

A career in environmental conservation

If you are passionate about the environment, why not choose a career where you can make a real difference? You could improve the quality of life of people and animals, and help to protect the environment for generations to come.

Environmental conservation is a very diverse subject and has links with areas such as heritage conservation, archaeology and environmental management. There are approximately 4,900 environmental conservation organisations in the UK and these organisations employ around 56,100 people and a further 200,000 volunteers. People working in this industry are involved with the conservation of rural and urban landscapes, birds, animals and plants, countryside recreation, and waterway conservation. They work on a local scale (for example, community recycling, planning and parks), on national issues such as pollution, roads and areas of outstanding National Scenic Areas, and on global problems like global warming and management of the earth's natural resources.

A career in environmental conservation is not only about 'green' issues, but is also about using your knowledge and understanding to provide solutions that will lead to a more sustainable environment for everyone. You might start off as a volunteer and go on to work for a global charity or government department. It is not just about "green" issues - it's about making the best use of scientific knowledge to help provide a sustainable environment for everybody. You'll need great team working and communications skills and will have to work well on your own initiative as well as part of a team. You'll learn lots of practical skills that will last a lifetime and will have to make the best use of your knowledge to help find solutions to complex problems.

So would you like a job that can REALLY change the world?



Laura Taylor is currently employed as a water vole Conservation Officer for the Cairngorms. Laura has a BSc (hons) degree in zoology with animal ecology and has worked in the environmental conservation industry for over five years.

"Having been brought up in rural Scotland, I have always been interested in wildlife and the outdoors. I spent most of my childhood following my dad and learning about nature from him. When it came to choosing what to study at university, a degree in zoology looked really interesting and was the logical way to turn my interests into a career.

At university, my honours year thesis involved a lot of field work which led to my being offered a short-term contract when I graduated. I had then developed specific field skills which helped me to achieve a position with Liverpool University.

My next appointment was as a research assistant with the Game Conservancy Trust when I returned to Scotland to assist with black grouse and capercaillie surveys. My proven track record, rural background and in-depth knowledge of upland land management and gamekeeping were key to me getting the job.

I applied to do a Mammals Trust UK internship project on water voles and American mink in Aberdeenshire. This lasted six months and gave me the necessary experience to successfully apply for the post of North East Scotland Water Vole Conservation Officer. After about 30 months I was transferred to the Cairngorms Water Vole Project and I have been working on this project for the past year.

Working as a Water Vole Officer I carry out a massive range of tasks needing many different skills, from field working, to working with landowners, writing funding applications and press releases and also teaching both adults and children. Communication skills are key to the projects success. I need the co-operation and assistance of landowners, gamekeepers and farmers for the project to be successful.

If you love the great outdoors, hard work and talking to people from lots of backgrounds, then environmental conservation is "the career you are looking for."

QUALIFICATIONS

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications	Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12		Doctorates	
11		Masters Post Graduate Diploma Post Graduate Certificate	SVQ 5
10		Honours Degrees Graduate Diploma	
9		Ordinary Degree Graduate Certificate	SVQ 4
8	Higher National Diploma	Diploma of Higher Education	
7	Advanced Higher Higher National Certificate	Certificate of Higher Education	SVQ 3
6	Higher		
5	Intermediate 2 Credit Standard Grade		SVQ 2
4	Intermediate 1 General Standard Grade	National Progression Awards	SVQ 1
3	Access 3 Foundation Standard Grade		
2	Access 2		
1	Access 1		

- The new skills for work courses are National Courses available as Access, Intermediate and Higher Qualifications (SCQF levels 3 - 6)
- Ongoing work to credit rate SVQs show a that SVQ units range from SCQF 4 to level 12. SVQs at 3 and 4 can be placed at different SCQF levels
- In line with the SQA's portfolio review, the Scottish Progression Award in Rural Skills will be being reviewed and revalidated as a National Progression Award. Work will begin on this in 2008.

There are many different types of Scottish qualifications – Highers, SVQs, HNDs, Degrees and many more. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) above shows the different training and education routes you can follow. Each qualification has SCQF Credits and a level to make it easier for you to compare one with another.

Think of the different levels in the Framework as a road map. You can see where you are now and the different routes you can follow - like the different routes to learning - to reach your next destination. Remember, you can always change your route and, if you choose to, you can move horizontally as well as vertically.

Career routes

Below is an outline of some roles and potential careers routes in environmental conservation. Please bear in mind that there are a huge variety of roles, both paid and voluntary, and this should only be used as a guide.



The chart above is a guide only and is not intended to map across to the table opposite.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is a fantastic way to develop important skills and experience for your future career while making a valuable contribution to the environment. There are many volunteer opportunities and it is strongly recommended that anyone considering a career in the industry embark on some volunteering.

To view all accredited qualifications please visit the Scottish Qualifications Authority website www.sqa.org.uk