



A FOCUS ON NATURE CAREERS HUB

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

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PREVIOUSLY SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, CHESTER ZOO

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What was your role, and how long were you doing it?

I worked as the Science & Conservation Communications Officer at Chester Zoo for almost two years.

What were your main responsibilities?

I was in charge of both internal and external communications. I used to write a monthly update for the Science Directorate so that different teams knew what had happened the previous month. I was also in charge of collating the content for the Annual Science Review and writing regular blogs about conservation projects for both the general public and the scientific community. From time to time, I would work in close relationship with the PR team to write a press release about a project and then pitch it to journalists. Part of my role also included work on events such as being on a stand at Blue Dot Festival or New Scientist Live and to organise symposia for the PhD students and post-docs who were affiliated with the zoo.

Who were the main people you had to work with?

I was working with a wide range of people! My role was to stay updated on everything that was happening within the Science Directorate so that meant talking with a range of conservationists, scientists, curators, educators, PhD students and postdocs, and with the PR and Marketing team members.

What did your day-to-day look like?

My day-to-day in this role could be very different based on the projects I was working on. One day I might be working on writing a blog for a scientific audience and the next I could be liaising with

journalists who wanted to meet and interview one of Chester Zoo's conservationists. I was splitting my time between the Conservation & Science Teams and the Marketing Team, which meant that I got to learn about lots of different conservation projects while also picking up skills such as video editing and press release writing.



Julia delivering a keynote speech at a conference at Chester Zoo

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What was your pathway into your role?

After completing a MSc in Applied Ecology with a specialisation in conservation I realised that I was more passionate about writing about other people's research than actually doing the research myself. I decided to enrol in a MA in International Journalism at Cardiff University and wrote my dissertation on the importance of involving local communities in conservation projects. After finishing my degree, I started looking for jobs and applied for both journalism roles and communications roles. The role at Chester Zoo came up and seemed like the perfect fit for me as it was a mix of conservation and communication!

What is the salary range for this type of role?

It usually ranges from around £20,000 to £25,000.

Is a degree essential to this role?

A degree in conservation or science definitely helps when it comes to understanding conservation projects and research projects. A degree in communication is helpful but wasn't a requirement for the role.

What are the most useful skills to have for this role?

Having good interpersonal skills is definitely crucial as this role requires getting people to tell you about their work and what they do. You want to make sure that you can make people comfortable and are able to build relationships with different teams quickly. Good writing and editing skills are also required.

CAREER PATHWAYS

What GCSEs/A-Levels or BTECs could someone study to help get into this career?

I studied in France, so I don't really know what qualifications are available in the UK – but anything that can give you a grounding in conservation concepts would be useful, such as biology or geography; and English can be a useful thing to study for any roles that involve communication or writing.

What could someone do after they leave school to help develop their skills for this career?

If you're interested in conservation but are uncertain of what roles you'd like to get, doing a bachelor's degree in biology is probably a good place to start. Picking modules that are across the discipline can help with getting a better idea of what you like and don't like.

If someone has graduated university, what next steps could they take to develop their skills for this career?

Sometimes what you do outside of university ends up being quite important. Having your own blog or social media channels if you're interested in a career in science communication can really boost your CV. Employers will be able to see straight away that you have some web editing/video editing/writing/podcasting skills and that's incredibly valuable. Short work experiences with organisations that are connected to what you'd like to do can also make you stand out so make sure to ask your favourite organisations if they have such opportunities and check your university career advice website to see if they organise micro internship placements.