

Encounter/Outreach- Careers at the Zoo

Objective:

To expose students to the variety of positions and professions associated with zoos.

Students will be able to:

1. List at least 4 zoo related jobs/professions
2. Describe 2 jobs/professions with some detail concerning skills necessary to work in these fields.

Opening:

- Introduce yourself, rules while doing presentation.
- What are some of the jobs your audience can name that involve animals (brainstorm)? There are many different jobs that need to be filled in order to run and maintain a zoo.

Animals:

- Any animals can be used for this outreach. Use the animals to illustrate the different jobs you are highlighting.
 - o For example: If you are talking about keepers, ask the audience “what do the keepers need to know to take care of this particular animal?” Answers should include what it eats, what native habitat is like, etc. Then go on to explain what that animal needs, and how the keepers provide for it.
 - o Another example: To talk about finance and fundraising, you could say “let’s say we want to design a big new exhibit for this animal because it’s really cool” Then, talk about why it’s cool (special adaptations, super cute). Then go on to say, “How are we going to pay for the exhibit?” Fundraising. This could also lead to a discussion about Event Coordinator.
- Do the same thing for Veterinarian, Education, Volunteer Coordinator, etc.

Zoo jobs include:

- Director—runs the zoo; finds funding for projects; directs course zoo is to take.
- General Curator—in charge of the animal collection; its care and housing; consults with the director regarding acquisitions and dispositions.
- Education Curator—develops education programs and promotes the goals of the zoo.
- Keepers—need to know behaviors of animals in their care in order to properly care for them (cats and their diets); they try to provide animals with some activity to prevent boredom; mention transmission of diseases and precautions that keepers take to keep their animals healthy.
- Veterinarians—cares for the health of the entire collection; animals can’t tell him/her where it hurts (compare to their doctor); cant always weigh

animals before you them medication, so the vet needs to be able to guess weights.

- Vet Tech—aids vet, and “animal nurse”.
- Animal Behaviorists—study animal behaviors in wild to discover ways to meet needs of captive counterparts; study animals in captivity to see how zoos can improve their care of these animals; provide information to the rest of the world to further the understanding of animals.
- Nutritionist—someone who develops well balanced diets for the animals at the zoo in order to keep them healthy; responsible for researching and experimenting to derive the best possible formula of foods to maintain the animal collection in good health.
- Secretary—self explanatory
- Concession and Gift Shop Personnel—self explanatory
- Ride Operators—camel and pony rides.
- Registrar- Maintains computer records on the animal collection and applies for permits and licenses to hold or transport animals.
- Finance Manager/Director- Manages the institution's finances, including payment of bills, purchasing, investments, and the preparation of financial statements.
- Public Relations/Affairs Manager/Director- Promotes the institution, its mission, and its programs to the public via the media.
- Development Director/Officer- Develops and manages fund-raising activities which can include writing grant proposals and attracting corporate sponsors, as well as soliciting private donations.
- Marketing Director/Manager- Creates advertising campaigns and other activities to increase public awareness of the institution.
- Special Events Manager/Coordinator- Develops and implements events to attract visitors throughout the year.
- Membership Director/Manager- Responsible for maintaining and increasing institution memberships for families and individuals and designing special events for members only. May also be in charge of "adopt-an-animal" programs to raise funds.
- Docent/Volunteer- Duties may include diet preparation, small animal care, teaching educational programs, leading group tours, and staffing special events.
- Curator of Horticulture- Responsible for the botanical collection and its application to the animal collection, as well as daily maintenance of the institution's grounds.

Review some of the jobs/professions by asking them to name some and describe what they do. Which jobs would they like to work?

More Zoo related careers:

- Architect- Someone specializing in designing exhibits for zoos can travel across the country creating exciting spaces for animals and zoo visitors.
- Engineer/Contractor- These people are needed to execute the designs of the architect.
- Skilled Trades (plumber, electrician, HVAC)- Zoo buildings and exhibits require maintenance, and the skilled people to do it. Even small zoos have facilities people on staff to deal with minor building issues.

Other Animal Related Careers:

- Wildlife Biologists—monitor wild animal populations; help with managing wild areas; with some endangered animals they are needed to capture and collar animals so they can be monitored; when populations start to decline, a wildlife biologist is usually the first to notify the proper authorities so that the animals may be saved; important for advising legislators on environmental issues.
- Forestry Service—manages forests and other wild areas to ensure that there is adequate food available for the native wildlife; protect our country's natural heritage.
- Conservation Officers—enforces hunting laws and protects native plants and animals from being destroyed or taken illegally.

More Information (From the AZA:

With nearly two hundred million people visiting AZA institutions annually, all zoo and aquarium employees have the opportunity to educate the public about the critical need for the conservation of wildlife and wild lands. This responsibility assures an interesting and rewarding career, but the profession requires more than a commitment to conservation - it requires hard work.

Zoo and aquarium employment is not always glamorous. Much of the work requires physical strength, as well as the ability to make detailed observations and keep information up-to-date. It takes a special kind of dedication to provide

care to captive animals that require attention 24 hours a day, seven days a week, come snow, rain, or shine.

Requirements

The conservation and scientific programs in zoos and aquariums have become highly technical and specialized. Although practical experience with animals may sometimes be substituted for academic training, most entry-level keeper positions now require a four-year college degree.

Training in animal science, zoology, marine biology, conservation biology, wildlife management, and animal behavior is preferred. Curatorial, research, and conservation positions typically require advanced academic degrees.

Students wishing to pursue animal-related careers are encouraged to carefully review the curriculum of the schools they wish to attend, as some programs focus more on a zoological application than others. Students who are interested in the business side of zoo and aquarium operations should concentrate on skills related to a particular area of expertise, such as accounting, public relations, marketing, or personnel management. Whatever your career goal, guidance counselors can offer assistance in determining the most appropriate course of study.

Salaries

Salaries for zoo and aquarium employees vary depending on the institution and its location. Institutions located in metropolitan areas generally offer higher salaries. An animal keeper's salary can range from minimum wage to more than \$30,000 a year, depending on skills and tenure. Salaries for other employees tend to be comparable to pay in other fields in the region.