

# Careers in Animal Behaviour

The Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour



Photo of Miles Keighley by Dr. Alecia Carter

## What could you do with qualifications in animal behaviour?

Animal behaviour is an innately intriguing subject, fascinating and all around us. Since the dawn of time people have observed the animals they have come across, watched with interest and questioned or related the animal's behaviour to their own. These days, this mixture of curiosity and relevance has led to a wide range of available career opportunities you might like to consider...

### CAREERS IN RESEARCH

Animal behaviourists do independent research at universities and many have academic appointments in biology, zoology or psychology departments.

### CAREERS IN TEACHING

Although animal behaviour isn't a specific subject at school level, teaching science and biology to young people is a rewarding career choice.

### CAREERS IN BROADCASTING & SCIENCE WRITING

Educating the public about animal behaviour through broadcasting, films, books and articles can be exciting and sometimes lucrative.



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ASABEducation

The Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB) has an Education Committee that supports colleagues who teach animal behaviour in schools, colleges and institutes of higher education. We provide free teaching resources and offer funding to teachers keen to develop new resources. We can visit schools to give free talks about animal behaviour, and our committee members are always on hand to advise on scientific research methods and the behaviour of the animals we study. Get in touch now!

## CAREERS IN ZOOS, AQUARIUMS & CONSERVATION GROUPS

Working as a zoo keeper is a very hands on way of working with animals. Lots of research happens here.

## CAREERS IN ADVERTISING

An opportunity to be creative and scientific. Advertisers are always interested in the psychology of choice, reinforcement and personality.

## APPLIED ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR TRAINING

Working closely with companion, farm and zoo animals, animal trainers may hold classes for pet owners, assist with training needs and help with behavioural problems.

## CAREERS IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY

From High Speed 2 to houses, most new building developments need to survey for rare species an ecological impact.

## What has the science of animal behaviour ever done for us?

The applied science of animal behaviour has far reaching and diverse applications. Here are a few examples:

In the world of conservation, understanding animal behaviour underpins the reasons for success or failure of captive breeding and reintroduction programmes. The behavioural responses of animals to tourism, urban development, noise and light pollution should inform us and help put in place mitigation measures. Migration patterns and pollination behaviours are used as indicators and measures of global change, including predicting natural disasters.

Studying animal behaviour has helped us to study and understand ourselves. The origin and evolutionary context of human behaviour, the psychology of punishment and rehabilitation, economic behaviour, decision making, social interactions, politics, conflict resolution, alarm systems and even crowd and traffic movements are all reflected in non-human animals.

We depend on animals for our food and other materials. The domestication and management of farm animals and their welfare is enriched by our knowledge of how they behave and flourish. Environmental enrichment programs in zoos and homes and laboratories, pet behavioural therapy and understanding what causes animals distress, pain and boredom has helped to improve the welfare of the animals we live amongst. Recognising the impacts of culling animals on welfare, social structure, dispersion and disease transmission has informed governments and welfare groups.

Animals are our companions, guides and helpers. They can work as detectors, rescuers and therapists. Studying them has provided behaviour models of pain, depression, anxiety, disease transmission, social behaviour and over crowding.

Even technology and robotics are influenced by what we have discovered from understanding animal behaviour. Robotics has two main branches: one modelled on individual behaviour and the underlying neurobiology, the other looks at collective behaviour. Ants, bees, fish, birds and slime moulds have influenced this world, from the development of optimisation algorithms for routing mobile phone calls, to the best methods for orientation and migration.

Biomimicry is the design and production of materials, structures and systems which are based on living beings. So, observing and using animal behaviour has inspired marvellous inventions such as neural networks, how to design the perfect arrangement of wind turbines and shark safe wetsuits amongst other brilliant examples.

Finally, what easier way to attract students to university to study science? Animal behaviour provides brilliant examples of how to apply the scientific method to understand the natural world. What better way to engage the general public with science, then looking at the world around them? Sunday night documentaries, eco-safaris, bird watching, whale watching etc. How many films, TV, books and ballets have had animal behaviour as their inspiration?

**Our Education Officer is here to help: [education@asab.org](mailto:education@asab.org)**