

Module 01 Ecology and Biogeography

Unit 02 The Scope of Ecology

Career Connection

Ecologist

A career in ecology contributes to many facets of human society. Understanding ecological issues can help society meet the basic human needs of food, shelter, and health care. Ecologists can conduct their research in the laboratory and outside in natural environments. These natural environments can be as close to home as the stream running through your campus or as far away as the hydrothermal vents at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

Ecologists manage natural resources such as whitetailed deer populations (*Odocoileus virginianus*) for hunting or aspen (*Populus* spp.) timber stands for paper production. Ecologists also work as educators who teach children and adults at various institutions including universities, high schools, museums, and nature centers. Ecologists may also work in advisory positions assisting local, state, and federal policymakers to develop laws that are ecologically sound, or they may develop those policies and legislation themselves.

To become an ecologist requires an undergraduate degree, usually in a natural science. The undergraduate degree is often followed by specialized training or an advanced degree, depending on the area of ecology selected. Ecologists should also have a broad background in the physical sciences, as well as a sound foundation in mathematics and statistics.



A landscape ecologist releasing a black-footed ferret into its native habitat.