

Game Warden

A sworn police officer whose beat is the woods and the water. Armed, alone, and usually the only one out there.

TYPICAL PAY

\$74,060

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$51k to \$101k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

2 to 5 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

State wildlife agencies, wildlife refuges, patrol boats, trucks, back...

How you get there

- 1 Finish high school** Grade 12
 Biology, government and physical education. Get your driver's license, learn to swim well, and stay out of trouble because the background check is thorough.
- 2 College** 2 to 4 years
 Most states want a degree. Some, including Texas, require a full bachelor's; others accept an associate degree or 60 college credits. Wildlife management, biology and criminal justice are the usual majors.
- 3 Apply and survive the process** 6 to 12 months
 Written exam, physical fitness test, swim test, panel interview, polygraph in many states, psychological evaluation, medical exam and a deep background investigation. It takes months.
- 4 The academy** 6 to 8 months
 A residential law enforcement academy run by the wildlife agency itself, commonly six to eight months. Firearms, law, defensive tactics, boats, first aid, wildlife identification and evidence.
- 5 Field training, then your own district** Year 1
 Months riding with a veteran warden, then you are assigned a county or a stretch of water and you work it mostly alone.

Pros and cons

- + Paid to train, with gear, a truck and a boat issued
- + A pension after 20 to 25 years, often in your forties
- + Outdoors, independent, and nobody hovers over you
- Extremely hard to get hired, and openings are shrinking
- Armed contacts alone, far from backup
- Nights, weekends and every hunting holiday

Good to know

Hunters pay the wardens' wages

A federal excise tax on firearms, ammunition, bows and fishing tackle has funded state wildlife agencies since the 1930s, alongside license sales. The people most likely to be checked by a warden are the peo...

Wardens can walk onto private land

American courts have long held that open fields and woods do not get the same privacy protection as a house and its immediate yard. That is why a warden can cross a fence to check licenses in situations wh...

Optional boosts

Marine and boating enforcement. K9 handler. Investigator. Pilot or drone operator.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Fish and Game Wardens (33-3031.00)
 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
 US Fish and Wildlife Service
 USAJOBS, the federal government hiring site

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/game-warden>



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