



# Animal Careers

This pack is for people who are interested or researching animal careers, with a focus on wild animals and conservation.



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# The Animal Industry

The animal industry is part of the larger sector of the environmental and land-based industry, which includes 230,000 business across the U.K., employing around 1,126,000 people and over 500,000 volunteers.

This information pack will focus on the zoological sector. Within the UK ,there are 350 zoo licences, which cover zoos, as well as safari parks, aquaria and bird gardens. Collectively they employ approximately 3,000 full time workers.

The main job roles in the zoological sector are animal keeping, veterinary work, conservation, research and educational work. It is important to remember these roles are linked and not exclusive from each other. For example, an animal keeper will also be part of conservation, research and education work, as well as limited veterinary work in some cases.



# Roles of Zoos in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Zoo are now more than just a good day out to see animals, zoo have a role to play in education, conservation and research.

There are over seven billion people on the plant and 1 in 10 of those people will visit a zoo or an aquarium. This gives zoos an opportunity to help and improve people's understanding of the world, as well as providing support for conservation work.

Colchester Zoo, like other zoos, has four roles:

- A place for recreation
- A place for conservation
- A place for education
- A place for research



**Recreation:** A day at the zoo should be enjoyable as many zoos, including Colchester Zoo, rely on people visiting as a source of income. Furthermore visitors who enjoy their day will spread the word to others, thus increasing the amount of people who can be educated and providing more funds to support conservation.



**Conservation:** Zoos are able to support small, lesser known charities by providing them with a platform to promote their work and the zoo can raise money on their behalf. Additionally zoos are active members of breeding programmes and support work in the U.K. as well as across the world.



**Education:** Raising awareness of human impact on the world, as well as improving understanding, can be carried out in zoos. It can be done through signage, keeper talks, as well as providing school educational trips to help their studies. It is also a legal requirement in the U.K. to provide education opportunities for visitors.



**Research:** Zoos offer opportunities to aid scientists in gaining close and easy access to animals that would be very hard to get to in the wild. Also students are able to complete research papers to aid their studies.



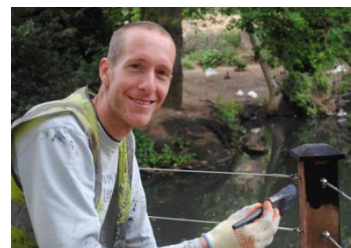
# Staff at Colchester Zoo

Colchester Zoo employs around 250 permanent members of staff on a full or part time basis. During the summer season, seasonal staff are employed to manage the higher visitor numbers.

Colchester Zoo is made up of 12 departments:

## **Maintenance and Development**

A complete building team, consisting of carpenters, labourers, digger drivers, plumbers and electricians – all responsible for the construction of new animal enclosures and buildings around the park, together with the maintenance of all of our existing buildings.



## **Catering**

From washer uppers and cooks, to catering assistants and cashiers, our catering team are responsible for running our many catering outlets around the Zoo, and providing our customers with an excellent level of service.

## **Retail**

This is our visitors' first point of call when entering the Zoo, as our retail team run admissions, as well as the Ark and Acacia Gift Shops and several smaller outlets within the zoo grounds, selling everything from bouncy balls and cuddly toys, to ornaments and furniture.

## **Play Area**

The play area team look after our smaller visitors! Supervising the soft play area, the Crazy Sand Shop and face painting, as well as dressing up for themed events and manning the grotto at Christmas!

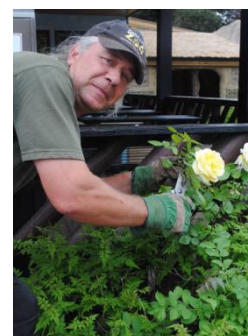


## **Grounds**

This is an extremely busy team who ensure the 60 acres of zoo grounds are kept to the highest standards of cleanliness, making sure the bins are emptied regularly, the paths are kept clean and clear, and the toilet blocks are all kept to a high standard.

## **Gardening**

The gardening team maintain the plants around the zoo, as well as in the animal enclosures.



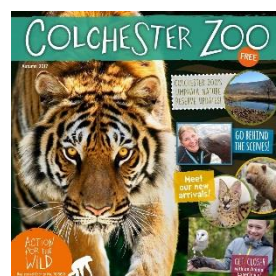
## **Guest Services & Administration**

In this department, they process group bookings and the various "Keeper for the Day" experiences on offer, and sell our Gold.

They are also an information point and coordinate lost visitors and lost property.

## **Communications and Development Team**

This team deals with all of the PR and promotions. As well as maintaining and developing the zoo's online presence on the website and social media, they also design posters, arrange filming for programmes like Zoo Days or publish our Zoo Matters Newsletter.



## **Accounts & Human Resources**

This team helps with job applications, ensuring that all of our staff get paid on time; making sure invoices are sent, and suppliers are paid!

## **Animal Team**

The animal keepers are one of the largest teams at Colchester Zoo, ranging from our Curators to our Trainee Keepers, they look after all of the daily needs of the 240 animal species to the highest standards possible. They also do the keeper talks and presentations. They also do training with the animals to help improve their welfare and the health care they receive.



## **Discovery and Learning Department**

This department are responsible for the formal and informal learning within the zoo. The information signs and the student and homework helper packs are created and updated by this department. They also run the school and home education sessions, as well as sessions for groups. All research is coordinated from this department, as well as monitoring the talks that take place around the zoo.



## **UmPhafa Department**

These staff are employed by the zoo, but most do not work there. Instead, these are staff who live in South Africa and manage the zoo's private nature reserve UmPhafa.



## **Volunteers**

As well as 12 departments of staff, Colchester Zoo also has a dedicated team of volunteers. Managed by the Volunteer Coordinator, these people use their free time to help around the zoo. They help with the public elephant and giraffe feeds, man walkthrough enclosures, as well as engage with the visitors and help raise awareness of conservation work and the animals.



## **Staff Recruitment**

Recruitment may be due to: growth of the business, internal promotions or staff leaving. Vacancies at Colchester Zoo can be filled internally – i.e. by someone who already works at the zoo; or, externally – i.e. by someone outside of the zoo.

Colchester Zoo is an equal opportunities employer and has an equal opportunities policy. The policy's aim is to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of: race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, beliefs, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age or disability.

## **Recruitment Process**

There are several steps to the recruitment process:

- Job description**: Describes the main tasks and responsibilities that comprise the job.
- Personnel specification**: Describes the type of person you are seeking.
- Advertisement**: Job advertisements need to raise interest and be eye catching. Colchester Zoo advertises jobs on the website and through the BIAZA website.
- Short listing**: Short-listing should be done by those who will be doing the interviewing. The personnel specification, job description and application form should be used as the most accurate and objective tools in short listing. Short-listing is simply deciding which candidate you wish to invite for an interview.
- Interviews**: An interview is a controlled conversation with a purpose, it is to gain information to determine suitability and involves continuous assessment. Interviewers want to find out if the candidate can do the job, will they do the job and will they fit in?
- Second Interviews**: In some cases a second interview may be part of the process. This would normally be a working interview to help see how that person works and for the staff members they may be working with to get to meet them and to then help with the selection.
- Selecting**: . The best person is then selected and a job offer made. It is also a good idea to have a second person as a 'back up' in case the first candidate declines the offer.





## **Induction**

Once employed, a staff induction is given. The induction is carried out by a member of the human resources team. The purpose of an induction is to:

- Reduce anxiety as starting a new job can be scary. You are introduced to staff and what they do.
- Help to develop relationships between staff.
- Ensure all paperwork such as collecting bank account details, next of kin etc. are collected.
- Give main terms of employment and guidance documents for safe working practice.

## **Staff training and development**

Colchester Zoo values its staff members and so offers training and development throughout employment. Colchester Zoo offers both in house training, and off site training.

### Courses on-site include:

- Customer relations
- Dealing with difficult customers
- Successful merchandising
- Environmental enrichment
- Animal training
- Presentation skills
- How to carry out a research project
- Observations and reporting data

### Courses off-site include:

- Food and Hygiene Certificate
- First Aid
- Driving courses (fork lift)
- NVQ Team Leader
- NVQ Customer Services
- Diploma in the Management of Zoo & Aquarium Animals (DMZAA)

## **Staff Appraisals**

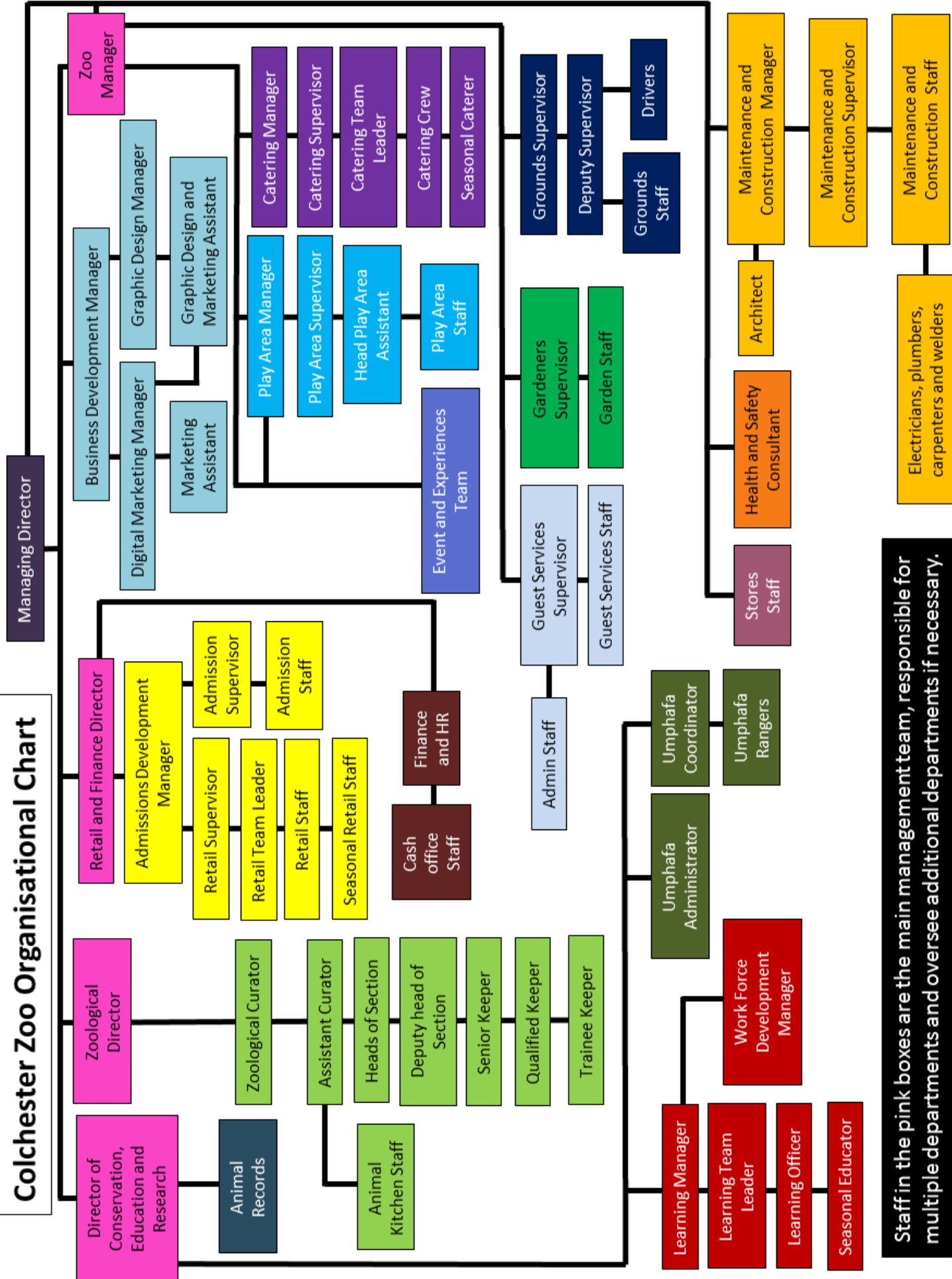
Colchester Zoo monitors work performance on a continuous basis so that strengths can be maximised and any weaknesses overcome—this is achieved through appraisals. New staff members have an appraisal after 3 months, appraisals are then annually. Appraisals record an assessment of an employee's performance, potential and development needs. Appraisal objectives include:

- What are the most important parts of your job?
- Which parts of the job you have done well and why?
- What can be done to build on your strengths?
- What you have not done so well and why?
- What action can be taken to overcome these shortcomings?
- Achievement or non-achievement of your current targets.
- Agreement on your future targets.
- Define an action plan for the future setting further targets





# Colchester Zoo Organisational Chart



Staff in the pink boxes are the main management team, responsible for multiple departments and oversee additional departments if necessary.

# Conservationist

The term “conservationist” is a broad term and does include animal keepers, education staff and wildlife rangers. Some job roles may be very specific and require specific qualifications and experience. Several organisations employ scientists to aid conservation work, who may work on research on a certain species or habitat for example.

Scientists are often associated with a zoo, museum, university or other scientific institute, whose work can be field based and/or lab based. They will often work as part of a team but also complete work on their own. Scientists often have to source funding to obtain equipment and cover travel in order to complete their work.

Many scientists are research assistants who are students who have already obtained a degree and are working towards a masters or a PhD.

There are many different roles within conservation work, some roles can be based in the field whereas others are based in an office. Field work may include managing the habitat, replanting trees, removing invasive plant species, as well as improving water and soil quality. Other work can include population control of invasive species and community support work.

Office-based conservation can be record keeping, organising funds and fund raising events, coordinating people, non-government and government departments.

There are many roles in the U.K. and worldwide and there are a number of opportunities to volunteer.





# Animal Keeper Job Profile

The animal keeper, sometimes called zoo keeper, ranger or animal carer is often the largest department with many specialised keepers focusing on one group of species, as well as keepers with a broad knowledge on several species.

There are several levels of animal keeper, from trainee keeper to zoological director. The following will outline the basic role of an animal keeper.

- Enclosure cleaning and presentation
- Food preparation and feeding
- Care and maintaining welfare
- Accurate record keeping
- Assisting with animal training
- Interacting with zoo visitors
- Responsible – could work with dangerous animals

## Experience

The keeping level will depend on the amount of experience needed. This can vary depending on the individual zoo. The table below states Colchester Zoo's level of experience.

Keeper Level	Amount of Experience
Trainee Keeper	Under a year
Qualified Keeper	1-3 years
Senior Keeper	3-7 years
Deputy Head	7-10 years
Section Head	10+ years
Assistant Curator	15+ years
Curator	15+ years

Experience can include any work with animals, not necessarily at a zoo. It can be with farm animals, rescue animals etc. For qualified keepers the zoo may want more specific experience with a certain species. For senior keepers, it is more likely the zoo would want someone with specific species experience.



# Learning Officer Job Profile

The learning officer, sometimes referred to as an education officer or schools coordinator is the formal education and learning side of a zoo or aquarium. They deliver talks and workshops to students and visitors. Some zoos and aquaria include a presenter team in this department as well, to deliver animal talks. Colchester Zoo does not have a presenter team as the keepers themselves deliver the animal talks.

The basic role of an education officer can include the following:

- Teaching all age groups
- Develop learning resources
- Complete admin
- Develop and deliver public engagement activities
- Develop relationships with schools and other educational bodies

Education and research departments work closely together with some research staff including in the education department.

## Experience

- 2 years experience in an education role
- Education/teaching in a formal or informal context
- Understanding of zoology and conservation
- Leading activities for high numbers of people

Experience does not need to be with zoo visitors or schools, it can be experience gained whilst working with youth groups, brownie or scout groups.

Some education departments have their own animals to use in sessions and it is often the education team who care, train and maintain the well being of the animals. Even if the department does not have their own animals, the staff will likely use animals to aid sessions. For this reason some experience handling small animals would be desired.





# Wildlife Ranger Job Profile

Colchester Zoo's charity Action for the Wild operates a private nature reserve in South Africa called UmPhafa.

UmPhafa employs people from the local area to be rangers, whose role includes the following:

- Removing snares
- Habitat studies
- Animal studies
- Reserve maintenance
- Animal releases
- Population studies
- Habitat creation
- Controlling wild fires
- Supporting students and volunteers
- Habitat management

## Experience

Specific experience is difficult to get as the only way to get that experience is to work on a reserve, however experience in certain areas can be obtained in other ways, this can be gained through volunteering and internship programmes. It is desired that rangers have the following experience:

- Worked with electric fencing and maintenance
- Experience with fire fighting/fire-breaks
- Working in the field of security
- Working with wild animals

## Qualifications

There are no set qualifications that rangers need, most can be obtained whilst working. However there are some that can be gained before becoming a ranger and would greatly aid in getting into this area. These are:

- Full driving licence
- Firearms competency certificate
- First Aid Qualification
- The Field Guides Association of Southern Africa (FGASA) training



# Skills and attributes

As with all jobs there are certain skills and attributes that are needed. Most skills are developed over time, however having some before starting a job will be an advantage.

- High standard of husbandry skills
- Proactive attitude
- Work well on your own or in a team
- Attention to detail and observation skills
- Accurate record keeping
- Be reliable and have good time management
- Full driving licence
- Able to use office software
- Understanding of BIAZA and EAZA
- Follow policy and protocol correctly
- Speak confidently and appropriately
- Strong presentation skills
- Animal/environmental knowledge
- Leadership skills
- Proactive attitude
- High standard of customer care
- Able to use Office software
- Honest and trustworthy
- Good communication skills
- Good literacy skills
- Able to learn quickly and adapt to new conditions
- Confident and level headed





# Qualifications

Depending on the department, the qualifications needed vary. The following is an outline of standard qualifications required.

Trainee keepers will usually be working towards formal animal related qualifications. A recognised while you work qualification is the Diploma in the Management of Zoo and Aquarium Animals (DMZAA).

This is a two year distant learning course designed for people who are already working in a zoo or aquarium. Often the zoo or aquarium pays for the course, however there is usually a set number of people the zoo or aquarium can pay for. Individuals working at the zoo can pay to do the course themselves if they wish. If the zoo or aquarium do pay for the course there is normally a contractual agreement that that person will work for them for an agreed period of time after completing the course.

Most people working in zoos or aquarium will already have a college or further education (FE) qualification. There are many colleges across the U.K. that offer animal related courses. These colleges are often land based or agricultural colleges which are affiliated with universities. The courses provided vary among colleges and include:

- Level 1 Diploma Animal Care
- Level 2 Technical Certificate in Animal Management
- Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Animal Care
- Level 2 Canine Care, Training and Management
- Instructor in Dog Training
- Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Animal Management
- Level 3 Advanced Technical Diploma in Animal Management

It is not uncommon for animal keepers to have degrees or other higher education (HE) qualifications as well, in a range of animal and environmental areas. Staff in education and research departments require a HE level qualification as standard. Qualifications include:

- FdSc (Foundation Degree) Applied Animal Studies
- Diploma of Higher Education in Animal Science
- Diploma of Higher Education in Animal Management
- Certificate of Higher Education in Animal Studies
- BSc (Hons) Animal Science
- BSc (Hons) Animal Management
- BSc (Hons) Applied Zoology
- BSc (Hons) Applied Animal Studies (Top Up)
- MSc Animal Welfare

Additional training can be obtained before starting or during work. These are normally self funded, however some zoos and aquaria may fund them as personal development. Such training can be:

- Chainsaw licence
- First aid
- Customer Service
- Health and Safety
- Management training
- Public speaking

# Getting Qualifications

## Entry Requirements

Requirements for Further Education (FE) courses vary from college to college. It is always best to check the individual college website for their exact requirements. Below are the average requirements.

Level 1 - At least two GCSE grades at D-E/3-1.

Level 2 - Four GCSE grades D/3 and above or a Level 1 Diploma in a related subject.

Level 3 - Four GCSEs at A\*-C/9-4, including English and Maths at grade C/4 or above.

Level 1 and 2 courses last one year and level 3 courses last two years.

For University or Higher Education (HE) courses the following is required.

BSc - Level 3 FE qualification or 3 A-levels C or above and depending on the BSc one of the A-levels should be in a life science

FdSc - Level 2 FE qualification or 2 A-levels C or above with one in life sciences

Diploma of Higher Education - Level 2 FE qualification

Masters - BSc

Some universities require GCSE maths and English at grade C/4 or above or Level 2 functional skills in maths and English.

A BSc lasts 3 years and a FdSc and a Diploma of Higher Education last 2 years. Top ups are done after completing a Higher National Diploma (HND) or FdSc to convert that qualification into a degree. The top up qualification is one year.

Masters are one year and can be either taught or research-based.

Below are some of the colleges and universities that offer animal related courses.



The University of  
Nottingham



# Membership Organisations

There are a number of organisations that offer the opportunity to become members to access information and professional development and support. Being part of these organisations will provide access to people and information and will show commitment. The organisations detailed below have both professional memberships (people who are already working in that area) and students memberships, which have a reduced membership fee.

**ABWAK - The Association of British Wild Animal Keepers:** <https://abwak.org/>

ABWAK a membership organisation for those interested and involved in the keeping and conservation of wild animals, which seeks to achieve the highest standards of excellence in animal welfare through communication, cooperation, training and development. (ABWAK 2018)

**ICZ - International Congress of Zoo Keepers:** <http://www.iczoo.org>

ICZ provides a variety of assistance to international colleagues and enhances communication among the world's zoo professionals. (ICZ 2018)

**IZE - International Zoo Educators Association:** <http://izea.net>

The Zoo Educators' Associations a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the education programmes in zoos and aquariums. (IZE 2018)

**UFAW - University Federation for Animal Welfare:** <https://www.ufaw.org.uk>

The Federation for Animal Welfare is an animal welfare science society and works to improve animals' lives by promoting and supporting developments in the science and technology that underpin advances in animal welfare. (UFAW 2018)

**IMATA - International Marine Animal Trainers Association:** <https://www.imata.org>

The International Marine Animal Trainers Association is a professional group composed of persons active in the marine animal field and other individuals who are interested in marine mammals. (IMATA 2018)

**BVZS - British Veterinary Zoological Society:** <https://www.bvzs.org>

The British Veterinary Zoological Society is the specialist of the Association (BVA) recognised as having responsibility for exotic pets, companion avian species, animals and wildlife. (BVZS 2018)



# Gaining Experience

Experience is often required to work with animals, yet gaining the desired experience is sometimes difficult to find.

Most qualifications will include a practical or work-based element as part of the course content and there are often a number of opportunities to volunteer. Most zoos, rescue centres and other charities will have a volunteering and work-based learning scheme.

Colchester Zoo has both a volunteering and work based learning scheme which are different from each other. The following is information regarding Colchester Zoo's volunteering and work based learning scheme, however other zoos may have different requirements and the role may differ as well. It is advisable to check the individual organisation directly.

## **Volunteering**

### Requirements

- 16 years old (some zoos require 18 years old)
- Be open and friendly

### Role

- Enhance the visitor experience
- Enable visitors to get the most from the zoo
- Provide a learning experience
- Raise awareness of the zoo's conservation work

Zoo volunteering is not a position that offers direct animal contact.

## **Work Based Learning**

Colchester Zoo has two work based learning schemes that are designed to support the different phases of learning and development for students from entry level to post qualification. Work-based learning placements are undertaken within the animal keeping sections. As this is work experience, the placements are full time over 5 consecutive days and will include some weekend work.

The two work based learning schemes are:

- 3-6 month work based learning scheme
- One year student keeper work based learning scheme.

### Requirements

- 18 years old or over at the time of placement
- Have completed or are completing an animal related course
- Be able to commit to five consecutive days per placement week
- Student keeper only—You will be able to demonstrate extensive animal husbandry experience, though not necessarily within a zoo environment.

The one year student keeper work based learning scheme has a taught element covering a range of zoo related topics as well as topics aimed to improve employability and understanding of the role.

# Seasonal Work

One way of getting employed full time is to do seasonal work, which is a common way into zoo work. As zoos have increased visitor numbers during the school holidays they require additional staff to cope with the increased visitor numbers. This period is referred to as The Main Season. This covers the months from March through to the end of October. The period outside of the Main Season is called the Low Season and has lower visitor numbers.

Staff that are hired to work over the Main Season only work for this period, however it does provide an opportunity to make yourself known within the organisation and hear about up and coming jobs sooner.

Many zoo keepers start in a seasonal position often in another department such as catering or retail. Sometimes there are seasonal animal keepers and educator positions as well, however this varies amongst zoos.

On occasion a seasonal position can lead to full time employment, which is subject to a number of conditions, one being how well the person has done in the seasonal position and if there is a need for a full time position. It is worth remembering that a seasonal positions does not always lead to full time employment, but is a good way to get a 'foot in the door' and get known by the zoo.



# Additional Skills

Gaining additional skills can be a major advantage when gaining employment in zoos and other animal related work. The list below highlights some of the additional skills that will look good on a CV as well as help in career progression. Many of these can be gained as part of a college or university course, however they can also be gained independently.

Additional skills include:

- Chainsaw Licence
- Tractor driving
- Presentation/public speaking skills
- Computer skills
- Safe use of veterinary medicine
- COSHH training
- Research techniques
- Butchery skills
- Craft and DIY skills and carpentry
- Diving qualifications
- Mechanic skills
- Gun licence
- Understanding of risk assessments

Some of the above can be done at adult learning centres and online, others can be done at local colleges. For further information visit the local library or an internet search for adult learning centres in the area.



## ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



# Where to Find Jobs

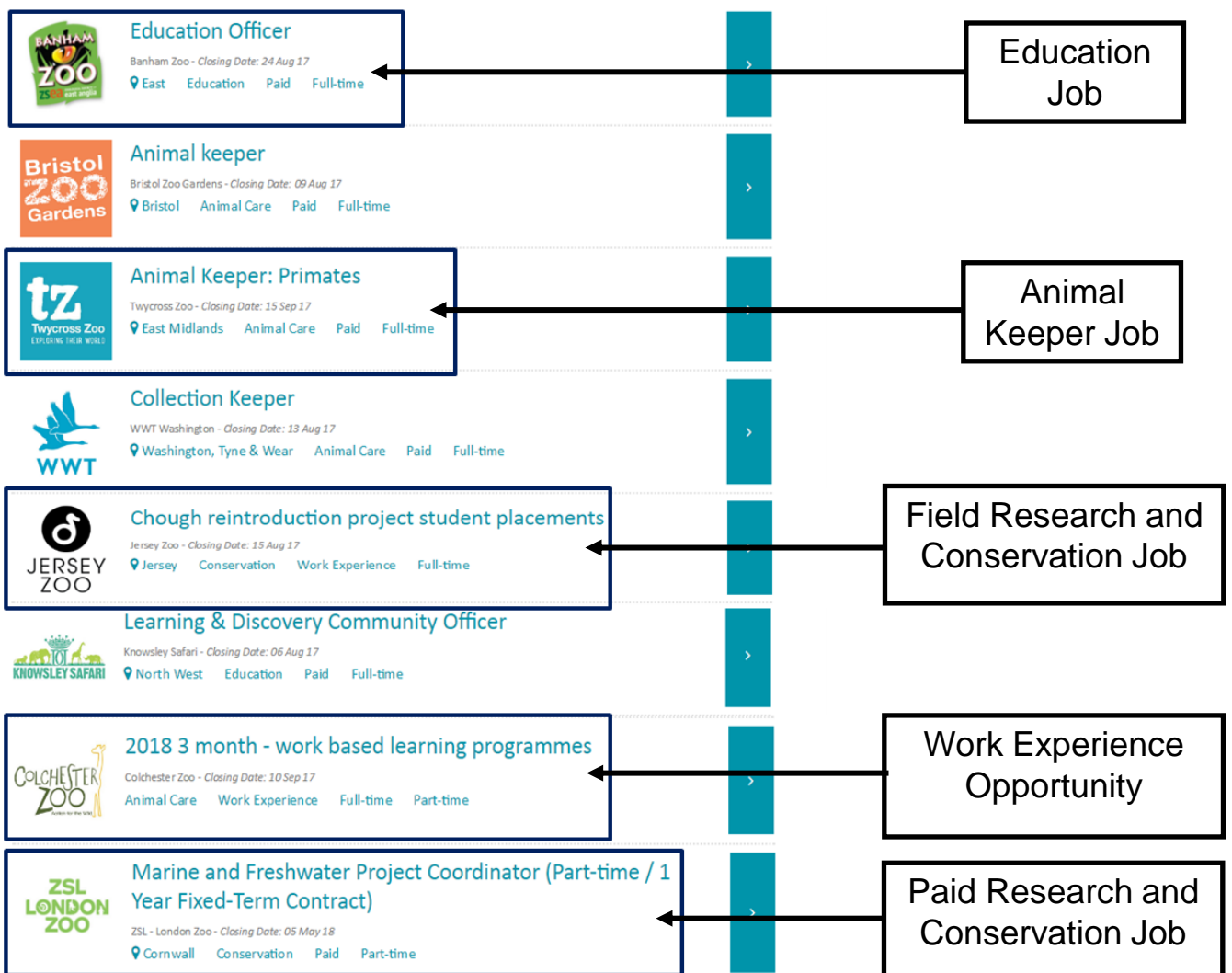
There are several ways to look for animal related jobs, the most simplest is an internet search or go to the individual organisation's websites. There is also a more efficient way to look for jobs and this is to go the BIAZA website.

BIAZA is the British and Irish Association on Zoos and Aquaria, with 116 members across the U.K. and the Republic of Ireland.

BIAZA career page: <https://biaza.org.uk/careers>



Below is a screen grab from the BIAZA careers page from August 2017.



# Where to Find Jobs

To find jobs outside the U.K. in the same field as BIAZA there are two other organisations, EAZA and WAZA and for jobs, as well as news on zoos from around the world, there is Zoo Digest.

EAZA is the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria, which has 345 members across 34 countries in Europe and the Middle East. These roles can be animal keeping, education and research roles, however knowing a second language (French, Spanish) is desired and sometimes required.

EAZA's career page: <https://www.eaza.net/about-us/vacancies/>



WAZA is the World Association of Zoos and Aquaria and has 280 members across the World. As with EAZA there are the same roles and a second language is desired and sometimes required.

WAZA's career page: <http://www.waza.org/en/site/get-involved/job-postings>



World Association of  
Zoos and Aquariums  
**WAZA** | *United for  
Conservation*

Zoo News Digest is an internet base of current zoo related news for people interested in zoos and for those working within the zoo industry. The Digest includes comments and notification of courses and events as well as jobs.

Zoo Digest job page: <http://zoowork.blogspot.co.uk/>



# Day in the Life of a Tiger Keeper

The following is the average day of our tiger keepers. This animal section is made up of two keepers who are responsible for three Amur tigers, five Philippine spotted deer, three warty pigs, two Andean condors, two great grey owls, two king vultures, timber wolves and two bush dogs.



## **Both keepers**

07:45 - Arrive at the Zoo, collect keys, radio and visually check the Andean condors, great grey spotted owls, king vultures, timber wolves, tigers and bush dogs.

08:00 - Team meeting regarding previous day and discuss jobs for the day.

08:15 - Check the Philippine spotted deer and the warty pigs. Prepare first feed of the day and give to the deer and pigs.

08:45 - Clean public areas - clean windows, sweep viewing areas and clean signage.

09:30 - Clean the wolf enclosure, check fences and feed and provide enrichment.

10:00 - Clean tiger houses and outside areas, check fences and provide enrichment.

10:45 - Break

11:10 - **Keeper one** - Public talk at the Andean condors, great grey owls and king vultures.

**Keeper two** - Feeds the Andean condors, great grey owls and king vultures.

11:25 - **Keeper one** - Cleans bush dogs enclosure, Philippine spotted deer and the warty pig enclosures and the Andean condors, great grey owls and king vultures enclosures.

**Keeper two** - Does the Keeper Shadow experience.

12:00 - **Keeper one** - Continues with cleaning.

**Keeper two** - Does the VIP experience.

12:45 - **Both keepers** - Public tiger talk. One keeper talks, the other keeper places enrichment or food out for the tigers.

13:15 - **Keeper one** - Continues cleaning.

**Keeper two** - Feeds Philippine spotted deer and the warty pigs their afternoon feed.

## **Both Keepers**

13:30 - Lunch, start writing diaries.

14:30 - Finish any cleaning, animal training, making enrichment and general section up keep.

15:45 - Start giving any final feeds, final visual check of the animals. Get rid of rubbish and waste from cleaning and secure the section.

16:45 - Finishing diaries and daily report.

17:15 - Finish for the day.



# Points to Remember

The following are some points to consider when looking into working with animals and wildlife in general.

- Competitive - Animal keeping jobs especially. It is not uncommon for some zoos to have between 60-100 applicants for one position and on average 10% of applicants will be invited for interview.
- Emotional - With animal keeping, keepers form a bond with the animals in their care and when animals are sick or move to another zoo as part of a breeding programme, it can be emotionally hard.
- Physically demanding - All roles are active, manual work, working in all weathers throughout the year. Often working outside the standard working period, including night work.
- Mentally demanding - Need to be aware of the surroundings, protocol and health & safety. Some roles involve working with dangerous animals.
- Can be a long process - It may take years to get to the desired positions and some times there is not a direct route.
- Often work for free - At the start it is common to do volunteering before getting a paid position.
- Working in other departments - Sometimes working in retail or catering in a zoo can make it easier to apply for animal jobs as well as build up a skill base and making yourself known.
- Get any experience - Any thing working with any animals or an education role will be beneficial, doesn't need to be zoo work at the beginning.
- All weather work - Be it  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$  or plus  $30^{\circ}\text{C}$ , in rain or shine the same work needs to be done 365 days of year. Working weekends and holidays are standard as well as working 40 plus hours a week.
- Working with animals can be rewarding and offer unique experiences and opportunities.

