

Biologist

Study living things, in a lab or out in the field, and turn what you find into reports people act on.

TYPICAL PAY

\$98,920

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$60k to \$168k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 10 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

**Federal and state agencies,
universities, consulting firms, field...**

How you get there

- 1 High school** Grades 11 and 12
Biology, chemistry, math and statistics. Volunteer with a local nature center, aquarium or wildlife rehabilitation group.
- 2 Bachelor's degree in biology** 4 years
Take the field courses, the statistics course and at least one summer of real research or a technician job.
- 3 Seasonal technician seasons** 1 to 3 years
Two or three summers counting fish, banding birds, surveying plants. This is the real entry exam for the field.
- 4 Master's degree** 2 to 3 years
Two to three years, often funded by teaching. It is the normal price of a permanent research or agency job.
- 5 Doctorate, only if you want to lead research** 5 to 6 years
Needed to run your own lab or teach at a university. Funded with a stipend.

Pros and cons

- + Outdoor work that most office workers would envy
- + Your reports change real decisions about land and water
- + Federal and state jobs come with strong benefits
- Years of seasonal contracts before anything permanent
- Pay is low compared with other science degrees
- Government hiring freezes can stop a career cold

Good to know

The government is the biggest employer of field biologists

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Forest Service and state wildlife agencies together hire thousands of biologists, and nearly all of those jobs are posted in one place, the...

Most named species are insects

Of the roughly 1.8 million species described worldwide, over half are insects, and scientists think the large majority of species on Earth still have no name at all.

Optional boosts

Mapping software. Scientific diving or a boat operator card. Wilderness first aid and CPR. Species identification permits.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Biologists
United States Fish and Wildlife Service careers
USAJOBS, the federal government hiring site
National Science Foundation

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/biologist>



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