

When I Grow Up… Careers in Conservation

**Grade Level, TEKS Science Objective:**

**Kinder-5th: 3C**

**Topic:** 4 different conservation careers

**Theme:** There are many different career options in conservation. This program highlights 4 careers including park rangers, game wardens, fire management officers, and wildlife biologists. Any personal interests could be translated to a career in conservation.

**Performance Objective:** Know 4 conservation careers, name one aspect of each different career

**Materials:** 4 corner signs, tape, conservation certificates, crayons/markers

**Introduction:** Presenters introduce themselves and the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service/National Wildlife Refuge System. Explain briefly what a National Wildlife Refuge is, what they can do there, where the nearest one to them is located. Explain how the program works, such as holding the boundary sign to talk, brief discussion, activity, and a take home. Ensure everyone will get a chance to talk and to always be respectful of whoever has the sign.

**Introductory Question:** What is a cool career you know about? What do you want to be when you grow up?

**Background information:**

Explain there are people whose jobs are to protect wildlife and habitat. Describe these four conservation career paths:

Park Ranger, Game Warden, Fire Management Officer, Wildlife Biologist

* **Park Range**r- Make sure visitors are safe and following the rules of the area. Provide visitor services and develops programs for the public to learn all about wildlife and ecosystems. Develop and conduct programs to educate visitors through programs like leading hikes, teaching skill classes, doing an interactive seminar with props.
* **Game Warden-** supervises hunting makes sure people have the proper licenses to hunt and makes sure people are being safe, make sure people are hunting the proper species and not going over the limit.
* **Fire Management Officer**- Similar to fire fighter they fight wildfires that happen within or close to the refuge. They also plan prescribed (controlled) fires that copy natural fires to help enhance the landscape for the plants and animals.
* **Wildlife Biologist**- Study animals and other wildlife and how they interact with the ecosystem. They study the physical characteristics of the animals, their behavior and the impacts humans have on wildlife and natural habitat. They develop conservation plans and make recommendations to help the animals in the refuge.

**Transition:** Today we’re going to use our critical thinking skills to correctly match job traits to careers. There could be more than one correct career so use your best judgement and be ready to defend your choice.

**Activity: 4 Corners**

Assign each corner of the play area with one of the four conservation careers. Read a trait and have the students run to the corner of the career that best describes that trait. Game is over when they are tired and/or you are out of traits

**Notes:** If kids choose a corner that is not the correct one, ask them to explain *why* they chose that one before telling them what the correct answer. There could be more than one correct answer.

**Conclusion:** These are just a few of the conservation careers! There’s even more careers out there and a bunch of ways to get there. Getting outdoors and exploring is a great way to learn more about the environment. Whether conservation becomes a career or just a hobby, anyone can be a conservationist.

**Craft/Take Home:** Certified Conservationist in Training Certificates

Have the kids highlight the conservation career they are most interested in! On the certificate, the kids will draw/paint/sketch the conservation career they like best, write why, sign it, and have an adult stamp your certificate to make it official. Encourage creativity. They can even create their own conservation career by incorporating their interests with some of the traits that certain job descriptions have. Example: A kid that enjoys airplanes could be a wildlife biologist that use a plane to spray pesticides combating invasive species. May need to assist kids with spelling and their certificates.

**Park ranger** **Traits-**

* I protect and supervise designated outdoor areas
* I make sure hikers and other visitors on national wildlife refuges stay safe.
* I lead environmental education programs
* I get to take people on nature walks.
* I make sure visitors on national wildlife refuges do not disrupt the natural environment
* I tell people why it is important to protect nature.
* When outside, I look for wildlife to show others
* I have to know a lot about nature so I can teach others
* I help teachers get their students out into nature
* My tools usually include binoculars, a hat, and mosquito spray

**Game Warden Traits-**

* I am like a police officer that helps protect people AND wildlife
* Sometimes my job requires me to wear camouflage
* I make sure fish, birds, and other wildlife aren’t over hunted
* I use technology to catch people that illegally harm wildlife and plants
* The tools I use can include trucks, airboats, kayaks, UTV, even horses
* I enforce Federal laws that pertain to fish and wildlife
* I have to know and identify birds and fish of the area where I am working

**Fire Management Officer Traits-**

* I help fight wildfires.
* Airplanes and helicopters are used to detect and control fires.
* Sometimes I start a fire but only if conditions are right and I know it is safe
* I am always part of a team
* I fight wildfires on national wildlife refuges.
* I try to copy naturally occurring fires in nature.
* My job can be on the side of a mountain, a prairie, in the woods, even near the ocean
* I am always training and learning new technology to be safe on the job

**Wildlife biologist Traits-**

* It is my job to learn as much as I can about the plants and animals of where I work.
* I study how wildlife interacts with the environment.
* I sometimes catch animals and put tag, bands, or radio collars on them in order to learn more
* I Study physical characteristics of animals.
* I study animal and their behaviors.
* I study the impact that humans have on wildlife.
* I study the impact of humans on natural habitats.
* I design management plans to help animals on a national wildlife refuge.
* My goal is to help protect plants and animals.

**FIRE MANAGEMENT**

**OFFICER**

**GAME WARDEN**

**PARK RANGER**

**WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST**

