

Marine Biologist

Study ocean life on three coasts. Popular, competitive, and mostly funded by fisheries and government science.

TYPICAL PAY

\$83,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$53k to \$139k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 8 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Federal and provincial science labs, universities, aquaculture firms, co...

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
 Biology, chemistry and math. Learn to swim well and get comfortable on boats.
- 2 Biology or marine biology degree** 4 years
 Four years. Dalhousie, Memorial, the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University and Ontario Tech all have marine streams. Take a coastal field course.
- 3 Field seasons** 2 to 3 summers
 Summer technician contracts on vessels, at hatcheries or on shoreline crews. These contacts decide who gets the next job.
- 4 Master's degree** 2 years
 Nearly standard for anything past technician work. Funded, two years, and built around your own research question.
- 5 PhD, if you want to run research** 4 to 6 years
 Required for a permanent government research scientist or professor position.

Pros and cons

- + Field work in places most people only see in photos
- + Your science feeds directly into fishing and conservation decisions
- + Graduate school is funded
- Far more graduates than permanent jobs
- Years of seasonal contracts before anything stable
- Most of the year is data analysis, not diving

Good to know

Canada has the longest coastline on Earth

Roughly 243,000 kilometres of it, across the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic. No other country is close, which is why federal ocean science is a large employer here.

The cod collapse still shapes the field

In 1992 Canada shut the northern cod fishery, ending about 30,000 jobs in Newfoundland almost overnight. Modern stock assessment science exists largely because of that failure.

Optional boosts

Scientific diver certification. Small vessel operator proficiency. Marine emergency duties training. Statistics and coding.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Marine Biologist in Canada, wages (updated November 2025)
 Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 Dalhousie University: Department of Biology, marine biology program
 College of Applied Biologists, British Columbia

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/marine-biologist>



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