



Rising to the Challenge

Careers in conservation

Are you passionate about conservation? Is protecting the environment, or a part of it, the only thing you want to do? Here are some ways you can get involved.

Because of changing attitudes and more public interest in conservation, there are conservation careers in anything from practical conservation to PR, marketing or education.

Competition for jobs in nature conservation is intense, as it has become a very popular field. However, despite the competition, there are opportunities for people who are both academically and practically oriented. To have the best chance of getting a job, it is important to develop extra skills and experience.

The best way to get the experience you need is to volunteer. You can do this before, during and after your studies, and it will help you get your dream job.

Many conservation organisations depend on volunteers, so whatever you are doing you will be making a difference.

Becoming a volunteer

Full contact details of all organisations mentioned here are provided below.

Volunteering in zoos

Most zoological parks and associations have a volunteer scheme, so contact your local zoo and ask about possibilities for volunteering. A list of BIAZA members currently offering volunteering opportunities can be found [here](#).

The Conservation Volunteers

The Conservation Volunteers ([TCV](#)) is a good place to start volunteering. They offer day, midweek, weekend and weeklong tasks to provide countryside agencies with a workforce.

Accommodation and food are provided at a low cost. They offer training in countryside skills, and the chance to learn about working with a group or as a group leader.

Conservation organisations

Many national conservation organisations offer the chance to volunteer with them.

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the Mammal Society all offer places for volunteers.

Friends of the Earth offer the chance to get involved in office work. This is a great opportunity to see how a conservation organisation runs, as volunteers do everything from research and information gathering to filing and office support.

Qualifications and Training

Academic qualifications

It is important to realise that academic qualifications are not enough to get a job in conservation. Experience and a willingness to get your hands dirty are essential. Unfortunately, you also have to be willing to work for relatively low pay.

A/S levels or International Baccalaureate Highers in biological sciences, chemistry, geography and/or maths are useful if you want to get involved in the scientific side of conservation.

They are not always necessary though. Environmental law is a growing field, and conservation organisations need PR people, managers, accountants, computer programmers, journalists/writers, graphic designers, interpreters, education officers, volunteer co-ordinators and statisticians.

If you do want to be a research biologist, the importance of statistical knowledge cannot be stressed enough: The more comfortable you are analysing your results, the better scientist you will become.

Taking a year out

If you are planning to take a year out, do plan carefully and make sure the work you are doing is linked to your prospective career. It might be worth looking at a one year, practical course in a land-based/environmental subject, especially if working in countryside management is a goal for the future.

This is a good idea because you study a new subject that will give you experience, transferable skills, and will show prospective employers that you are willing to get your hands dirty. It will also allow you to study relevant subjects without them being too academically challenging after A/S levels.

Moving into conservation from another career

If you are considering going into conservation as a career switch, a vocational course such as those listed below are a good way to transfer into a new career, while allowing you to work part time if needed.

BTEC/Edexcel First Diplomas, National Diplomas, Higher National Diplomas, Degrees and also General National Vocational Qualifications (Vocational A Levels and GNVQs at

Foundation, Intermediate or Advanced level) National and Advanced National Certificates are very practical qualifications.

Other useful skills

Other useful skills that might help you get a career in conservation include the ability to climb trees (possibly a climbing qualification), being able to strip down and rebuild an engine, diving qualifications, fluent language skills, first aid certification, chainsaw certification, a clean driving licence, and the ability to work with computers.

Finding the job you want

Conservation posts are advertised in the local and national press, scientific journals, particularly New Scientist, and other professional and technical publications. There are also several jobs websites focused on animal and conservation jobs, and we have listed these below.

If you have loved some of the volunteer work you have completed, keep in touch with the agency and the people you met. It is very useful to have personal contacts in the industry, as people often hear about jobs in advance.

Don't send speculative job applications without knowing who you are sending it to and without doing some research about the company first.

Listed below are a number of useful addresses - some provide good advice on how to get started in conservation, and some publish lists of conservation jobs.

Good luck in your future career!

Useful publications, organisations and addresses

Publications

Working with Animals by Animal Jobs Direct
Published by lulu.com 2011 - £24.95

Real Life Guide: Working with Animals and Wildlife by Brin Best
Published by Real Life Guides 2008 - £9.99

Zoo Animals: Behaviour, Management and Welfare by Geoff Hosey, Vicki Melfi and Sheila Pankhurst
Published by Oxford University Press 2009 - £31.99

Getting Into Veterinary School by James Barton
Published by Trotman 2011 - £12.99

Volunteering

The Conservation Volunteers

Sedum House

Mallard Way

Doncaster

DN4 8DB

Website: www.tcv.org.uk

Telephone: 01302 338 883

Email: information@tcv.org.uk

British Trust for Ornithology (BTO)

The Nunnery

Thetford

Norfolk IP24 2PU

Website: www.bto.org

Telephone: 01842 750 050

Email: info@bto.org

The Wildlife Trusts

The Kiln

Waterside

Mather Road

Newark

Nottinghamshire NG24 1WT

Website: www.wildlifetrusts.org

Telephone: 01636 677 711

Email: enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org

The Mammal Society

3 The Carronades

New Road

Southampton SO14 0AA

Website: www.mammal.org.uk

Telephone: 023 8023 7874

Email: info@themammalsociety.org

Friends of the Earth

26-28 Underwood Street

London N1 7JQ

Website: www.foe.co.uk

Telephone: 020 7490 1555

The National Trust

Volunteering

Heelis

Kemble Drive

Swindon SN2 2NA
Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk
Telephone: 01793 817 400
Email: volunteers@nationaltrust.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

Wilberforce Way
Southwater
Horsham
West Sussex RH13 9RS
Website: www.rspca.org.uk

The Blue Cross

Shilton Road
Burford
OXON OX18 4PF
Website: www.bluecross.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 777 1897
Email: info@bluecross.org.uk

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

Burghfield Common
Reading RG7 3YG
Website: www.guidedogs.org.uk
Telephone: 0118 983 5555

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

The Lodge
Sandy
Bedfordshire SG19 2DL
Website: www.rspb.org.uk
Telephone: 01767 680 551

Other organisations

The Royal Veterinary College

Royal College Street
London NW1 0TU
Website: www.rvc.ac.uk
Telephone: 020 7468 5000
Email: enquiries@rvc.ac.uk

The British Veterinary Nursing Association

82 Greenway Business Centre
Harlow Business Park
Harlow
Essex CM19 5QE

Website: www.bvna.org.uk
Telephone: 01279 408644
Email: bvna@bvna.co.uk

Association of British and Irish Wild Animal Keepers (ABWAK)

Chair of ABWAK contact details:

Mr Ross Snipp
C/o Flamingo Land
Kirby Misperton
Malton
North Yorkshire YO17 6UX
Website: www.abwak.org
Email: info@abwak.org

The Kennel Club

1-5 Clarges Street
Piccadilly
London W1J 8AB
Website: www.thekennelclub.org.uk
Telephone: 0844 463 3980

The British Horse Society

Abbey Park
Stareton
Kenilworth
Warwickshire CV8 2XZ
Website: www.bhs.org.uk
Telephone: 02476 840500

The College of Animal Welfare

Administration Centre
Headland House
Chord Business Park
London Road
Godmanchester
Cambridgeshire PE29 2BQ
Website: www.caw.ac.uk
Telephone: 0844 372 9410
Email: admin@caw.ac.uk

Society of Biology

Charles Darwin House
12 Roger Street
London WC1N 2JU
Website: www.societyofbiology.org
Telephone: 020 7685 2550

Sparsholt College Hampshire

Westley Lane
Sparsholt
Hampshire SO21 2NF
Website: www.sparsholt.ac.uk
Telephone: 01962 776 441
Email: enquiry@sparsholt.ac.uk

Institute of Animal Technology

5 South Parade
Summer Town
Oxford OX2 7JL
Website: www.iat.org.uk
Telephone: 0800 085 4380
Email: admin@iat.org.uk

Natural England

Foundry House
3 Millsands
Riverside Exchange
Sheffield S3 8NH
Website: www.naturalengland.org.uk
Telephone: 0845 600 3078
Email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Earthwatch Europe

Mayfield House
256 Banbury Road
Oxford OX2 7DE
Website: www.earthwatch.org/europe
Telephone: 01865 318 838
Email: info@earthwatch.org.uk

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

Monkstone House
City Road
Peterborough PE1 1JY
Website: www.jncc.defra.gov.uk
Telephone: 01733 562 626
Email: comment@jncc.gov.uk

Scottish Natural Heritage

Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness IV3 8NW
Website: www.snh.gov.uk
Telephone: 01463 725 000

Countryside Council for Wales

Maes-y-Ffynnon
Penrhosgarnedd
Bangor
Gwynedd LL57 2DW
Website: www.ccw.gov.uk
Telephone: 0845 1306 229

Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Town Parks
Belfast BT2 8GB
Website: www.doeni.gov.uk
Telephone: 028 9054 0540
Email: enquiries@doeni.gov.uk

Field Studies Council

Head Office
Preston Montford
Montford Bridge
Shrewsbury
Shropshire SY4 1HW
Website: www.field-studies-council.org
Telephone: 0845 345 4071
Email: enquiries@field-studies-council.org

Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens

The Greenhouse
Hereford Street
Bristol BS3 4NA
Website: www.farmgarden.org.uk
Telephone: 0117 923 1800
Email: admin@farmgarden.org.uk

Useful job websites

Environment Job: www.environmentjob.co.uk

Countryside Jobs Service: www.countryside-jobs.com

The Environment Post: www.environmentpost.co.uk

Nature Net: www.naturenet.net

Charity Job (animals/environment): www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/Animal /
www.charityjob.co.uk/jobs/Environment