

Ecology

The study of the interrelationships between organisms and their environments



Small changes to an ecosystem can trigger much larger environmental changes

Ecology covers a broad and diverse range of topics. However, it is generally agreed it is the study of the interrelationships between organisms and their environment, between different organisms and the structure and function of ecosystems.

Why is ecology important?

Ecosystems are at the heart of a range of important processes, such as the pollination of crops or the decomposition of waste.

On a larger scale ecosystems are key components of environmental systems such as the nutrient cycle and climate.

Small changes to any ecosystem can have a knock-on effect on many species and the environment. A better understanding of ecological systems will allow society to predict the consequences of human activity on the environment and protect ecosystems from damage in future.

How do I get into ecology?

Ecologists will need to have at the very least a degree in ecology, biology or a closely related discipline. Ecology is generally a field where master's and postgraduate level study is desirable, but not essential. Most successful ecologists have gained significant practical experience through independent study and voluntary work during their education.

What can I do with ecology?

Being such a broad subject area there are many professions that use ecology and many employers you can work for. These range from basic research in universities, research organisations (such as the Natural Environment Research Council) and museums, to working for non-governmental organisations such as the RSPB or the WWF. Ecologists can also find employment as conservationists, teachers and science writers, and even in government agencies that have responsibilities to promote or conserve the natural environment.

Where can I find out more?

The British Ecological Society can provide you with more information regarding ecology.

● www.britishecologicalsociety.org

The Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM) is the professional body that represents and supports ecologists and environmental managers in the UK, Ireland and abroad.

● www.ieem.net