



Ultimate Guide

Switching Careers into Conservation
A Snapshot of Jobs





Intro to Switching Careers into Conservation

Are you searching for more meaning in your career? Do you have a passion for wildlife that keeps nagging at you? Do you feel more energised by nature than by your office?

Today, one third of Conservation Careers Academy members are career switchers – professionals (and graduates) who are switching careers into conservation from different job sectors.

Many career switchers worry that it's too late to change careers. They worry that they'll have to retrain only to compete with recent graduates, or that their skills won't be recognised.

At the core of all these concerns is one question: Are there actually opportunities for career switchers in conservation? Is it worth it?

We know that transferable skills are incredibly valuable in the conservation sector, and that many conservationists – CEOs included – have made successful career switches. But we wanted to know what types of conservation jobs – and how many – were actually available for career switchers.

*We're here to help
you understand
the conservation
job landscape,
where you might
fit in!*





To find out, we monitored conservation jobs worldwide for two weeks to give a snapshot of the opportunities for career switchers, and we were blown away by the results.

The take home message? There are more conservation jobs available for career switchers than you've probably imagined, and career switcher skills are often in demand. If you feel alone, overwhelmed or anxious about making a career switch, we hope this Ultimate Guide will show you that your skills and passion are needed.

Let's explore what we discovered, and find out how to switch on your conservation career.

Read on to find
out how to
switch careers
into conservation!





Contents

1. Who are career switchers?.....	p.5
2. Single switch, double switch or switching back?.....	p.6
3. What challenges do career switchers face?.....	p.8
4. How many conservation jobs are available for career switchers?.....	p.10
5. What organisations are hiring career switchers?...	p.11
6. Does switching careers into conservation require a degree?.....	p.11
7. What level are career switcher jobs?.....	p.11
8. What job types are available for switching careers into conservation?.....	p.12
9. Take-home messages for switching careers into conservation.....	p.16
10. Need some help switching careers into conservation?.....	p.17
11. Useful links and free stuff.....	p.19

WHAT'S INSIDE

ALL ABOUT SWITCHING CAREERS INTO CONSERVATION

A SNAPSHOT OF JOBS FOR CAREER SWITCHERS

HOW DOES CONSERVATION CAREERS HELP?



HOW TO GET A CONSERVATION JOB

Free video training series

Learn how to quickly and easily start your career as a professional wildlife conservationist with Conservation Careers.

If you're a student, job-seeker or career-switcher you'll learn the golden rule for getting started, the key mistakes to avoid, and answer your biggest questions.

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Get my free training!](#)

www.howtogetaconservationjob.com

"I can safely say that without this course, I probably would still be working in a pub in Manchester and applying for my dream jobs, unsuccessfully. I now work in one of the most beautiful places in the west of Scotland, get to see amazing wildlife every day. Thank you!"

- Kilian Hughes, UK



1. Who are career switchers?



Meet Alexandra, a 31-year-old marketing professional for a sales company who loves her work, but struggles to find much meaning in it anymore. She wonders if the next 30 years of her career will be the same, and if she'll look back and regret not taking the opportunity to contribute to conservation efforts abroad.

Ryel has worked in the financial sector for 15 years but daydreams about trading in his office for a forest and his keyboard for a pair of gloves. But with two young kids at home, he's not sure how to justify a career change and potential pay cut to do more of what he loves. Hudson has just graduated from an engineering degree, but, unlike his classmates, has no interest in applying for engineering jobs or traineeships. He feels like his personality and values don't fit the corporate sector and wants to explore a curiosity for natural systems instead.

Sylvia's had a successful career in business operations, and is now the Chief Operations Officer for a multinational company. But at 59 she's ready for a new challenge. She's always been fascinated by museums and Endangered species, and wonders if she can't apply her operations experience in this environment.

Career switchers – like the composite characters described above – come in many unique forms. They are everyone from recent graduates or tradespeople, to mid-career professionals, to directors who plan to retire within the next 10 years.



2. Single switch, double switch or switching back?

If you're wondering if all career switches are alike, we'd like to share a not-so-secret secret. They're not!

We've grouped them into three main categories: single switch, double switch, and switch back.

Single switch

Single switchers are seeking to transfer their skills and experience from their sector into conservation. For example, an HR Manager who works for a bank might apply for an HR role with a conservation organisation. Similar skills, different sector.

A single switch is probably the most straightforward way of shifting into conservation, and an available pathway – most of the jobs we found were ideal for this kind of switch. Single switchers can quickly create impact for conservation by bringing in transferable skills, while adding meaning – and possibly new challenges and learning to stretch themselves – to their daily work.

Not all career switchers are alike - everyone comes from different backgrounds and has different circumstances





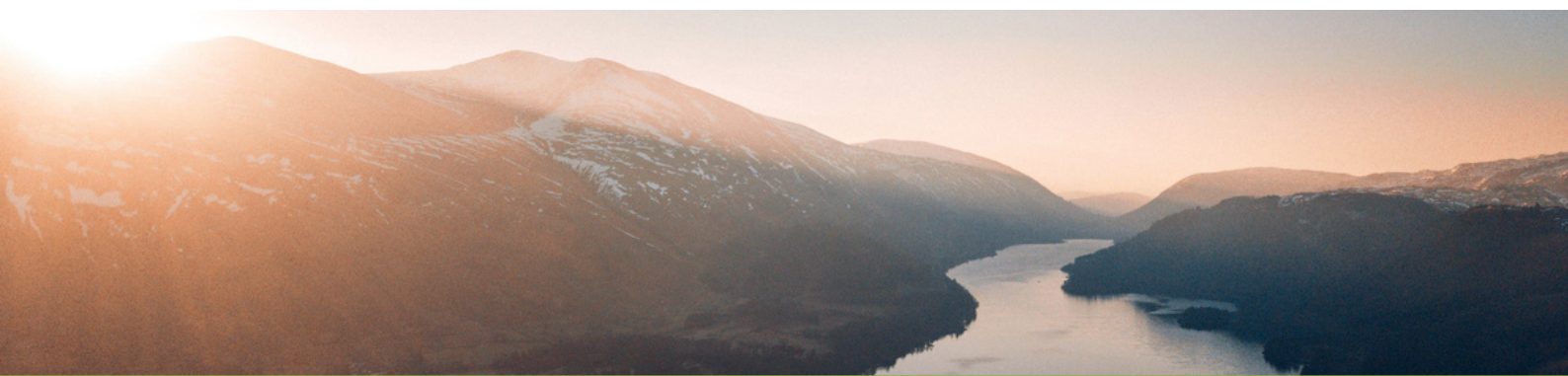
Double switch

A double switch happens when a career switcher changes both their sector AND their [job type](#). For example, a banker who wishes to work in wetland restoration may need to acquire new knowledge and/or experience to make a successful career switch. Double switches are often more challenging, because they involve retraining. But if switchers find an [efficient way to fill gaps in skills, knowledge or experience](#), they can be formidable forces with their arsenal of transferable skills and experience.

Switching back

People who have previously studied or worked in conservation, but had a significant [employment gap](#) before re-entering the sector, are switching back. They might have pursued different work for financial reasons, raised a family or taken care of other personal matters.

The good news is that switching back doesn't necessarily mean moving backwards. If you can demonstrate that you're passionate about and connected to conservation, and have the right transferable skills for the role, you can [switch into conservation after an employment gap](#).





3. What challenges do career switchers face?

Check out our
[Ultimate Guide -
15 Key Conservation Jobs](#)
to find out more about your
options for switching
careers into conservation

Conservation is a highly competitive sector with more people entering the field each year than ever before. With funding for conservation often in short supply, there is also less support at the entry-level to help aspiring conservationists get started.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified a classic challenge in conservation: a bottleneck of recent graduates and career switchers competing for entry level roles.

“There’s already a shortage of jobs in the conservation field,” said Taryn Curry, an independent contractor in New Jersey, USA, who hopes to switch careers into wildlife conservation.

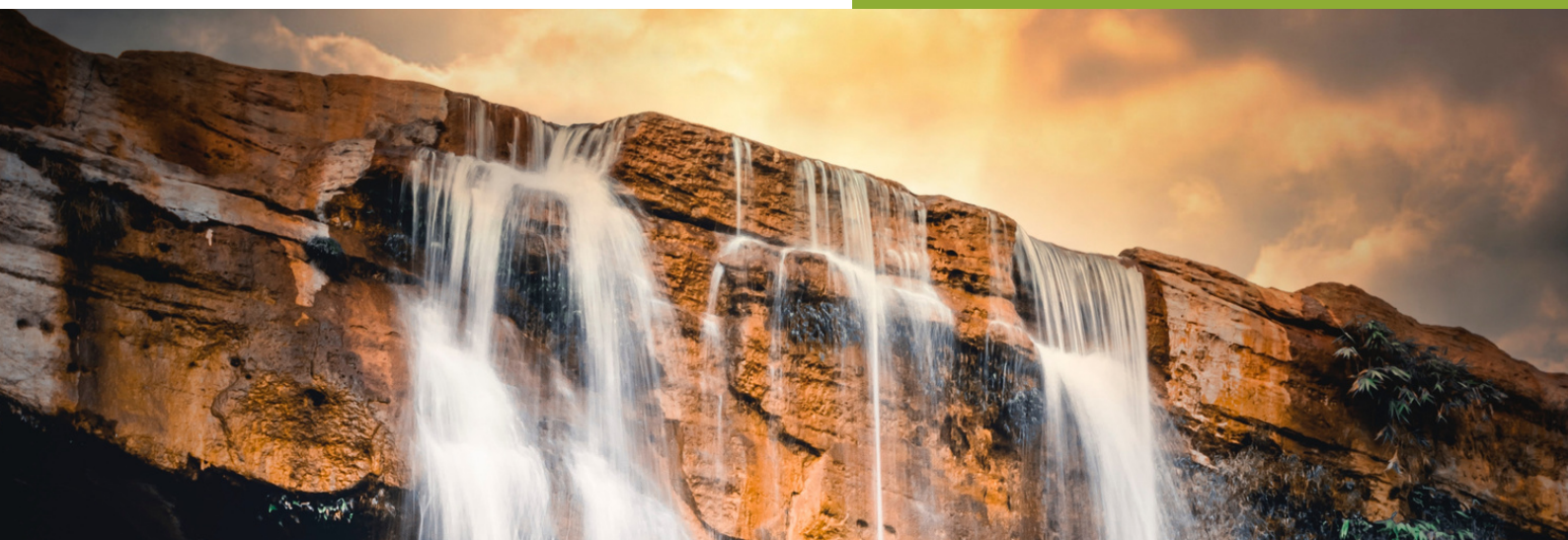
“But for people like me who are pretty much starting over in their career, it’s even harder. I have no education or experience in the field and the only thing really being offered are senior level jobs or internships. I wish there were more options for those looking to switch careers and have no experience at all.”



Depending on their career or life stage, career switchers may also face personal or financial challenges. They may be supporting a family and unable to take a financial risk. Or they may be unable to travel or to work extended hours and weekends like many recent graduates can. Conservation can feel like a risky career move without a safety net or lots of flexibility.

But there's good news on the horizon. There are more conservation jobs being advertised than ever before, and it turns out that many of those jobs are ideal for career switchers.

[Click here to join our Kick-Start online course](#)
and start your
career change now!



4. How many conservation jobs are available for career switchers?



Career switchers are a diverse, passionate and talented group of all ages and career stages. In just two weeks of monitoring conservation jobs, we found an impressive 63 jobs for career switchers. Those were just the jobs we saved as a sample, from the opportunities widely advertised on major job boards.

If we'd saved all the jobs we found, or considered the 'hidden job market' – those jobs that aren't published on major job boards, or at all – that number would be much higher.

Based on this snapshot, we estimate that well over 1,600 conservation jobs are best-suited to career switchers each year. **In other words, career switchers are more likely to be competitive for them than most formally-trained conservationists.**

Ready to look for jobs? Meet our new Job Board, [Conservation Jobs for Career Switchers!](#)

Career switchers can be more competitive than formally-trained conservationists



5. What organisations are hiring career switchers?

In just two weeks, 43 different employers posted career switcher roles. Most of them were mainstream, well-recognised conservation organisations, in countries like the UK, US, Canada and New Zealand.

Among them were African Wildlife Foundation, Audubon, Conservation International, Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation, Rainforest Alliance, RSPB, The Nature Conservancy, the Wildlife Trusts, WWF and ZSL.

6. Does switching careers into conservation require a degree?

Yes and no. We estimate that about 75% of the career switcher jobs we found required a degree. A few accepted any Bachelor's degree, while most required a degree related to the role (but not a conservation or biology degree). Only a handful required master's or PhDs, and some required no degree at all.

7. What level are career switcher jobs?

Of the 63 jobs we found, about 10 were internships, 17 were early career roles, 16 were mid career roles and 20 were senior roles. In other words, if you're switching careers into conservation, there are opportunities at any stage, and at any age.



8. What job types are available for switching careers into conservation?

All of the conservation jobs we considered have this in common: they don't require a formal background in conservation or a very closely related field.

These jobs were diverse, but we've categorised them roughly to help give you a better sense of the types of jobs available for switchers (and their frequency).

Business (very frequent)

- Sample job titles: Business Analyst, Operations Coordinator/Manager, Business Manager
- Sample themes: business, business development, business administration, business intelligence, business operations, procurement, entrepreneurship, facilities management/maintenance, administration support, health and safety.

Administration (very frequent)

- Sample job titles: Administrative Assistant, Officer Manager, Assistant to Directors, Administrative Co-op Student, Professional Services Intern, Administrative Assistant
- Sample themes: Office management, administrative systems, office administration.

Human Resources (frequent)

- Sample job titles: Human Resources Specialist, Talent Coordinator
- Sample themes: Employment, recruitment, training, performance management, disciplinary procedures, grievance, employee relations, talent management, professional development.

Finance & Accounting (very frequent)

- Sample job titles: Accountant, Coordinator, Finance Director, Head of Finance and Services, Project Accountant, Grant & Financial Manager
- Sample themes: Finance, financial management, accounting, budget management, benefits and payroll administration, financial analysis.

Information & Data Management (frequent)

- Sample job titles: Director, Data Services
- Sample themes: Data management, Data protection, information management, data governance

Many of the categories above overlapped in roles. For example, several roles required skills in business administration, operations, finance, human resources and data management.



Some career switcher jobs come up more frequently than others - consider this before applying for jobs

Marketing & Communications (very frequent)

- Sample job titles: Marketing Officer, Digital Strategy Manager, Senior Digital Manager, Communications Consultant/Officer, Assistant Editor, Media Manager, Graphic Design Internship.
- Sample themes: Market research, user experience, digital strategies, social media, ecommerce, customer experience, digital transformation, social media, media, journalism, communications strategy, public relations, branding, publishing, international journals, editing, peer review, communications guidance, training, graphic design, digital marketing.

Fundraising & Development (very frequent)

- Sample job titles: Data Services Assistant, Foundation Relations Manager, Individual Giving Officer, Grant Writer, Strategic Partnerships Manager. Sample themes: fundraising, donor management, marketing, grant writing, major gifts. Information Technology (very frequent)
- Sample job titles: Software Developer, Digital Lead, Developer, Director – Information Technology, Software Development for Business, Website Developer
- Sample themes: information technology





Policy (occasional)

- Sample job titles: Legal Assistant, Legal Intern, Policy Engagement Intern.

(Environmental) Science (occasional)

- Sample job titles: Environmental Sustainability Manager, Agroforester, Oceanographer, Engineer In Training.
- Sample themes: Environmental sustainability, environmental management, environmental science, carbon, energy.

Environmental sustainability was an important job type, including environmental projects for clients, as well as internal environmental projects where organisations are striving to improve their sustainability.

GIS (Geographic Information Systems) (occasional)

- Sample job title: GIS-Database Technician
- Sample themes: GIS, ESRI, ArcGIS.

Beyond the categories above, there were lots of other conservation jobs ideal for career switchers. They included work with supply chains; product development; audits, risk and process analysis; and a hands-on opportunity for a hut warden.

Are you dreaming
about switching
careers into
conservation?
It's not as
impossible as you
might think!





New and emerging trends

Despite the devastation and hardships they represent, events such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement have helped create new opportunities within conservation.

We've seen jobs like 'Digital Transformation Programme Director' and other roles focussed on change management within organisations.

There has also been a recent trend in roles focussed on gender and inclusion. Organisations such as The Wildlife Trusts and Woodland Trust (UK), Rainforest Alliance (US / International) and the Canadian Wildlife Federation have all posted roles promoting increased diversity and inclusion of marginalised groups in the conservation workforce and projects.

Are you ready to look for jobs? Meet our new Job Board, [Conservation Jobs for Career Switchers!](#)

Learn all about how to
apply for a
conservation job in our
step-by-step system to
get hired as a wildlife
conservationist -

[click here!](#)



9. Take-home messages for switching careers into conservation



If you enjoy skimming to the bottom of posts, or sharing what you've learnt with your friends and loved ones, here's a summary in six bullet points:

- There are TONS of jobs available to career switchers. We estimate that 5% of jobs are best suited to career switchers. [Search the latest opportunities here!](#)
- Career switcher jobs are available at all levels – from internships and early career opportunities to senior-level roles.
- There is a huge opportunity for switchers to lead conservation efforts in senior-level roles.
- Most opportunities available are for a 'single switch' – where switchers simply transfer their skills and experience from one sector to another, in the same (or similar) [job type](#).
- Some career switcher roles don't require any university or specialised training at all.
- There are some interesting new and emerging trends such as digital transformation and diversity and inclusion.

Find out more about [volunteering](#) and [internships](#) at [Conservation Careers](#)



10. Need some help switching careers into conservation?



The conservation sector urgently needs a greater diversity of skills, experience and perspectives. If you're a career switcher, we hope this Ultimate Guide has reassured you that your skills and experience will be valued in conservation and that it's never too late (or too early) to get started.

Are you feeling inspired and ready to make your switch a reality? Head over to [How to switch careers into conservation | Top 10 questions answered](#) to get answers to the top questions, plus resources to help

.Are you looking for your career switcher job? Search our latest [Conservation Jobs for Career Switchers](#).

Are you ready to apply for a job? Remember to focus on the positives, not the negatives. You may be inwardly anxious that you won't be competitive as a switcher, but many employers are actively searching for talent and transferable skills from other sectors. Leave your hesitations aside when you write your application and focus on what you can offer.

Also remember that applications, like applicants, aren't cookie-cutter moulds. You can organise your CV any way you like to best showcase your transferable skills, so long as it's easy to follow. For examples of how to do this, check out our free eBook Conservation Jobs: The Step-by-Step System to Get Hired as a Wildlife Conservationist – available on [Kindle](#), [EPUB](#) and [PDF](#).



HOW TO GET A CONSERVATION JOB

Free video training series

Learn how to quickly and easily start your career as a professional wildlife conservationist with Conservation Careers.

If you're a student, job-seeker or career-switcher you'll learn the golden rule for getting started, the key mistakes to avoid, and answer your biggest questions.

[CLICK HERE](#)

[Get my free training!](#)

www.howtogetaconservationjob.com

"I got hired for an education and outreach position teaching about endemic butterflies at a local conservation area! As a career switcher, it's my first conservation related job. The course has really helped me focus on how I want my future career to look. Thank you for a wonderful program! "

- Christina Carlton, USA





6. Useful links and free stuff

To help you navigate your options, please select which best describes you:

You want to work in conservation but you're feeling lost, disillusioned or confused?!?

Check out our Kick-Starter training designed to help you understand the job market, to navigate your career options, and to get hired more quickly. It's designed for students, graduates, job-seekers and career-switchers. We're proud to say it also has 100% satisfaction and recommendation ratings. We know you'll love it. Find out more about our [Kick-Starter – Online Course](#) and [Kick-Starter – UK Workshop](#).

You need answers to top questions about working in conservation?

Check out our free [Ultimate Guides](#) covering topics like the [Top Conservation Internships](#), [Paid or Free](#) and [Marine Conservation Jobs](#), and answering questions like [How to Switch Careers into Conservation](#), [Do I need a Master's Degree?](#) and much more!

You feel ready to be applying for jobs in conservation?

Check out our membership packages for job seekers which provide access to the world's biggest conservation job board – with over 10,000 conservation jobs shared each year – plus a range of other benefits. [Check out our monthly memberships here](#).

You're submitting applications, but failing to get many interviews?

Check out our FREE eBook Conservation Jobs: The Step-by-Step System to Get Hired as a Wildlife Conservationist – available on [Kindle](#), [EPUB](#) and [PDF](#). We can also review your applications, and provide 1:1 advice on how to improve them (and we don't cost the earth). Check out our [application support here](#)

You've got an interview (well done!) and would like our help to prepare for it?

We know what employers want, and have helped many people prepare for and deliver successful interviews. Check out our [interview preparation here](#).

[Find more of our Ultimate Guides HERE!](#)



DISCLAIMER

All internships are subject to current travel restrictions. Please check with the internship provider for more information.

About Conservation Careers

We are the #1 careers advice centre for conservationists – helping 630,000 conservationists in 178 countries across the globe.

We believe that all wildlife is beautiful and that it deserves great conservationists working to protect it. We have extensive international knowledge, experience and a network of contacts within the conservation career sector. This means that we can help job seekers and conservation organisations to form lasting relationships. We do this by providing careers advice and information to a network of dedicated conservationists across the globe.

Have a question or suggestion?

Contact us at mail@conservation-careers.com

The legal bit

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