

Zoologist Job Description

Zoologists study the habitats and characteristics of animals and wildlife. They use their research for many different purposes. Some just want to improve human knowledge of a particular species. Others help governments develop conservation plans to decrease the negative impacts of human expansion.

Zoologists use many different tools to collect and analyze data. As an example, they sometimes use GPS systems and sophisticated modeling software to forecast and track the migration patterns of particular types of animals. They also collect biological samples (like blood and fecal matter), and test it to determine the health of animals.

Some of the research that zoologists do is based purely on observation. They might observe how one species reacts to another, how they interact with their habitat, what their reproductive habits are, and how they socialize with other members of their species.

Zoologists often work on cross-functional research teams with other scientists. For example, if a zoologist was studying the effects of pollution on fish, she would probably work very closely with a hydrologist and conservation scientist.

Because there are so many animals out there to study, most zoologists choose to specialize in studying one particular species. Insects, fish, mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles are some of the most common specialties, but many zoologists specialize even further and study only one type of animal within a species.

Zoology is a unique field. If you have a natural curiosity, love animals, and enjoy traveling to new places, then a career in this occupation might be a good fit for you.

Work Environment and Schedule

The majority of zoologists work for state and local government agencies, but there are also opportunities for employment with research and development firms, as well as scientific consulting services.

Zoologists spend a lot of time in the field, where they observe animals in their habitats and collect field data. Depending on the animal that a zoologist is studying, extended travel to remote regions of the earth may be required.

Fieldwork can be very demanding. Zoologists have to work in all types of weather and climates. Physical terrain is not always easy to navigate, and walking long distances is

sometimes required. In remote regions, healthcare can be primitive. Even when a medical staff is on hand, the quality of care is not of the same quality that could be had at home.

Most zoologists work full time. They can often maintain a regular schedule while they're working in a laboratory or office, but long and irregular hours are required when doing fieldwork.

This occupation requires a huge commitment, and in many ways it's a lifestyle choice. Before you choose to pursue a career in this field, you should consider how it will impact the goals that you have in your personal life. This can be a very rewarding occupation, but it isn't for everyone.

How to Become a Zoologist

A minimum of a bachelor's degree in ecology, zoology, or wildlife biology is required for most entry level zoologist positions. Zoologists need to have a well-rounded scientific background, and these programs normally include courses in wildlife management, ecology, botany, and chemistry.

Because zoologists spend a lot of their time analyzing data, an academic background in statistics and mathematics can be very helpful. Courses in computer science can also be useful, since many zoologists use sophisticated modeling software on the job.

If you want to spend your entire career in this field, it would be good to get a master's degree. Without one, your opportunities for advancement may be severely limited.

If you want to lead a research team or teach at the college level, then a Ph.D. is required. In a Ph.D. program, students learn how to perform advanced research in their area of interest. Most students also receive real world work experience, which helps prepare them for their careers in zoology.

While in graduate school, most students choose a particular area of animal to specialize in. Some students decide to specialize in a group of animals (like birds or fish), while others may specialize in a single type of animal.

Related Occupations

- [Microbiologist](#)
- [Animal scientist](#)
- [Conservation scientist](#)

Employment Outlook

There are currently 19,800 zoologists in the United States, with 590 new zoologist job openings created each year.

Zoologist jobs are not expected to see much growth beyond their current levels in the next decade.