

# **Ultimate Guide**

Careers in Ecotourism
Your Conservation Adventure Awaits





# Your Conservation Adventure Awaits

Do you have an overzealous case of wanderlust AND a burning passion for conservation? Why not fuse them in an ecotourism career that offers the best of both worlds?

In many ways, careers in ecotourism have it all: the opportunity to make a difference for wildlife, habitats and local communities; the adventure and excitement of travel; meaningful global connections; and perhaps even a chance to explore your entrepreneurial side. Careers in ecotourism can also offer more opportunities (and pay) than other highly-competitive <u>Conservation Job Types</u> that rely primarily on donor funding.

We've designed this Ultimate Guide like a travel guidebook – to give you a glimpse of some of the exciting adventures in store if you embark on a career in ecotourism.

Feel free to explore everything cover to cover, or travel straight to the section you need. "Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel"

— The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)





# 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 careerswitcher 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





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WHAT'S INSIDE

# WHAT EXACTLY IS ECOTOURISM?

WHAT TYPES OF ECOTOURISM JOBS AND EMPLOYERS ARE THERE?

HOW DO I KNOW IF ECOTOURISM IS DOING GOOD?



# 1. What is ecotourism? | Conservation through experience

A leading <u>definition of ecotourism</u> is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education". That last bit is for both guests and staff.

Another useful way to think about ecotourism is <u>sustainable</u> tourism (which strives for social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability), which takes place in natural areas and focuses on providing benefits for conservation and local communities.

Ecotourism can be a powerful way to achieve conservation impact by making conservation part of a successful business model. In some parts of the world – like African parks and conservancies, for instance – it's often the best tool we currently have to protect wildlife and habitats.

Read on to hear all about careers in ecotourism!





Ecotourism can give

participants the
opportunity to see
conservation research and
projects first hand – such
as mist-netting to monitor
bird species.
Image below.

While we're on the topic of definitions, it's worth mentioning that there are other related types of tourism out there. These include nature- and nature-based tourism, <a href="mailto:sustainable">sustainable</a> tourism, <a href="mailto:responsible travel">responsible travel</a>, <a href="mailto:conservation tourism">conservation tourism</a>, wildlife tourism and protected area tourism, to name a few.

Many volunteer and internship opportunities in conservation also encompass aspects of ecotourism within their programmes.





Before we do a deep dive into the conservation job market, let's quickly touch on what we define as an ecotourism job. For Conservation Careers, an ecotourism job is any role where your activities aid the conservation or enhancement of wildlife or habitats through ecotourism.

This includes jobs which directly benefit conservation like a Community Liaison Officer who helps local communities engage with and benefit from ecotourism in Africa. It also includes roles which indirectly benefit conservation efforts, such as a Sales Manager, who ensure guests continue to visit to provide reliable alternative livelihood opportunities for local people.

If the role aids conservation efforts through tourism, it's an ecotourism job.

Ecotourism is a broad theme of work, encompassing most of the <u>15 key conservation job types</u>. But ecotourism is also uber-diverse, encompassing many areas of focus – such as protected areas, guiding and certification.

If you're worried about whether your skillset is needed in careers in ecotourism, you can put that fear to rest!

Ecotourism
generates benefits
for conservation
and local
communities and
involves education
and interpretation.



Ecotourism is a broad theme of work, encompassing most of the 15 key conservation job types.

#### Animal Welfare Ecotourism Jobs | Caring for animals.

- Examples of early career job titles: Veterinarian, Programme Manager – Breeding.
- Examples of employers: Macaw Recovery Network.

# <u>Communications & Marketing Ecotourism Jobs | Raising the profile of conservation</u>

- Examples of early career job titles: Communications
   Officer/Specialist, Marketing Officer, Social Media
   Assistant, Magazine Editor, TV Assistant, Writer,
   Wildlife Journalist, Presenter or Blogger.
- Examples of employers: The world's your oyster!
   Almost every organisation needs support with this.
   Some examples include Audley Travel, African Impact,
   African Conservation Experience, Ecotourism Australia.

   Note: Some ecotourism companies hire
   communications experts to train aspiring students in these skills.

# <u>Community-based Ecotourism Jobs | Helping people to be part of the solution</u>

- Examples of early career job titles: Community
   Outreach Officer, Local Empowerment Officer
- Examples of employers: Blue Ventures, Global Vision International (GVI), Alliance for a Sustainable Amazon, Fauna Forever, MAD Travel.

Note: because <u>"ecotourism is about uniting</u> <u>conservation, communities and sustainable travel,"</u> many ecotourism jobs have elements of community-based conservation.



#### Ranger Ecotourism Jobs | Saving key sites for nature

- Examples of early career job titles: Assistant Ranger, Park Ranger.
- Examples of employers: OI Pejeta Conservancy, African Parks.

<u>Ecotourism Jobs | Helping people experience the natural world</u> Congrats! You're already here!

# Environmental Economics & Ecosystem Assessment Ecotourism Jobs | Putting a value on nature

- Examples of early career job titles: Economics Programme
   Officer, Junior Environmental Economist.
- Examples of employers: Fauna Forever.

Experiencing the Serengeti, Tanzania V





Environmental
education doesn't
have to start and
stop in the field.
Photographers can
capture images that
engage a much wider
audience.

#### <u>Environmental Education Ecotourism Jobs | Increasing</u> <u>awareness and support for nature</u>

- Examples of early career job titles: Environmental Educator, Field Guide, Tour Guide, Naturalist.
- Examples of employers: NATUCATE, Lindblad Expeditions, Fuze Ecoteer.

# <u>Fundraising & Development Marine Ecotourism Jobs | Raising money to save nature</u>

- Examples of early career job titles: Fundraising Officer, Development Officer.
- Examples of employers: Any organisation that needs funding!

**Note**: Many ecotourism ventures combine donations and profits as part of their business model – sometimes within two complementary organisations.

#### Marine Ecotourism Jobs | Protecting the blue planet.

- Examples of early career job titles: Marine Program
   Officer, Marine Assistant, Assistant Marine Ecologist,
   Scuba Instructor.
- Examples of employers: Blue Ventures, Love The Oceans.



# <u>Photography and Film-making Ecotourism Jobs | Storytelling for change</u>

- Examples of early career job titles: Freelance
   Photographers, Photo-journalists, Film-makers, Editors,
   Producers, Nature Photography Coordinator.
- Examples of employers: NATUCATE, GVI, African
   Conservation Experience, Fauna Forever.
   Note: Some companies hire photographers and
   filmmakers to help teach volunteers, interns and tourists.

#### Policy & Advocacy Ecotourism Jobs | Saving wildlife through law

- Examples of early career job titles: Varies (often combined within other roles).
- Examples of employers: Fauna Forever.
   Note: Many ecotourism organisations provide data to local governments to help inform decision making. Tip: look for organisations that partner with local agencies.

We bet you didn't realise there were so many different job types available within the ecotourism sector!



There are lots of options within ecotourism - there's something for everyone

# <u>Programme & Project Management Ecotourism Jobs | Saving the world one project at a time</u>

- Examples of early career job titles: Project Officer, Project
   Assistant, Programme Officer and Programme Assistant, Project
   Manager, Programme Manager.
- Examples of employers: GVI, Blue Ventures, African Conservation Experience.

# Science & Research Ecotourism Jobs | Answering the key questions to tackle biodiversity loss

- Examples of early career job titles: Field Assistant, Research Assistant, Science Officer.
- Examples of employers: Operation Wallacea, Para La Tierra,
   British Exploring Society, Iwokrama International Centre for
   Rainforest Conservation and Development.

In practice, it's very common to find ecotourism jobs that combine several different job types – such as Science & Research, Environmental Education and Community-based Conservation.





Let's explore some of the sub sectors within ecotourism. We've compiled some of the most common – but the possibilities are endless. You might even create your own!

#### Guiding

Guides are responsible for helping tourists and other visitors create the experience of a lifetime. Whether you're seated at a bird hide, guiding a group through the rainforest at night in search of amphibians, or pointing out wildlife as a diver, you're an educator, storyteller, organiser and conversationalist all in one.

Your conservation superpower: Helping people discover or deepen their connection with nature.

Tip: Wildlife may be the star attraction, but guiding usually relies on excellent people skills.

Guiding Ecotourism Jobs | Career Stories & Advice – Search for the latest here.

- Adventurer at heart: exploring the marine world with Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic's Alyssa Adler
- James Lowen | Wildlife Photographer, Author & Travel Guide
- From intern to inspiration story: landing an adventure job in the Peruvian
   Amazon
- Sail to the Ecotourism Job of Your Dreams
- How to Scuba Dive Into an Epic Ecotourism Job

Nature and field guides play an important role in environmental education and interpretation.



#### Consulting / Certification

Consultants, Certification Coaches and Managers help guide ecotourism destinations and businesses move towards sustainability and more responsible practices. You might even guide a destination or business through the process of becoming certified at global or national standards. This might involve everything from wildlife practices, through to waste management, business plans and benefits for local staff.

Your conservation superpower: helping destinations or businesses operate in a way that minimises negative impacts and maximises positive benefits for wildlife and habitats.

Tip: There is a growing focus on sustainable destinations and certifications for destinations.

Consulting & Certification Ecotourism Jobs | Career Stories & Advice – <u>Search for the latest here.</u>

• <u>Sustainable tourism ecopreneurs: transforming the way</u> the world travels

Don't see your ideal job
here? Don't worry!
Careers in ecotourism are
open to everyone from
boat drivers and
sustainable agriculture
experts to gender
specialists and CEOs.





There are lots of types of ecotourism jobs available! Work out your skills and find what suits you best...

#### Lodge / Base Camp / Research Station Manager

These managers are responsible for managing a lodge, research station or base camp – from guest safety and satisfaction, to sustainable operations, to construction and staffing. Sometimes these posts are offered on a temporary basis for singles or couples.

Your conservation superpower: being a jack of all trades and a problem solver. On any given day you might need a combination of customer service, carpentry, communications and conservation skills!

#### Other ecotourism jobs

In practice there are many other ecotourism jobs available, such as:

- Volunteer Coordinator
- Sales Manager
- Destination Manager
- Business Owner



Understanding the main employer types can help you navigate careers in ecotourism. They are:

- Academia Help create the research base that
   ecotourism practitioners need to maximise the positive
   impacts and minimise the negative impacts of tourism.
   Employers are typically universities and colleges, such
   as the <u>University of Kent</u> (UK), the University of
   Queensland (Australia) and the <u>University of Victoria</u>
   (Canada).
- Charity Contribute to not-for-profit and nongovernmental conservation activities through ecotourism with the Charity, NGO or 'Third Sector.' Examples include WWF, Fauna & Flora International, Blue Ventures and Love The Oceans.
- Business Work with for-profit private companies or consulting firms that practice or support ecotourism, such as <u>Audley Travel</u> or African Conservation Experience.

You could work in academia, charity, business, government or enterprise



- Government Help set regional, national or international policies, and enforce best practice with the public sector or civil service. Examples of government institutions and agencies include the Department of Tourism (South Africa), the Ministry of Tourism (Canada), Tourism New Zealand and the Guyana Tourism Authority.
- Enterprise Join the start-up, social enterprise or innovation movement, applying commercial strategies to maximise improvements in environmental and human well-being. Examples include <u>Blue Ventures</u>, <u>GVI</u> and <u>Fuze Ecoteer</u>.

Note: many ecotourism organisations have a business and charity arm – to ensure their conservation work has the resources it needs to run year-round.

Many ecotourism
companies
support local
employment as
part of their
sustainability
strategy and
mission'





#### Selection Criteria:

#### Key Duties and Responsibilities:

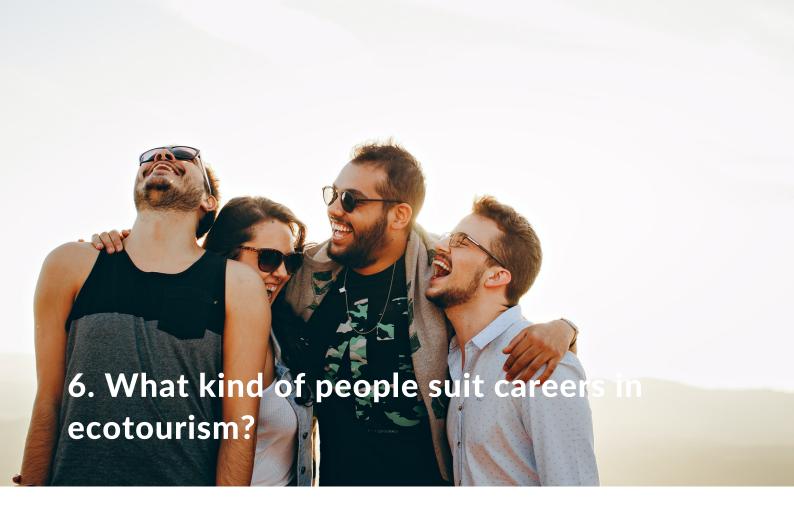
Project & Company Administration:

- Ability to manage day to day administration of projects
- Demonstrated capacity to manage multiple priorities within tight deadlines;
- Effective written and oral communication and interpersonal skills
- Demonstrated organisational ability, problem solving skills and initiative....

#### Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting:

- Broad understanding of environmental concepts and issues relevant to the seafood industry.
- Ability to prepare and distribute written and graphic communications that require a high level of research, liaison, writing skills and collaboration with internal & external stakeholders.
- Demonstrated ability in the use of relevant contemporary computer-based office applications.
- A degree in social science/ science and/or a related field; or an equivalent combination of relevant experience and/or educational training.

Wading through tropical rivers is good fun, but if fieldwork isn't your thing, there are a wealth of other job types in ecotourism.



Do you think careers in ecotourism are just for extroverted adventure-lovers? Many field-based guiding and environmental education roles do require an adventurous spirit and excellent people skills.

But this diverse sector has plenty of space for all personality types and working preferences. For example, you might choose a desk-based job focussed storytelling and marketing, or become a veterinarian at a rescue centre who prefers spending most of their time with animals, rather than people.

Ecotourism can employ people with a diversity of skills, from front line people skills, to business acumen, to planning, communications and marketing. Ecological expertise is not necessarily a prerequisite and <a href="mailto:switching careers into ecotourism">switching careers into ecotourism</a> is a great option!

If you research the ecotourism sector and know your niche, chances are you can find the right fit for you!



# 7. What top skills, education and experience are in demand in ecotourism?

To give you a snapshot of the education, experience and skills needed to work in the ecotourism sector, we analysed a sample of 30 ecotourism jobs posted on Conservation Careers in the past 3 years.

These jobs came from 28 different employers from around the globe. Among them were African Wildlife Foundation, Audubon, <u>BirdLife South Africa</u>, Department of Conservation, Lindblad Expeditions, <u>Love The Oceans</u>, Macaw Recovery Network, <u>Project Biodiversity</u>, RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts and WWF.

Would you like to discover more ecotourism organisations in your region of interest?

As a <u>Conservation Careers Academy</u> member you can access every job ever posted on Conservation Careers on our <u>Expired Conservation Jobs Board</u>. It's the perfect place to find organisations that match your interests and explore the types of opportunities available!

Here's a quick overview of the types of education, experience and skills required for ecotourism jobs (and their frequency). Keep in mind that this is just a tiny sample of the thousands of ecotourism jobs available worldwide every year!

Alyssa Adler used her dive experience to work for Lindblad Expeditions and National Geographic as an Undersea Specialist.

Image below.





#### **Education**

Over half of all roles required a Bachelor's degree in relevant field (or an equivalent combination of work and education). None of the jobs specifically required a master's degree.

#### **Experience**

Industry experience (very frequent)

- Interest in, passion for or commitment to conservation (very frequent)
- Experience in the tourism or travel industry, or a specific sector such as nature-based tourism, sustainable tourism (frequent)

Experience in a relevant environment (very frequent)

- Experience living or working in a relevant setting, such as the developing world, a multicultural or cross-cultural setting, the tropics, Africa, an NGO or a specific country (frequent)
- Physical capability to work outdoors and walk long distances, sometimes in challenging conditions, such as heat and humidity (frequent)
- Ability to work in remote / isolated areas, often with limited support and/or logistical challenges (occasional)
- Ability to work flexible / irregular hours and/or travel for work (frequent)

You might be surprised to discover that the most indemand skills in ecotourism are easily transferable from other sectors.



#### Skills

Career switcher and career-starter alert: you'll notice that the top skills in demand for ecotourism careers can come from any sector, not necessarily conservation!

They include the <u>15 Key Conservation Job types</u>, as well as more general (but very important!) competencies such as leadership and communication skills.

Interpersonal skills (very frequent)

- Leadership and/or people management, such as leading groups, developing a team or managing volunteers (very frequent)
- Teamwork (frequent)
- Customer service (occasional)
- Building and maintaining relationships (occasional)
- Experience working with groups (occasional)
- Being friendly / approachable (occasional)
- Experience working with youth (occasional)
- Facilitation (occasional)
- Other skills: collaboration, influencing people, working with the public (occasional)

Interpersonal
skills are likely to
make you a
stronger
candidate for a
career in
ecotourism.





#### IT skills (very frequent)

- MS Office (very frequent)
- Other software / applications e.g. Microsoft Teams, Google online suite (occasional)

#### Communication skills (very frequent)

- Oral communication (very frequent)
- Written communication (very frequent)
- Presenting to groups (occasional)

#### Working independently (frequent)

- (Self) motivation (frequent)
- Time management (frequent)
- Organisation (frequent)
- Problem solving (occasional)
- Resourcefulness (occasional)
- Responsibility, dependability (occasional)

#### Organisational management (frequent)

- Accounting and finance (frequent)
- Business development (e.g. owning or running a company, developing business plans, generating income) (frequent)
- Administrative experience (occasional)

Are you comfortable working independently? This ability could be an asset in an ecotourism career.





#### Community conservation (occasional)

 Specific skills and experience varied by role but included things such as: community organising, facilitation, empowerment, knowledge transfer, safeguarding and social policies (e.g. gender, human rights), community development and alternative livelihoods.

#### Communications & Marketing (occasional)

- Marketing (frequent)
- Social media (frequent)
- Campaigning (occasional)
- Other: press, branding, graphic design

#### Project and Programme management (occasional)

Environmental Education (occasional)

Science & Research (occasional)

Sector-specific and other skills (occasional)

- Guiding experience
- Logistics
- Sales

Some field stations are so remote, it can take 2 to 4 days just to get to work





#### Personal attributes

- Flexibility / adaptability (frequent)
- Positive attitude and/or sense of humour (occasional)
- Patience (occasional)
- Open-mindedness and/or cultural sensitivity (occasional)
- Maturity (occasional)

#### Qualifications

- Driver's licence (frequent)
- Second language (frequent)
- First Aid (occasional)
- CPR (occasional)
- PADI certification (occasional)

Flexibility and adaptability can be important assets in an ecotourism career - especially if you're working in the field



# 8. How do I know if ecotourism is doing good?

Ecotourism has enormous potential to conserve some of the world's most biodiverse places – and there are many success stories of ecotourism benefiting conservation and local communities around the world

.

But like any sector, a few bad apples can spoil the bunch. It is an unfortunate reality that some companies mislabel themselves as ecotourism, making people wary of all companies.

If words like 'eco' and 'green' send your ethical radar flashing, the good news is that some quick research will usually confirm if a company is ethical. Here are a few great suggestions and questions:

- Research their reputation. What does online research say about the organisation? Check out their website and social media platforms; look for project updates, results and outcomes; and read reviews. What do past participants have to say?
- Check for partners. Good organisations rarely work in isolation. A good ecotourism operator will usually collaborate with others, such as local community organisations, government agencies, conservation organisations, etc. Many share data and results with incountry NGOs as a minimum. If the organisation is stand alone, you may want to question why.

Some quick research will usually confirm if a company is ethical!



- Look for true sustainability. Look for evidence that the company is actively working to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts (rather than just highlighting a few green initiatives for marketing purposes). These can include environmental, social, economic and cultural impacts.
- Consider conservation impact. A good ecotourism company will know what problems it's working to solve. A great question to ask is if the conservation is there purely for the tourists, or if the tourists are contributing to conservation?
- Ask questions. Want to know what percentage of tourist dollars go to conservation? Ask. Want to know what the organisation accomplished for conservation in the past year? Ask. Most organisations will be more than happy to answer. Check out this <u>Ethical</u> <u>Ecotourism Code of Conduct</u> by Terra Incognita for key principles that should be part of ethical ecotourism.

Did this jeep drive too
close to a herd of
elephants, or was it
parked at a safe
distance while the
elephants approached?
Image above.



Careers in ecotourism
are diverse,
accessible to
conservationists and
career switchers alike,
and can create
positive impact for
wildlife, people and
the landscapes
they share.

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

- Ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" The International Ecotourism Society.
- Ecotourism can be a powerful tool for achieving conservation impact by making conservation part of a successful business model that benefits local people.
- Ecotourism is a broad theme of work, encompassing most of the <u>15 key conservation job types</u>, plus specific areas of focus – such as protected areas, guiding and certification.



Bottoms up! It's time to take the plunge into your dream career!

- Ecotourism employers span the Academic, Business,
   Charity, Government and Enterprise sectors.
- There are careers in ecotourism to suit people from all backgrounds, including people <u>switching careers into</u> conservation.
- Many of the skills and experience in demand for careers ecotourism can be easily transferred from other sectors.
- Ecotourism has enormous potential to conserve some of the world's most biodiverse places, and there are many success stories from ethical organisations. Asking a few questions can help ensure you're supporting one of the good guys.



# 10. Need some help finding an ecotourism job?



Phew! That was a lot of information and well done if you made it this far. And hello those who skim to the bottom of blog posts.

Understanding the job market is so important in your quest to find an <u>ecotourism job</u>. Unless you fully understand all your options, you won't be able to find your niche, and without that you're far less likely to be happy, impactful and competitive.

A big part of this also is to understand yourself. What do you love doing? What are you great at? What are your biggest needs right now?

At Conservation Careers we've helped hundreds of people just like you to get clarity on your career options, form a plan of action, and secure your dream job.

The <u>ecotourism sector</u> is ready to be explored! If you need our help, we're here for you.

Not sure which direction to head in next? We hope this guide has helped!



# 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 careerswitcher 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





#### 11. 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.

# You need answers to top questions about working in conservation?

Check out our free <u>Ultimate Guides</u> covering topics like the <u>Top Conservation Internships</u> | <u>Paid or Free</u> and <u>Marine Conservation Jobs</u>, and answering questions like <u>How to Switch Careers into Conservation</u>, <u>Do I need a Master's Degree</u>? 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 15,000 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.

You feel stuck, are struggling with a difficult career decision, or need some clarity about your next steps? We can help you form a clear plan of action so you can feel confident and take the next steps to make your dream career a reality. Check out our 1:1 career coaching here.

## <u>Find more of our</u> <u>Ultimate Guides HERE!</u>



#### **DISCLAIMER**

#### **About Conservation Careers**

We are the #1 careers advice centre for conservationists – helping 700,000 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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