



Animal conservation

Animal conservation involves work with animals directly and also the habitat in which they live. Many of the roles within animal conservation involve working with other people, whether that's colleagues or members of the public. There are a diverse number of job roles within animal conservation and to give you a flavour of this the following are sample job titles:

- beaver trial manager
- biodiversity manager
- education outreach officer
- living seas policy officer
- owl conservation officer
- ranger
- reserves manager
- 'Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels' project manager

It's also possible to work in roles which are not specific to the field of animal conservation but are important for the work of that organisation e.g. fundraising, finance, IT. Sometimes temporary roles can be a way into the organisation and this means you would have access to internal vacancies.

Employers

There is a variety of organisations involved with animal conservation. Some are very broad in their scope while others may be more niche, focusing on a specific species for example.

Wildlife trusts are a major source of both paid and voluntary opportunities. Trusts are located throughout the UK and you can find a list at www.wildlifetrusts.org.

While not for everyone, zoos are a major source of opportunities for people who want to work closely with animals, particularly exotic animals. Many of the larger zoos run placement programmes. Some zoos run captive breeding programmes which involve the release of endangered species back into the wild, which can mean that there is the opportunity for international travel.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide a wide range of opportunities depending on the type of organisation they are. There are broadly four different types of NGOs working in animal conservation:

- those who own nature reserves or manage land for wildlife conservation e.g. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Woodland Trust
- campaigning organisations e.g. Worldwide Fund for Nature, Marine Conservation Society, Whales & Dolphin Conservation Society
- practical conservation organisations e.g. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Scottish Conservation Projects Trust
- learned societies e.g. Royal Entomological Society, British Trust for Ornithology, Sea Mammal Research Unit

(source: *Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management*)

Gaining experience

Volunteering is one of the key ways to get experience. A lot of conservation work is completed by volunteers and the proportion of salaried staff can be very small. For example, the Scottish Wildlife Trust has 100 paid staff and 800 volunteers. Organisations such as the British Trust for Ornithology rely on volunteers to complete surveys which inform reports that are used to influence Government policy; so volunteers can make a huge impact

As well as gaining experience, volunteering enables you to learn and develop key skills both soft (such as teamworking, communication, time management) and technical (survey skills, species identification etc). These skills are crucial for making applications for paid jobs.

To find volunteering opportunities:

- Speak to EUSA Volunteering about opportunities locally. Either visit their office in Potterrow or their website www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/volunteering
- Local volunteering centres are another way of finding opportunities. For example, if you are looking for opportunities in the Edinburgh area try the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, www.volunteeredinburgh.org.uk.
- Approach organisations that you are interesting in volunteering with directly.
- Use the book, *Working with Animals – UK, Europe and Worldwide* (available in the Careers Service) which lists animal conservation organisations throughout the world.

Formal work experience programmes are very rare within animal conservation (zoos are the main organisations who offer this sort of opportunity). Third Sector Internships, www.3rdsectorintern.com, sometimes offer environmental opportunities which can be beneficial experience.

Learning Environments in Marine, Urban and Rural Areas (LEMUR), www.projectlemur.org, offer 9-month placements to people with little or no experience in the field of conservation. The closing date for applications is usually in February with placements running from April to December.

Some organisations, such as Natural England, offer dissertation projects on their land that are relevant for undergraduates and postgraduates. This can give you an

excellent opportunity to apply your academic work to a practical issue, which is great experience to have on your CV.

Insider information

Talking to people working in conservation is really useful. Many of them will have been in your position at some stage and can offer some really valuable insight and advice. Social media has made the networking process much easier and allows you to find and connect with people locally, nationally and internationally. Many organisations also use social media to advertise vacancies as it's cheaper and can reach a wide audience very quickly. Use the information on the Careers Service website <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/looking-for-work/social-media/overview> about how to effectively use this strategy.

Informational interviews (where you talk to people working in the sorts of jobs you are interested in) enable you to find out more about a job or sector: what the day-to-day job involves, how that person got into their current job, suggestions of good places to look for jobs/experience. More help on informational interviewing is available on the Careers Service website.

Use **Connect.ed** (found in the Careers tab on your MyEd portal) to search for Edinburgh alumni contacts working in this field who can give you some useful advice on getting into this type of work.

Working overseas

Working with Animals – UK, Europe and Worldwide is available in the Careers Service and includes lists of conservation organisations you can work for.

Some organisations will be looking for unpaid volunteers and some organisations require that you pay (quite a lot of) money to take part. You should thoroughly research the organisation and its opportunities in advance of making any commitment. If you intend to work in conservation long-term it's important to ensure that the voluntary opportunities will provide you with skills that will be sought by other conservation organisations.

Zoos and NGOs undertake work in other countries. To get involved in this type of conservation work you generally need to be well qualified with significant experience. It is unlikely to be the first job for a graduate.

There is an increasing move to train local people to work in this area rather than rely on overseas workers. However, overseas experts are needed to work in training roles, helping local workers gain the knowledge and skills they require.

Postgraduate study

There are Masters courses available in wildlife conservation but many employers will be more interested in your skills and experience. If you want to work in a specialist field a relevant PhD can be valuable. If you are not sure whether postgraduate study

is right for you, speak to people working in animal conservation to find out how postgraduate qualifications are viewed and discuss your thoughts with a careers adviser.

Looking for jobs

- Getting into animal conservation is competitive so it's important to have tenacity and passion, in addition to the necessary qualifications and experience.
- Check **MyCareerHub** www.mycareerhub.ed.ac.uk regularly for vacancies.
- Use the resources in www.ed.ac.uk/careers/occupations > *Environment and energy* > *Vetinary and Animal Care*. The professional bodies listed there are excellent sources of relevant vacancies and career information generally. They are also a good source of potential contacts – check the members directory.
- Use specialist vacancy websites such as www.countryside-jobs.com and www.environmentjob.co.uk
- Specialist publications are a good source of vacancies, as well as a means of staying abreast of current issues.
- Bear in mind that many jobs are seasonal. This can be particularly beneficial if you are looking for a job during the summer vacation.
- Identify conservation organisations and see what they are currently advertising. If there is an organisation you are keen to work for contact them and ask about their recruitment: How often do they recruit? Where do they advertise vacancies? Do they accept speculative applications?
- Speculative applications can be a successful way of finding unadvertised opportunities. For help with speculative applications, see the *Looking for Work* section of the Careers Service website.
- Getting yourself known is important. Blogs, involvement in relevant LinkedIn discussions, attending conferences and networking are all useful.
- Staying in touch with people/organisations you have volunteered with means that you can hear about vacancies as they arise.

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