medical attention, socialization with other gibbons, and human interaction.

The plight of these apes has increased dramatically on the outside because of the demand for their participation in fatal medical research, tourist attractions and entertainment. Too often we hear about gibbons raised as cute little toy babies in homes, then rejected when they grow up because of their aggressive adult (wild) behavior. Some gibbons foolishly released to an unfamiliar jungle commit suicide, some are handed to temples/zoos, and others travel to villages for food handouts by humans and are most often killed.

The gibbons are not free to roam the sanctuary grounds and the enclosures are for their protection since they do not possess the same traits as gibbons that have never been captive. It's questionable whether captive and injured gibbons could ever acquire jungle release survival traits. Another reason for the use of enclosures is for people safety. A young gibbon is cute and responds consistently to human touch in play or nurturing situations. On the other hand, a four-year-old plus gibbon can put you in the hospital if you try to handle. Adult gibbons must be addressed 100% of the time with **CAUTION**. A gibbon's teeth are 1 inch long and they know how to use them. Our worst bites occurred when we forget that they are wild and unpredictable.

A gibbon is an ape, not a monkey. You would do well to recognize that each of these gibbons has existed in a unique captive environment. The majority has never seen another gibbon prior to arrival here. They grew up in private homes. None have lived in the jungle and were removed at a very young (months) age they have never had a parent to teach, provide love, and protection.

If you see this sanctuary and work with them, you'll understand how our greatest reward is to see the gibbon's behavior and health quickly improve when they know that they are safe and loved.

Common Misconceptions:

1. **WEDFG is supported by a government agency with grant money.**
NO. Only volunteer contributions, some foundation grants and our personal funds support the gibbon sanctuary. It is NOT a sophisticated class 'A' zoo or tourist showplace, nor will it ever be one. Much work remains to be done, hence volunteers.
2. **Coming here is like being at a resort, amusement park or signing on for a tour.** NO. Volunteers are expected to be involved in directed efforts; either their own professional projects or staff identified basic introductory programs. Only serious, self-motivated people should come. We exist for gibbon care but as much as possible wish to provide a location for study and an environment to accommodate learning and active involvement.
3. **Gibbons at WEDFG live free, branchiating through the trees.**
NO. For reasons stated in Attitudes/Conditions section on previous page.
4. **Many volunteers are here at any one time.** NO. Usually one or two per month. The average stay is one month but longer stays may be arranged. Your participation level will determine your value to the primates, the staff, and other volunteers. Are you ready for this commitment? Please consider carefully.

Cost and Volunteer Duties:

In order to determine pricing, first establish what type of volunteer you will be.

1. Overnight Guest:

In certain instances we accept people who come simply to rest, write, paint, or photograph. It can be an idyllic period. We will not disturb such visitors – your privacy will be respected. Let us know if you might be this type of visitor because we have a special daily rate for you. Because of the remote location of the sanctuary we require a minimum of 3 nights stay. It takes a few days to get introduced to 42 gibbons and 5 monkeys as well as the other animals that live at the sanctuary.

- \$25US per person per night for a minimum of a 3 nights. This includes 3 meals a day including tea and coffee and accommodations.

2. General Volunteer or Self-Initiated Primate Researchers:

General Volunteer: Volunteers' main tasks are caring for the gibbons. This includes mundane chores such as the preparation of food, feeding, cleaning food trays and filling water bottles, cleaning and maintenance of the enclosures. These chores place you in close proximity to the gibbons so they can grow comfortable with your presence and begin to trust you. Other responsibilities might include giving informal tours for the sanctuary's drop in visitors and special projects based on the volunteer's skills (i.e. construction, auto repair, landscaping, etc.)

Self-Initiated Primate Researchers: We welcome professionals and students who wish to study the gibbons. Any non-invasive primate research/study projects are considered by us to be important. Professionals with research skills and project proposals will be left pretty well on their own. Research volunteers may have the opportunity to be introduced to other projects or gibbon experts in Northern Thailand. Student researchers will be encouraged to join our occasional two-week coordinator-driven basic primate introductory program. All will be provided time throughout the day to pursue those activities which benefit your research. Volunteers are encouraged to discuss sanctuary topics after the evening meal.

- **Short Visits:** 2 weeks \$400US contribution per person. This is the minimum amount of time for a volunteer or researcher. This includes 3 meals a day including tea and coffee, accommodations and training.
- **Longer Visits:** The cost is \$750US for the first month, \$700US for the second month and \$650US for the third month and each following month as the volunteer will serve as a coordinator. Each monthly contribution must be paid at the beginning of each month. This includes 3 meals a day including tea and coffee, accommodations and training.
 - **An initial \$100US deposit is required prior to arriving.**

All volunteer contributions go to gibbon related care and not to salaries.

Note: No money is ever paid to "Volunteer Search" agencies.

An example of our daily tasks/schedule is given as follows:

- 7:30 - 8:30 Prepare breakfast for the gibbons, feed them, and clean and collect food bowls.
- 9:00 - 9:30 Your breakfast
- 9:30 - 11:30 Sanctuary maintenance: clean enclosures, refresh cage water bottles, repairing of cages, painting of signs, etc.
- 11:30 - 12:00 Gibbon snack preparation and feeding
- 12:00 - 13:00 Your lunch
- 13:00 - 15:30 Research/study project time/private time, general maintenance around gibbon cages, refresh their water and cleaning if needed (Remember to keep well rested!)

- 15:30 - 17:30 Evening gibbon meal preparation and feeding, cleaning and collect food bowls.
- 17:00 - 18:00 Rest
- 18:00 Your dinner, discussion about the day is encouraged

After 18:00 you are on your own. The farm's isolated countryside location provides an excellent opportunity in the evening for reflection, writing, reading, and relaxation.

Optional Volunteer Work: If your stay is longer than 1 month, volunteers may have the opportunity to teach English or other skills at a nearby Hmong village's elementary school for several hours per week.

WEDFG can accommodate from 2-3 volunteers at any one time and the number present varies according to the number of applicants accepted. Also, we all act as responsible caretaker 24 hours a day – so expect to be 'on-call'.

Accommodations:

The sanctuary has accommodations available for 4 volunteers. The volunteer house consists of three-bedrooms and two shared western-style bathrooms. The other house is a guesthouse with studio style living quarters and a bathroom. Each bathroom has a western toilet, a wash basin and a hot shower and the bedrooms have space for one to two volunteers. You may be required to share a room with another volunteer, depending on the number of volunteers who are visiting at the time of your stay. The rooms have basic furnishing including beds, tables and fans and although there isn't any air-conditioning, you will be at 850 meters above sea level so temperatures are cool at night. Bedding and towels are provided for each volunteer and you are expected to clean your own rooms and keep them tidy as you would at home. There is also a refrigerator and small kitchenette for your use and at the main house there is a washing machine as well as 110V (U.S.) outlets to recharge batteries, cameras, camcorders and laptop computers.

Preparation:

A. Pre-trip

1. **Personal information** to send us in advance
 - Please fill out the attached 'participant particulars' form and return it to us via e-mail or our mailing address:
WEDFG, P.O. Box 24, A. Mae Sot, Tak, 63110 THAILAND
 - Please also include:
 - 1) A photo for identification
 - 2) Two references, professional or work related, addresses included
 - 3) A statement of your goals and objectives so that we understand your thoughts on the experience. Why do you think you would be good for Thailand and the sanctuary? This information is vital.
2. You must have **travel medical coverage**. Very good clinic/hospital facilities and dental services are near-by.

3. **Required Vaccinations:** Hepatitis A & B and DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio). Optional shots: Malaria (has been known to be in this area), TB (Tuberculosis and Meningitis. If you want to take anti-malarial, please contact your travel doctor for advice.)
4. **Visa** – Secure a regular tourist visa, never apply for a work – related visa as it's very expensive and not necessary. You can extend a regular visa in Mae Sot. Normally you will get 2 or 3 months if you apply at a Thai Embassy or Consular Office.
5. Send us your \$100US deposit on your cost for volunteering to hold your space.

Traveling

A. Travel to & from Mae Sot

Mae Sot by Air: We suggest you take a short flight to Mae Sot (via Phuket Air). Your local travel agent or Phuket Air (www.phuketair.com) can inform you about schedules and fares. Their daily flight to Mae Sot is around 7:30AM and arrives in Mae Sot at around 9:00AM.

Mae Sot by Bus: Go to Mor Chit # 2 bus depot (Northern Bus Station) & catch the Bor Kor Sor bus to Mae Sot. Bor Kor Sor bus has a few buses which will run in the morning and 3 - 4 buses in the evening.

Bor Kor Sor Bus schedule:

2 buses: 8:00am and 9:00 a.m.

4 buses: between 8:00pm and 10:00pm

The trip is 7 to 8 hrs, and we advise taking the morning bus. If you take a night bus you'll get into Mae Sot at 4:00 a.m. and will have to wait as it'll be difficult for us to arrive and transport you to the farm before 8 a.m. The bus will make several stops along the route to other stations and to make food and restroom stops (good to use the gas station restrooms). There are 3 types of buses: Second class, First Class and VIP. The First Class and VIP are the better choices.

B. Farm Attire

Bring as little as possible because you can do laundry here. We suggest long pants and strong shirts or T shirts, long and short sleeve dark color is better. Bring walking shoes and/or old tennis shoes and sandals (flip-flops) and socks, we have rubber boots. The soil here is dark red and it stains lighter colored clothes especially white socks and tennis shoes so bring old stuff you don't care about.

C. Climate

The sanctuary is 850 meters above sea level and temperatures are milder than at lower elevations such as Mea Sot (250m). Nights can be quite cool and pleasant here. Thailand's climate is tropical and is divided into three seasons.

March to May is the Hot Season. Temperatures at the Sanctuary are around 29 – 38 degrees C. Hot and humid with a small chance of rain.

June to September is the Rainy Monsoon Season. Temperatures at the Sanctuary are around 22 – 35 degrees C. Hot and Humid with rain falling mostly in the mornings and late evenings but it rarely falls for the entire day and the sun does shine for most of the day.

October to February is the Cool Season. Temperatures at the Sanctuary are around 10– 26 degrees C. Cool in the evenings and warm during the day with a rare chance of rain.

Services for Volunteers

1. **Communication** – In Mae Sot, there are some international phone services but they are not good or consistent. E-mail is best. There is not much for phone service at the farm and foreign mobile phones usually will not work. We go to the city (43 km. a ways) as required. You can take a bus between farm and Mae Sot if you like (runs between 8AM to 6 PM).
2. **Medical/Dental** – We think the support is very good; most medicines are inexpensive and available and your insurance should cover it.
3. **Entertainment** - We have a good book library. Volunteers may view movies from a good VHS/DVD library on the weekly movie night.
4. **Field trips** - cultural exposure may be scheduled if you stay over 2 months (i.e. our Chiang Mai contacts) at the staff's discretion. You'll see a lot, meet people with common interests if you can accommodate the S.E. Asia people/environment. Where we occasionally go you will not find western toilets, western restaurants, or tourist accommodations.

E. Closing Comments

Your conduct is your responsibility: public or sanctuary/farm drunkenness is not approved of. The use of drugs (illegal) is strictly prohibited as is causing dissention between volunteers, staff, or other Thai people and subsequently will result in your immediate removal from the farm.

We do our best to inform people of what to expect during their stay, however some do not take the term 'remote' seriously. Please put the deserved thought into your decision to come to the farm. We have hosted many volunteers who leave here having had an incredible experience. The Thais are friendly and gracious, and it is important to respect their cultural ways no matter how different from your own.

Participant Particulars

To make sure we have adequate information to properly accommodate you during your stay, please furnish us with the following:

Name (s):

Date of Birth:

Home Address:

Home Phone Number:

Work Phone Number:

Passport Number:

Primary Email Address:

Occupation:

Hobbies/Interests:

Allergies:

Disabilities/Ailments:

Phobias:

Prior Travel Experience:

Emergency Contact Person

Name:

Relation:

Address:

Phone Number: ()

Email:

Travel Insurance

Insurer:

Policy Type:

Policy Number:

International Collect Call Number:

Other Stuff We Should Know About You:

Thanks very much for taking the time to provide us with this information. We look forward to meeting you soon and being a part of your Thailand experience!