

## Animal-Related Career Information:

### *What do zookeepers do?*

- Clean and maintain animal enclosures & barriers
- Diet preparation and feeding of animals
- Record-keeping, behavioral observation, animal training and environmental enrichment
- Veterinary assistance, research, and public speaking/zoo education

### *What do zoo veterinarians do?*

- Daily check-ups on hospital animals; working closely with keepers and curators
- Diagnose and treat diseases and injuries of a very wide variety of animals (birds, mammals, reptiles, etc.). \*\*This requires not only a broad background knowledge of diseases and injuries, but also a good amount of internet and/or journal research
- Administer treatments, perform surgeries, and conduct necropsies (animal autopsies) to determine the cause of all un-diagnosed animal deaths
- Participate in veterinary training programs and become adept at using a dart-gun to anesthetize any animal, if necessary

### *What do zoo educators do?*

- Continually learn about zoo animal biology and conservation
- Teach programs to patrons of any age, either on zoo grounds, or off-site
- Create fun, exciting, entertaining, and educational programs
- Become trained animal handlers, and sometimes animal trainers

### *What do zoo researchers and/or conservation biologists do?*

- Conduct and/or oversee all research projects that take place on zoo grounds and/or off-site (locally and globally)
- Continually learn about zoo animal biology and conservation
- Collect and analyze data using a strong knowledge of animal behavior and biology methodologies and statistics
- Present results of research to numerous venues including papers in professional journals, speeches at professional conferences, and course materials to local colleges and/or universities

### *How much monkey (oops, I mean money!) do zoo professionals make each year?*

- Zoo professionals often make less money than professionals working in comparable fields.
- Entry-level positions (keeper assistants, internships, seasonal positions): about \$15-20,000/year
- Zoo Keepers and Zoo Educators: about \$25-35,000/year
- Curators: about \$45-65,000/year
- Veterinarians: about \$55-75,000/year

### *What is the demand for jobs in zoo-related fields?*

- In a word: Low. There are more people interested in getting into this field than there are jobs available. So, be prepared to start in an entry level position, or in a non-animal related position, to get your foot in the door before landing that dream job.

### *What is a typical work-week for a zoo professional?*

- Nearly all zoo professionals must be willing to work outside of the typical 8-5, Monday-Friday work week. For example:
  - Zoo Keepers are staffed every day of the year, including weekends and holidays, and often cover regular or haphazard midnight shifts.
  - Zoo Educators often teach programs on weekends (like Career Programs!), in the evenings, or even as part of an overnight (Bunk with the Beasts) event.
  - Researchers who conduct studies abroad will often work for week's straight- and possibly in very extreme conditions.
  - Zoo Veterinarians are staffed every day of the year, including weekends and holidays, and are often on-call at night.

### *Where do I look for a job?*

- The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has a great job search tool ([www.aza.org/JobListings](http://www.aza.org/JobListings)) and most AZA accredited zoos and aquariums post their position openings on this website (even internships).
- For Zoos that are not AZA accredited, check their individual websites.
- Look in your local papers or online for jobs with non-zoo animal career opportunities.

## Hands-on/Practical Preparation:

### *What other experience do I need to land a job working with animals?*

- Volunteering or working for minimum wage or a small stipend is a very typical way to gain employment in this field. Be prepared to start at the bottom and work your way up to your dream job!
- Internships for college students or recent college graduates are common at zoos around the country. To find these opportunities, a good place to start is the Association of Zoo and Aquariums (AZA) website (<http://www.aza.org>) and look under job listings.
- If you're really lucky, you might be able to get a job right out of college at a small zoo that may or may not be accredited by AZA.
- Working with animals in other venues (veterinary offices, humane societies, wildlife rehabilitation facilities, etc.) is another good way to get experience.
- Attending a field school (an organization that offers students the opportunity to build skills and experience in field research methods) can also help.

# Animal Career FAQs

## Pre-College Preparation:

*When should I start preparing for a career working with animals?*

- Soon, if not RIGHT NOW!!
- Take science & math electives and gain experience working with animals – this will not only give you experience; but it will also let you know if a career working with animals is right for you.
- Enroll in courses or learning experiences geared towards life sciences (like the career workshop weekend series offered at Denver Zoo.  
[www.denverzoo.org/education/careerprograms](http://www.denverzoo.org/education/careerprograms)

*How can a teenager get experience working with animals?*

- Denver Zoo's teen volunteer program (many other zoos offer this type of experience, as well)
- Wildlife rehabilitation centers (wolves, bears, big cats, birds of prey, and even bats) and research centers
- Veterinary offices, animal shelters or local humane societies
- Farms (for domestic animals, or even ostrich, llama, or butterfly farms) or horse stables/boarding facilities
- Animal training classes (does your dog need obedience training?)
- 4-H Clubs

*What classes should I take in high school to prepare for a college degree in biology or another life science?*

- Biology, Anatomy, AP Biology, Zoology and any other life science class your high school offers.
- Still take classes that interest you, such as English, art, anthropology and photography.
- MATH is a must!!!! Keep taking math, as you will use it plenty when you take advanced science courses in college.
- See if your high school allows you to take college or community college courses (potentially one with zoology courses or vet tech courses).

## College Preparation:

*What colleges should I apply to if I'm interested in becoming a zookeeper?*

- Any institution that offers a solid life sciences program; however, the following schools do offer zoo or animal science focused degrees:
- Example: Two-year Associates Degrees in Animal Sciences are offered at:
  - Moorpark College (<http://www.moorparkcollege.edu/zoo>) in California offers an associates degree in exotic animal management and training
  - Pikes Peak Community College (<http://www.ppcc.ccooes.edu>) in Colorado Springs, CO offers an associates degree in Natural Resources focusing on zoology
  - Oregon Coast Community College (<http://www.occc.cc.or.us>) in Newport, OR offers an associates degree in Aquarium Science
- Four-year, Bachelors Degrees in Animal Sciences are offered at:
  - Canisius College; NY
  - Delaware Valley College; DE
  - Emporia State University, KS
  - Friends University, KS
  - Michigan State University, MI
  - Oswego State University, NY
  - Unity College, ME
  - University of West Florida, FL
  - University of Wisconsin, WI
  - Western Illinois; IL

*What major should I choose and what classes should I take in college if I am interested in a career working with animals?*

- Major in Biology, Zoology, Environmental Science, Wildlife Science, Zoo Science, Zoo Biology, or another Life Science
- Take classes that will support your end goal: for veterinary science, take lots of math and science in addition to the zoology courses; for research, take statistics, animal behavior, physiology, psychology and/or ecology and conservation; for zoo education, take science education classes, public speaking, and conservation science.

*How many years of college do I need to work with animals?*

- Zookeeper: four-year degree in a life sciences field.
- Zoo Educator: four-year degree in education and/or life sciences; a master's degree can help!
- Curator or Animal Manager: master's degree (2-3 years more college after the four-year degree).
- Researcher or Conservation Scientist: 6-10 years of graduate school after the four-year degree (a Ph.D. is typical).
- Veterinarian: 4-6 years of Vet school after the four-year pre-vet degree.

*Are there graduate schools that offer degrees that will help me land a job at a zoo?*

- George Mason University offers a Master's degree in Zoo/Aquarium Leadership
- Michigan State University offers a Master's degree in Zoology
- University of Plymouth (in the United Kingdom) offers a Master's degree in Zoo Conservation Biology
- University of New Orleans offers a Master's in Conservation Biology
- And there are many others!!!



HERE AT THE ZOO AND AROUND THE WORLD