

Breaking into Conservation

Please read this information sheet in conjunction with our **Employment FAQ** information sheet, which explains more broadly about AWC and employment.

There are many different paths into conservation, in part determined by the type of job you're seeking, the organisation you'd like to work for, how long you're prepared to study, what you're interested in studying etc. Keep an eye on AWC's employment page [<http://www.australianwildlife.org/About-AWC/Employment.aspx>] and other job websites, and download job descriptions to gain an understanding of the critical competencies, education and experience required for each type of role. Roles with AWC are broadly divided into either **land management/operations** or **scientific**.

Land management

Land management roles cover feral animal control, weed control, fire management and asset & infrastructure maintenance and management. These roles generally attract people with a trade, coming from a farming background, or with experience as a National Park Ranger, or similar.

The entry level position with AWC is as a *Land Management Officer*, who would support a Sanctuary Manager with all land management duties. Depending upon the size of the sanctuary and number of staff at the sanctuary location, the LMO may specialise in a particular area such as Feral Control Officer, or Asset & Infrastructure.

An AWC *Sanctuary Manager* has responsibility for a particular sanctuary, and all operational staff on that sanctuary. This includes additional duties such as operational and financial planning and OH&S for that sanctuary.

All Sanctuary Managers report to a *Regional Operations Manager*. The Regional Manager has responsibility for all sanctuaries in that region (NW, NE, SW, SE). This can be between 3 – 8 properties and may cover a land mass of more than 1,000,000 hectares and 10 – 15 staff.

The main educational pathway leading into conservation is a Certificate III and/or IV at TAFE in Conservation & Land Management. Some courses incorporate work experience at organisations such as AWC, to ensure students are given the opportunity to gain relevant field experience. State government conservation branches (i.e. Department of Environment & Conservation) may also offer traineeships.

Science

AWC science staff contribute to the development of AWC's ecological monitoring strategies, which guide AWC's land management programs (fire management, feral animal and weed control). They implement programs of fauna and flora surveys, vegetation mapping, ecological monitoring, and monitor the health and condition of AWC's sanctuaries over time. Senior ecological staff will also supervise, administer and participate in AWC's biodiversity research programs, which include research programs with external partners, and mentoring AWC's interns.

All roles in the science stream require a university degree in a relevant discipline, such as a Bachelor of Science, Zoology, Ecology etc. The entry level role is as a *Field Ecologist*, which in addition to a degree also requires further research, studies and published articles, as well as conservation field experience. To assist students in gaining this experience, AWC advertise *Internships* October/November each year, to coincide with the end of the university year. Internships are generally for 6 months and allow graduates the chance to gain field experience across a range of habitats and AWC sanctuaries.

Wildlife Ecologists at AWC, in addition to the requirements for a Field Ecologist, will also hold a postgraduate degree (Masters etc) and have further broadened their research, studies, articles and field experience. A Wildlife Ecologist will oversee science programs for 1 – 2 sanctuaries and may supervise a team of Field Ecologists.

A *Regional Ecologist* would have a PhD, extensive experience and publications, experience in managing remote teams of staff, and extensive involvement with research partners and other conservation organisations. Their experience may involve studies, research and work placements in other countries. A Regional Ecologist has responsibility for the science program and staff across a region (NW, NE, SW, SE) covering between 3 – 8 properties, and as a Regional Operations Manager, may include a range of habitats covering more than 1,000,000 hectares.

General

Conservation is a competitive arena to get into. Places are limited with organisations like AWC, who employs approximately 100 staff that generally reside on one of AWC's 23 sanctuaries throughout Australia. National Park roles are also similarly limited.

Roles will normally be in regional locations. Be prepared to live remotely and move between the states of Australia freely in order to gain experience. Both land management and scientific roles are extremely physical and will require you to work and live in harsh climates (outdoors in extremes of temperature, working all night undertaking survey work etc).

The payoff though is equally rewarding, changing the face of conservation throughout Australia, and making a difference where it really counts, in the field.