

Zoology

The study of animals and how they behave, reproduce, evolve and interact



Despite our interest in them, mammals make up only a tiny fraction of the animal species on Earth

Zoology is the scientific study of animals, including how they behave, reproduce, evolve and interact with their environment. It is sometimes known as animal biology or 'whole organism biology' in contrast to other branches of biology that specifically study life at the cellular or molecular level.

It can be broken down into numerous sub-disciplines based on the study of particular types of animal: ornithology (the study of birds), primatology (the study of primates) or ichthyology (the study of fish) to name a few. It is a complex and broad subject encompassing a range of related disciplines and fields, including ecology, conservation, taxonomy, palaeontology, genetics and evolutionary biology.

Why is it important?

Zoological institutions often focus their efforts on the conservation of animal species and their habitats. Preserving and balancing delicate ecosystems and

biodiversity is critical to humans as well as animals. Zoology enables us to better understand wildlife and our environment and – by studying behaviour, evolution and higher mammals – ourselves.

What careers are available?

Zoology graduates are employed in a wide range of career areas, including conservation, environmental and wildlife management, tourism, medical research, veterinary sciences, animal ecology, the media, teaching, and science policy.

Jobs are available with a variety of organisations in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Typical employers include zoos and wildlife parks; government agencies; environmental and animal charities; science centres, libraries and museums; and universities and research institutes.

How do I get into a career in zoology?

Studying for a degree in zoology provides many transferable skills valued by many employers, including data handling, analytical skills, and both laboratory and field research experience.

An A-level in biology is often essential to get onto a zoology or animal biology degree. Most universities offer a three year course, though some offer four year courses with a year's industrial placement. There are also joint honours courses, with related and completely unrelated subjects. According to The Complete University Guide, employment prospects are good and Imperial is the highest ranking university that offers zoology as a specific degree.

Where can I find out more?

The Zoological Society of London is an international scientific, conservation and educational charity. Its research division, the Institute of Zoology, specialises in scientific projects and training related to the conservation of animal species and their habitats.

● www.zsl.org