

# Would You Like To Be a Wildlife Professional?



**Life Skill:** Critical thinking

**Project Skill:** Interviewing and data collection and analysis

**Objective:** Learn about the physical and technical skills expected of entry-level wildlife and fishery biologists and/or law enforcement officers, and evaluate personal abilities along with educational and vocational needs and opportunities

**Success Indicator:** Participants interview professional wildlife or fishery biologists or law enforcement officers, assess their own abilities, and develop a plan for career development

## Provisions Needed

- Telephone directories
- Computer with Internet access (optional)
- Word processor or notebook for note-taking and organization

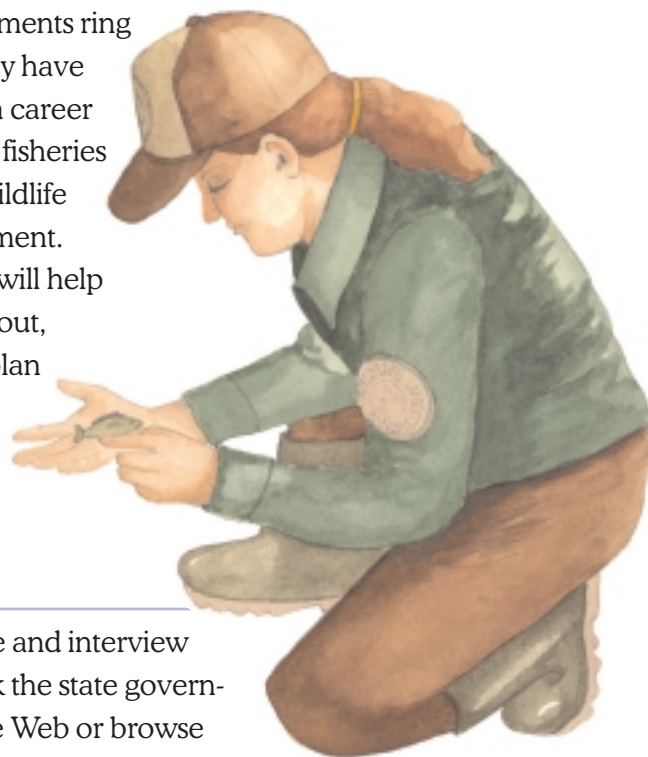


## Trailhead

Do the following descriptions fit you? If these statements ring true, you may have

- You love the outdoors.
- Fishing, hunting, or watching wildlife is a favorite activity.
- You often think about wild creatures and their habitats and about having adventures in wild places.
- When you look at art or draw things yourself, birds, mammals, fish, and wild places attract your attention.
- Nature documentaries on television draw you in.

considered a career in wildlife or fisheries biology or wildlife law enforcement. This activity will help you think about, assess, and plan for career possibilities.



## Trailblazing

A good way to begin your investigation is to locate and interview professionals working in a fisheries or wildlife field. Check the state government listing on the World Wide Web or browse

**HELP WANTED:**  
wildlife biologist  
fisheries biologist  
enforcement officer  
wildlife Extension  
specialist  
fisheries Extension  
specialist

the blue pages in phone books. The phone book for the capital of your state lists the headquarters of the state agency charged with conservation of fish and wildlife resources. If you don't live near the state capital, look for the phone number of biologists or enforcement officers stationed nearest your hometown. Another option is your local sheriff's office or Cooperative Extension Service Cen-



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Southern Region 4-H Wildlife Curriculum Committee

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thank you

ter. Law enforcement officers usually know one another, and the Extension Service may hire professional biologists in positions of wildlife Extension specialist or fisheries Extension specialist.

Be polite and direct on the phone. State that you want to schedule an interview to gain information that will help you plan a career. Every professional started just where you are today and will relate to your needs. When you convince them of your sincerity, most people will work hard to help you.

Try to do your interview in person. Be prepared to show that you respect the professional's time and want to make the most of the oppor-

tunity. Write your questions in advance. Among other things, it is beneficial to ask about the nature of the work, educational requirements, school courses and experiences (in high school and college), likes and dislikes about the job, professional organizations, job competition, research needs, and opportunities for advancement.

Remember to write "thank you" letters to the professionals you interview. You might ask in the letter or during the interview if you may accompany them as they work in the field.

Assemble and analyze what you have learned about this career.



## Field Guide

- The basic career path in **conservation** is a college education in wildlife or fisheries science. Be prepared for rigorous science courses. Sometimes your chances of competing in college can be improved by first attending a **community college**. If you do well in such a program, you will be able to transfer to a university providing a major in conservation; wildlife and fisheries science or management; parks, recreation, and tourism; or criminal justice. Also, many wildlife law enforcement officers serve several years of active duty in the military or work as police officers before they get into the wildlife field.
- Aspiring wildlife professionals should learn as much as they can about the environment around them. Bookstores have field guides that will help identify animals and plants. Invest in **binoculars** and a hand magnifying lens. Keep a **personal journal** in which you record the date, location, and details of what you observe, as well as general observations. Make a habit of keeping faithful and accurate notes of days spent outdoors.
- Future officers should become skilled at many of the techniques used by hunters and anglers. Effective and safe use of **power equipment**, including four-wheel drive vehicles, motorboats, chainsaws, and even farm equipment, are valuable skills. The ability to handle oneself with **confidence** in rugged terrain and in rough water is valuable, too. Search-and-rescue training is helpful. Being able to use maps to find locations off roads is another useful skill. Learn to identify game animals and fish in your home area and know the standard regulations for taking them. You can learn much of this by studying your state hunting and fishing regulations digest.
- Wildlife officers must have a **personal code of ethics**, a fundamental belief in fairness, and the ability to uphold rules and regulations.
- The work that wildlife professionals do frequently involves strength and agility. Working as a team member, both outdoors and in office situations, is essential for success. Also, develop **leadership skills** in high school, in your place of worship, or in community organizations.

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- Explore career options using the World Wide Web. One web site that provides broad information is <http://www.careercity.com/>.
- Get valuable work experience as a volunteer or an intern.



## The Extra Mile

If this career path calls to you, develop a personal plan to become a professional wildlife or fisheries biologist or a wildlife law enforcement officer.



## Field Notes

share

- What interests and intellectual strengths do you have that would allow you to excel in a wildlife course of study in college?
- What special abilities do you have that could help in your career?
- What are some of your hopes and values with regard to work?
- What knowledge did you gain from your interviews that you didn't acquire from other research?
- What did you learn about wildlife law enforcement that surprised you?

process

- What did you learn from thinking and self-assessment that you might not have discovered if you had relied on someone else to make your plan?
- How can you develop a network of professionals who can help you succeed in your chosen field?
- Why is it beneficial for high school students to plan for a career that won't begin until graduation from college and very possibly from graduate school?
- Why is it important to be able to analyze information and make follow-up decisions?

generalize

- Why is it important to begin thinking about a career before you've graduated from high school?
- What does it mean to be competitive in the job market compared to ways you now compete in school?
- What knowledge did you acquire about career planning that you can use, even if becoming a wildlife professional is not for you?

apply

- What high school courses will you take from now until graduation to become competitive for entrance into a university program?
- What extracurricular activities will you undertake to gain physical and teamwork skills between now and graduation from high school?