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Exploring the Wild Side: A Career as a Zoologist

A tiger growls allowing the ears of a gazelle to perk up. A lion roars causing its cub to whimper right beside him. A wolf howls causing its pack to sing along throughout the chilling night. An untamed animal expands the vast nature we call wildlife. I am researching a career as a zoologist and exploring the duties and responsibilities, the education needed, and the job outlook available for this career. A zoologist researches wild animals and may also go out in the field to work hands on with the animals. A zoologist can work in either basic or applied research, which depends on his or her level of education. Zoologists study several areas of animal life, including origin, behavior, diseases, and life processes.

To become a zoologist, one must perform definitive duties and responsibilities. If one is interested in taking on the career as a zoologist, he or she must experiment and evaluate with both live and dead animals. For example, to study one's structure it is much easier to obtain better research and

information by dissecting only dead animals. To study an animal's behavior, disease, or other instincts, a zoologist must experiment and handle animals while they are alive in specific habitats: "Those working in basic research may conduct experiments on live or dead animals in a laboratory or in natural surroundings, in order to make discoveries that might help humans"("Zoologists"172). Since many experiments and research tactics can be difficult to perform on just a live animal, a zoologist must be able to work with a dead animal as well.

A zoologist must also collect and analyze data he or she receives from the animals being tested on. This must be done to determine and receive a better understanding of the environmental effects of wildlife. Currently, large habitats and crucial water sites are being destroyed due to much urban development and human settlement. In order to study the extreme effect this has on wildlife, zoologists must collect and go over the biological data: "Zoologists and wildlife biologists also may collect and analyze biological data to determine the environmental effects of current and potential uses of land and water areas" ("Biological Scientists"2). Because of today's continuous potential use of many land and water locations,

animals are being negatively affected. It is the duty of wildlife biologists to find out how this could harm other animals and their species.

A wildlife biologist must conduct research and results to keep up with new discoveries. New discoveries can be made everyday by zoologists who look into their research to form one or many results. In order to concentrate on research, biologists stay in laboratories or offices where experiments are not being performed: “Most biologists spend their time in laboratories conducting research and in offices writing up results and keeping up with the latest research discoveries” (“Biological Scientists”2). Since discoveries and fine results are crucial to obtain, a zoologist will focus hard to conduct research and do everything he or she can to improve. Conducting this research is one of the most important roles the job as a zoologist has.

Another crucial responsibility a zoologist must have is to adapt to harsh and shifting climates, as this is important in order to perform his or her job exceptionally well on the field. Experiments and other jobs that need to be performed out on the field can not be rescheduled or affected by the climate. Therefore, a scientist must adapt well to this harsh weather where important research and data is being collected. Raucous

weather and shifting climates are disregarded as jobs and experiments need to be performed immediately out on the field. Along with harsh climates, a zoologist must also deal with arduous physical activity involved: “Some zoologists conduct filed research in remote areas and harsh climates, which can involve strenuous physical activity and primitive living conditions”(“Zoologist”2). Since experiments are needed to be performed well, one must adapt to several climate changing and the extreme physical activity involved.

A zoologist must perform required research in order to develop new products and processes. For many zoologists who perform basic research, the only way to obtain that position as a biologist is to keep a record of research that is published: “They perform research to gain a better understanding of fundamental life processes and apply that understanding to developing new products or processes”(“Biological Scientists”1). Because of the new processes being developed today, a zoologist will have to gain a better understanding of the research that is required. Thus, particular duties and responsibilities are required for a zoologist.

Also, there is specific education needed in order to become a zoologist. In order to obtain a solid field research position, a zoologist must obtain a certain degree. He or she must require a master's or doctoral degree to find specific and accurate research positions: "Most field research positions in zoology and other areas of biology require a master's or doctoral degree"("Zoologist Career Information: Becoming a Zoologist"1). Since master and doctoral degrees are required for the field research position, a biological scientist must focus and study hard in college to reach the goal as a zoologist to reach higher positions.

A career in zoology can have many education and degree requirements, but there is also a minimum. The minimum education requirement for a career in zoology is a bachelor's degree: "Zoologists not only need a bachelor's degree, but a master's or doctoral degree is almost always required for jobs involving high research" ("Zoologists"173). Being the minimum education requirement, a bachelor's degree will only offer specific jobs. Other jobs will have limited opportunities as well. Since this is the minimum education requirement, a bachelor's can only

offer little jobs in the zoology career as it may become boring and not as enriching.

A bachelor's degree can offer the lowest of jobs and careers when dealing with zoology. Those with a bachelor's degree can enter either veterinary, medical, or dental schools that can improve a zoologist's work. One can also find jobs as a high school science teacher, while teaching biology and it's related subjects: "Many with a bachelor's degree in biology enter medical, dental, veterinary, or other health profession schools, or find jobs as a high school science teachers" ("Biological Scientists"3). Since a bachelor's degree can offer some variety in the career, it is not quite living up to the greatest expectations of zoologists.

A master's or bachelor's degree can only be sufficient for some type of jobs in the biological science field. It can be available for applied research, which is where research is used and evaluated to solve specific problems and issues in biology. A bachelor's or master's degree can also offer jobs dealing with product development, where management and inspection is involved: "A bachelor's or master's degree is sufficient for some jobs in applied research, product development, management, or inspection" ("Biological Scientists"3). These type of degrees

can mainly offer only limited jobs and duties in the zoology field dealing with research and other development.

A Ph.D in biology is among the highest degrees one can get if he or she desires to work a career as a zoologist. A Ph.D. offers scientists independent research, usually in academia, and can also advance positions in the biological scientist field: “Most biological scientists need a Ph.D. in biology or one of its subfields to work in independent research or development positions” (“Biological Scientists”2). A specific strong amount of education is required in order to work in independent research or to advance positions during the career. A Ph.D. will offer more positions as a zoologist. Therefore, a career as a zoologist requires certain education.

Furthermore, a career in zoology has a reasonable outlook for the future, making the career as a zoologist a generally desirable profession. The demand for biological scientists will continue to stay, especially for those who major in zoology. Although demand is there for several scientists and researchers, minor opportunities may be cut due to the popularity of the career: “There will continue to be demand for biological scientists

specializing in botany, zoology, and marine biology, but opportunities will be limited because of the small size of these fields"("Biological Scientists"4). Because of demand in these small and unpopular areas, specific jobs and opportunities will not be offered to those who desire to specialize in the field.

Biological scientists are less likely to lose their jobs during recessions, which is one of the many positive points pursuing the career as a zoologist has. According to *Top 300 Careers*, during recessions if zoologists are employed on long-term research projects, they will not be fired while others with different occupations throughout the economic downturn may be let go:

> Biological scientists are less likely to lose their jobs during recessions than those in other occupations, because many are employed on long-term research projects. However, an economic downturn could influence the amount of money allocated to new research and development efforts, particularly in areas of risky or innovative research. An economic downturn also could limit the possibility of extensions or renewal of existing projects. (233)

Since there are strong possibilities of recessions in the future, it is helpful to pursue a job in zoology, where losing the job is highly unlikely. Some opportunities may be affected if the economy is not doing well, such as issues pertaining to money and project extensions.

Starting salaries for zoologists can range and differ depending on the type of degree a biological scientist obtains. Biological scientists with a bachelor's degree start by earning the least amount of money followed by those with a master's. Those with a doctorate can earn even more: "Starting salaries for zoologists with a bachelor's degree range from $18,000 to $22,000 per year. Those with a master's degree earn starting salaries ranging from $24,000 to $28,000, and those with a doctorate can earn a starting of $32,000 to $38,000"("Zoologists"173). Since the salaries generally progress higher by the degree, becoming a zoologist can be beneficial for those who receive higher degrees.

There is a very wide variety of opportunity given to familiar and experienced zoologists. Biological scientists who are very experienced can gain a better control of research and can become leaders while directing groups of other scientists: "As they gain experience, biological scientists typically gain a

greater control over their research and may advance to become lead researchers directing a team of scientists and technicians”(“Biological Scientists”3). Since long-time experience in the field of zoology can offer lead positions in research, a career as a biological scientist would be well worth it. Also, experienced zoologists can have a higher salary and earn a lot more as they pursue their career: “Experienced zoologists can earn $60,000 or more”(“Zoologists”173). Since higher salaries can benefit to many experienced biological scientists, zoologists can live a better life and continue earning more money throughout their career.

The average annual wage for zoologists in the U.S. is around $60,000. Over the years, annual salaries have progressed higher. In May of 2008, biologists earned a median annual wage of $55,290: “Median annual wages of zoologists and wildlife biologists were $55,290 in May 2008”(“Biological Scientists”4). Because of the annual wage being around $55,000 in 2008, salaries have managed to advance higher from then. In May of 2009, annual wages progressed to the amount of $60,670. Other branches of government had allowed to offer a median wage of $75,690 to zoologists: “The executive branch of the federal government was the highest paying industry, offering a mean wage

of $75,690”(“Zoologist Career Information: Becoming a Zoologist”1). Over the years, annual wages have progressed higher in the U.S. and will continue to advance for many biological scientists. Because the outlook for a zoologist is fairly great, a career as a zoologist is a considerable choice for the future.

In conclusion, after thoroughly researching a career as a zoologist, I believe that I have found a career that I am interested in pursuing. I am passionate about animals and and intrigued by wildlife. So, in ten years you may find me out on the field locating a blue whale, in the laboratory researching different types of creatures, or maybe even standing face to face with a vigorous lion. Who knows?

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