

Careers in Stewardship

Game Warden

The Life of a Wyoming Game Warden is...

- A 24-hour-a-day job
- A full-time responsibility
- “The greatest job in the world,” says North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley.

Though wardens in many states spend the bulk of their time on law enforcement, Wyoming’s wardens have many responsibilities, as you’ll note below.

Part of the job’s attraction is never quite knowing what the day will hold-whether trapping bears, darting and transplanting moose, flying in a helicopter to count bighorn sheep, getting a deer out of a resident’s backyard, hazing 1,000 elk out of a rancher’s field, talking to hunters, or catching poachers. They are wildlife biologists, wildlife law enforcement officers, wildlife educators, problem solvers, and ambassadors to landowners, hunters, anglers and communities throughout Wyoming. Wardens are considered the local “expert” when constituents want to find out what’s going on with their wildlife and their department. Additional information is available on the Wyoming Game Wardens Association’s website.

Wildlife Management/Data Collection & Analysis

Collect/summarize wildlife data, from both ground and air, to determine distribution, abundance, recruitment, hunter harvest, and mortality causes of wildlife. Work with wildlife biologists and neighboring game wardens on hunting season strategies and recommendations. Sample wildlife for research and disease surveillance.



Enforcement of Game and Fish Laws and Regulations

Enforce/check compliance with hunting, fishing, trapping and watercraft statutes and regulations as well as littering and state land camping, open fires, and closed/off road travel restrictions. Write enforcement reports, attend court, work with other enforcement agencies, conduct investigations, and collect intelligence. Carry and maintain law enforcement weapons and gear.



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Injured and Nuisance Wildlife

Respond to and appropriately handle injured and nuisance wildlife calls which may require euthanization of wildlife. Utilize immobilization or lethal techniques based upon evaluation of circumstances.

Watercraft Safety

Conduct watercraft safety and registration inspections along with HIN, VIN, and AIS inspections. Enforce/check compliance with watercraft statutes and regulations. Educate public regarding watercraft safety.



Wildlife Damage/Conflicts

Evaluate damage to crops and livestock by wildlife, including investigations, data collection, and delivering damage materials to mitigate conflict.

Public and Agency Contacts and Communication

Act as the local liaison between the WGFD and the public. On a daily basis, develop and maintain effective working relationships and communication/coordination with WGFD employees. Make regular public contacts, both in the field and office setting, with landowners, sportsmen, boaters, public-at-large, conservation groups, government agencies and non-government organizations. Provide information and education on various wildlife topics and boating safety as well as the wide variety of other WGFD issues. Develop and present structured educational and information programs related to watercraft safety and hunter education.



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Training

Participate in law enforcement (including firearms and intermediate weapons), wildlife management, wildlife conflict resolution/damage, injured wildlife, immobilization of wildlife, equipment (motorized and non-motorized), working with the public and other training as assigned or deemed necessary. Required to attend and successfully complete/pass the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy Peace Officer basic and annual training.



**Adapted from <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/law-enforcement/field-operations>*

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Park Ranger

What is a Park Ranger?

For many, the term “park ranger” evokes the image of an officer working in nature amongst grizzly bears, elk, and other wildlife. While this characterization is accurate, it only paints part of the overall picture. Park rangers do much more than just observe, track and protect wildlife. A park ranger is responsible for a broad range of duties- similar to that of a fish and game warden, conservation officer, or wildlife resource manager, but within the defined area of a state or national park.

Park rangers are considered peace officers, which means they are authorized to carry a weapon and make arrests. A park ranger’s primary duty is to protect parks from those who would do damage to them, to enforce recreational, hunting, and environmental regulations, and to protect visitors in the park from wildlife and other dangers.

Park Ranger Job Description- Major Job Duties

A park ranger may perform a number of different duties. Some of these duties vary depending on where the park ranger works, while others vary from position to position. Those who work for the federal government are often more focused on the law enforcement side of being a park ranger, while those who work in state parks may focus more on wildlife and on public relations. Here are some common duties that many park rangers have:

- **Enforcing Park Regulations and Laws** – Park rangers have a duty to uphold and enforce all laws—even those that do not pertain to parks. However, they usually only enforce park regulations unless they come across an illegal activity in a park. They do carry firearms and are trained to defend themselves.
- **Write Citations, Issue fines, and Make Arrests** – Likewise, park rangers are empowered to write fines, confiscate hunting/fishing licenses, and make arrests whenever the situation calls for it.
- **Investigate Criminal Cases** – Federal park rangers may train to be special agents. These agents work for the U.S. National Park Service and conduct investigations into criminal activity that takes place in national or state parks.
- **Collect Evidence and Provide Testimony** – When a park ranger makes an arrest, they often have to appear in court to provide testimony. They are also in charge of collecting any evidence at the crime scene and are trained in how to do so without contaminating the evidence.
- **Assist Park Visitors** – Park rangers provide information, directions, and help to those who are visiting the park. This includes assisting them with camping activities (in parks where camping is allowed) and more. Park rangers are expected to be knowledgeable about the park they are assigned to.
- **Provide Education** – Park rangers may work in the visitor’s center and help educate guests on the environment, tell them about the park, and more. Rangers may also go to local schools or other organization meets and do presentations on local wildlife, conservation methods, and nature.

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- **Patrol the Park** – Rangers often spend time outdoors patrolling. These rangers are looking for litter, illegal hunting, wounded animals, lost children, and hurt visitors. They may need to provide emergency first aid when needed.
- **Search and Rescue** – If someone is lost in the park, park rangers are often the first to respond. They will work with other law enforcement as necessary to make certain the lost person is found.
- **Evacuating and Closing the Park** – Park rangers are charged with finding everyone in the park and getting them to safety in the event of a forest fire, tornado, flooding, or other natural disaster.
- **Administration** – Those who work in the visitor’s center may also handle daily administrative tasks, work as a dispatcher for other rangers, and perform other tasks as needed.

Park rangers often have tasks that change with the seasons. In the spring, for example, they may inspect trails and prepare campsites, while in the fall, they may cut back plants or prepare buildings and areas for the winter.

Typical Work Settings for Park Rangers

Park rangers, as one would guess, work primarily in a state or national park. However, they may also work in private parks. Those who do will find that their duties are very similar to park rangers who work for the state or federal government. Park rangers who have become special agents may travel across the country, while other federal park rangers may travel throughout a region. Others work in a single national park, much like how state park rangers work in a single park.

Working Conditions

Park rangers may often work outdoors and on their own. They may work in the freezing cold and in extreme heat, plus they may be asked to go out during snowstorms and thunderstorms to check on visitors or to bring them to a shelter. During a major natural disaster, park rangers are the last people out of the park after they have made certain that everyone is safely out of the area.

Some duties will take the park ranger indoors. Working in the visitor’s center, giving educational presentations, or testifying in court will all require park rangers to work indoors.

Education and Experience Requirements for Park Rangers

The educational requirements for working as a park ranger depend on what type of position you want. If you’re applying for a state position, you may find that all you need is an associate’s degree if you want to primarily work in the visitor’s center or give guides. However, if you want to serve as a full law enforcement park ranger, you may need a bachelor’s degree. If you want to work for the National Park Service, especially if you want to become a special agent, a bachelor’s degree is a necessity.

But what do you need to study? There are many different fields you can go into. Generally,

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you want to study something that is connected to the duties of a park ranger. Studying biology, wildlife conservation, botany, earth science, criminal justice, public administration, archaeology, and anthropology can all be good options. It all depends on what type of park ranger you want to be. Again, those who want to join the National Park Service may want to focus on criminal justice since national park rangers often do more law enforcement work.

State park positions are often arranged on tiers. The lower tiers may require only an associate's degree. These bottom level park rangers often perform only basic duties. Those who have experience in law enforcement may be able to substitute that experience for education. Those with a four-year degree can come in at a higher level. One advantage of this is that those with associate's degrees can begin gaining experience while they work on their bachelor's.

Supervisory positions often require a master's degree or years of experience.

Examination, Entrance and Training Requirements

In order to become a park ranger, you may have to pass a written and/or oral exam. The exam varies from state to state, but in most, it involves showing that you can communicate effectively, that you understand many of the basic duties of a park ranger, and that you can demonstrate basic problem-solving skills. You may also need to pass a physical exam that includes vision and hearing tests, plus a stamina requirement—some departments require their park rangers to be able to run a mile in a certain amount of time or to swim a certain distance.

Once a park ranger has been hired, they will go through training. This training course varies from state to state. The training a park ranger receives also depends on the job they will do. Those who will provide law enforcement will need to be trained on how to enforce laws and will have to go through a gun safety course. Those who will mostly serve as guides or work in the visitor's center may be trained in the areas of record keeping and public relations. Most park rangers will go through a basic first aid and CPR course.

In some areas, park rangers will also be trained in how to drive ATVs, boats, planes, or snowmobiles.

Those who get hired by the National Park Service will receive training at one of three different training courses. They may also need to complete the Seasonal Law Enforcement Training Program.



**Adapted from <https://www.gamewarden.org/career/park-ranger>*

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Ecologist

What is an Ecologist?

The term “ecologist” is a fairly broad title that can be used by a number of people. Ecologists work in a number of different areas and may study a wide variety of different topics—anything connected to ecology falls under the purview of ecologists. People who consider this career may find themselves working in a lab, doing field research, working with engineers, and much more.

On the most basic level, ecologists study nature, wildlife, flora, any organism that lives within nature, and how they interact with each other and their environments. Most ecologists work behind the scenes in laboratories and other areas. They do a lot of research, gather data, perform analysis, and write environmental impact studies. Some work closely with companies to help them develop green technology and processes, while others study how the introduction of other species of plant or animal would impact an area. Some work for the government in advisory positions.

Ecologist Jobs & Job Description - Major Duties

The duties of an ecologist greatly vary depending on what the ecologist is assigned to do. Ecologists work in many different places, so what is a common duty of one ecologist may be something another ecologist never does. Here are some of the most common tasks an ecologist may be called upon to do:

- **Create Environmental Impact Studies** – Ecologists who work for companies, the government, and anyone who is going to build new buildings or alter existing ones will need to have an environmental impact study done. These studies look at how the proposed changes to the environment will impact the plants and animals that make it their home. These studies may also be done when the population suddenly increases or decreases or when a new plant or animal is introduced to a new environment.
- **Work to Create Green Practices** – Some ecologists do research into more environmentally friendly production methods. They may test how a new chemical affects plants, for example, or experiment with new types of plastics.
- **Provide Educational Programs** – Ecologists may teach workshops at universities or may lecture in schools, universities, and community programs. Those who have gone on to receive a doctorate may even teach full time.
- **Help Restore Natural Habitats** – Natural sites, for many reasons, may require human intervention before they can support wildlife. Ecologists will create and implement recovery plans for these areas.
- **Write Scientific Research Papers** – Those who do not want to work outdoors may instead focus on research and the study of wildlife and ecology. These ecologists will often seek grants to research particular species or areas of the earth with an eye towards learning more about that species or place. They may have this research published in various journals or present it at conferences.
- **Create Computer Models** – Ecologists with computer programming expertise may create models that predict how an area will be affected by different events.

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- **Perform Surveys and Other Fieldwork** – Ecologists who do enjoy getting outdoors can do fieldwork. They will survey areas, record information about the wildlife, plants, and the environment, and more. This may involve capturing, tagging, and releasing animals or returning to check on certain plants on a regular basis. Following this research, the same ecologist may analyze the data, or it may be handed off to someone else.
- **Advise Groups on Environmental Issues and Law** – Ecologists may advise government officials, CEOs, and other leaders on environmental law.
- **Manage Wildlife Conservation Lands** – Ecologists who rise to supervisory positions may be placed in charge of wildlife conservation lands, meadows, woodlands, and other environments.
- **Create Project Budgets** – In many cases, the ecologist will need to create and submit budgets for various research studies, educational programs, and other activities.

Where Do Ecologists Work?

Because there are so many different duties ecologists can take on, there's no single work environment. Some do work outdoors collecting samples, tracking animals, and gathering data. Others may be outdoors while analyzing an area for an environmental impact study or while working to restore an area.

However, there are plenty of ecologists who spend their entire day indoors. These include those who do data analysis and research for scientific journals or for reports to various organizations. Some may work at the computer all day, while others may meet with business, community, state, and even national leaders to discuss ecology, answer questions about nature conservation, and lobby for new protective regulations.

Work Conditions

When working outdoors, ecologists may have to deal with the occasional unexpected storm. Unlike game wardens and other law enforcement officers, most ecologists do not work outdoors if it looks like there will be bad weather. Some may have to work in freezing temperatures or in very hot temperatures depending on what area or wildlife they are studying.

Some ecologists may also have to work up close with animals. While these animals may be tranquilized, some may not, and ecologists may get scratched or bitten. Even those who are only studying the environment may be unexpectedly attacked by an animal if it's disturbed.

Ecologists who work indoors may find themselves on the computer most of the day. Others may be in meetings with various people. In the case of ecologists who lobby, they may have to move from office to office while meeting with various high profile people.

Ecologists usually only work a standard 40-hour week. Most do not need to work evenings, weekends, holidays, or any overtime. Some jobs do include travel.

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Education and Experience Requirements

To become an ecologist, you will need to hold a bachelor's degree in a job related to ecology. Degrees that provide a good basis for ecology include biology, zoology, marine biology, environmental science, wildlife conservation, botany, or another related field. Ecologists may need to study math, statistics, computer programming, chemistry, geology, meteorology, sociology, oceanography, and other related areas. It all depends on what area of ecology you want to focus on.

Some ecologists, especially those who do in-depth research or serve as consultants, may need to hold a master's degree in an area such as biology or environmental science. To teach at a university, a doctoral degree is usually required.

No previous experience is necessary to become an ecologist. Those who want to be ecologists often have a love of nature or of animals. They may enjoy working outdoors or solving puzzles through research and trial and error.



**Adapted from <https://www.gamewarden.org/career/ecologist>*

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1. How does a _____ manage and care for the land?

2. How does a _____ impact Wyoming's culture? (help keep it unique)

5. How has the _____ job changed over time? How might it change in the future?

4. What are some problems a _____ faces in his/her career?

3. What would happen if _____ went away?



Insert or draw photo above.

Insert one fact from your graphic organizer below.

Managing and Caring for Public Lands

A _____ manages and cares for public lands by:

Fact One continued...

_____ helps keep Wyoming's culture unique by:

Insert a second fact from Graphic Organizer below.

Insert Career name and visual aid.

Managing Public Lands

Insert information on how this career contributes to land management.

Impact on Culture

Insert information on how the career affects culture.

Changing Over Time

Explain how the career has changed in recent years.

Problems and Challenges

Insert information about challenges for the career.

Absence

Insert information about what could happen if this career no longer existed.