

CAREERS

#GREENCAREERSWEEK

JOB OF THE DAY



Ecologist

Salary range: £25k - £40k



JOB PROFILE

An **Ecologist** studies the relationship between animals and plants and the environment in which they live. Their work typically looks at the impact changes to the environment have on the distribution and abundance of different species and how we can manage those impacts to help nature thrive. A generalist Ecologist will have a broad understanding of lots of different species and habitats, but some Ecologists specialise in specific groups of species and habitats, such as mammals or the marine environment.

Ecologists typically spend their time undertaking ecological surveys, identifying issues or potential issues that could harm the natural world, and then producing and implementing plans and actions to prevent this and help nature to recover. Increasingly, Ecologists use technologies such as drones, infra-red cameras and satellite imagery to aid their work.

SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

It is expected that Ecologists have an interest in the natural world and understanding how it works.

Technical skills

Fieldwork and survey techniques. Plant and animal identification skills. Knowledge of relevant legislation, policy and regulations. Ability to collect, analyse and interpret data. Report writing skills.

Transferable skills:

Analytical thinking. Attention to detail. Customer service. Decision making. Effective communication. Influencing. Listening. Planning. Project management. Resilience. Stakeholder engagement. Time management. Writing skills

ENTRY ROUTES

Most Ecologists have studied a relevant subject to degree level but there are increasingly more vocational routes into the sector. In addition, whether it is a work placement, internship, graduate scheme or volunteering, gaining valuable and relevant work experience is a key step to securing the job you want. If you're interested in an outdoor-based job in the sector, try reaching out to local nature reserves or Wildlife Trusts. Other desk-based roles such as policy, data and mapping may require a formal work placement.

POTENTIAL CAREER PROGRESSION

From starting as a junior Ecologist, your career journey could take different directions depending on the employment sector.

There are opportunities to support career development with continuing professional development activities including training courses and conferences, as well as joining a relevant professional body and even progressing to become a Chartered Ecologist.

- You could go from being an Assistant Reserve Officer, for example, to becoming a Nature Reserve Manager and then Head of Conservation for a charity.
- Or, you could go from being an Assistant Ecological Consultant to becoming a Senior Ecologist and then a Principal Ecologist for a big private sector consultancy (or even setting up your own consultancy).
- Another option could involve becoming a local authority ecologist or working for a government department.

HOW DOES THIS ROLE ALIGN TO THE GREEN AGENDA?

The twin environmental crises we are facing of biodiversity loss and climate change mean that the work of Ecologists is ever more important. Ecologists help us to address these environmental crises and have a positive impact on the environment, not least by creating natural habitats to manage the impacts of a changing climate. Understanding how human activity impacts on nature also helps us to drive change in our behaviours.

The work of Ecologists and Environmental Managers will be critical to delivering the UK's environmental ambitions as we go forwards and this is an exciting time to be considering a career in this sector.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Work in Ecology is varied. You can work independently or as part of a team. Ecologists work with a range of stakeholders, including local authorities, housing developers, landowners, researchers, engineers and members of the public.

Working hours range from part-time and full-time to flexible working, and it's important to know that working hours in some roles can be unsociable. For example, some surveys can only be undertaken during certain months and in the evening or at night when the animals are active. Plants don't move around so much and can be surveyed during the day! Travel is also sometimes required as part of your role, potentially to remote locations.

Location: During the survey season (April–September) much of the field Ecologist's time will be spent out on site conducting surveys in a range of habitats including woodland, marine, coastal, grassland, heathland, rivers, fens, dunes and peatland. Work is undertaken in all weather conditions. Often during the winter months, time is spent writing-up reports. Some Ecologist roles are much more desk-based.

Ecologist examining moss sample

- Typical duties and responsibilities include:
- Fieldwork and surveys
- Identification of plants species and animals
- Surveying and mapping a range of habitats
- Using technology to model the effects of changing environments and impacts
- Designing mitigation and management plans
- Working on habitat creation plans
- Undertaking ecological impact assessments and producing technical reports
- Working with stakeholders on projects.
- The role of an Ecologist varies across sectors depending on the type of employer, but the job always involves working to minimise potential harmful impacts on nature and the environment, to help nature to thrive.