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Wild Animal Biology

MSc

Full-time course for one year

Offered in conjunction with the Institute of Zoology, London



Recent years have seen an increasing demand for training in the wild animal health field from biologists and zoologists because of the need for research into the effect of wild animal diseases on biodiversity and the importance of health in the management of captive and free-living wild animals. The Wild Animal Biology MSc course provides a high quality learning experience in the wild animal health field through practical, theoretical and problem-based teaching, and high calibre training in research methodologies relevant to the study of wildlife health and disease. Wild Animal Biology students share many of their classes with their Wild Animal Health MSc colleagues.

Career prospects

Graduates from the course would be expected to follow careers in wild animal management, conservation and welfare (government agencies, developing and developed countries, charities), wild animal rehabilitation, wildlife related research (universities, zoological collections) and zoo management (collection/section curators), with some students proceeding to study for a PhD.

Entry requirements

Applications are invited from EU and non-EU candidates with a biology, zoology (not less than class 2.2 or the international equivalent) or veterinary degree. Preference will be given to applicants with training in microbiology, parasitology and pathology. Overseas applicants will be required to provide evidence of proficiency in spoken and written English (see page 64). Relevant work experience (e.g. zoo, wild animal hospital, wild animal research) would be an advantage.

Aims

The course will:

- offer a sound foundation in the principles governing wild animal biological science, interventions in wildlife, wild animal management, conservation biology and the surveillance, epidemiology, control, and prevention of wildlife disease
- equip students with essential methodological skills for the conduct of research studies in wild animal populations

Objectives

Upon graduation, students will be able to demonstrate:

- a critical awareness of current problems in wildlife disease with implications for wildlife conservation and welfare, and a new insight into interventions for the management of captive and free-living wild animals
- basic competence in management and pathological techniques in wild animals;
- a conceptual and practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create knowledge, and a comprehensive understanding of scientific skills, including critical review of the scientific literature, and design and analysis of laboratory or field studies.

Course content

The course comprises:

- a taught component leading to examinations
- an individual research project leading to the final assessment

The MSc in Wild Animal Biology is structured around a series of problem-based learning scenarios which encourage critical thinking, decision-making, exploration and inquiry, and awareness of current issues at the forefront of wild animal biology. Insights into novel research and important systematic knowledge is given in lectures to complement the problem-based approach, while practical skills are taught through rotations and visits to selected advanced institutions.

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Project

Each student will be required to undertake an individual research project and to submit a report not exceeding 10,000 words in the form of a literature review and a scientific paper suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

The project will encompass a practical study on an approved aspect of wild animal biology. The project may be undertaken at any place approved by the Institute/College with the guidance of a course supervisor.

Assessment

Assessment will comprise written papers, course work (assignments, casebook), an individual research project report and an oral examination, irrespective of students' performance in other parts of the course. The project report must be submitted by mid-August and oral examinations are held in mid-September.

Duration

Full-time for one year.

Katharine Bowgen

MSc Wild Animal Biology 07

'Taking the MSc in Wild Animal Biology was a great choice to further my future career plans of working in wildlife research. The quality of the lecturers who taught on the course was fantastic, as were the included practical sessions. The course also gave us the chance to work and discuss current issues with researchers and staff at the Institute of Zoology, London and Whipsnade Zoos. The skills gained from all these areas have added to my CV immensely and I now have many fond memories including catching swans for health checks! Since graduating I have used the experiences from the MSc to gain work as a research assistant to an ornithologist in France and to work for a cheetah hand rearing team in South Africa. I hope to undertake a PhD in the near future into avian conservation research.'

Chloe Booth

Winner of the WAB Project Prize

MSc Wild Animal Biology 06

'Work with the animals and keepers at London Zoo and Whipsnade Wild Animal Park has given me invaluable experience which I will carry with me forever. As well as being taught the basics of wild animal care and pathology, I was also able to refine my problem-solving skills, making me better prepared to deal with, and think critically about, difficult situations I could face when working with animals in the wild. As a graduate I now have a number of career options open to me. I have been given a place to study veterinary medicine starting next October and have also been offered an opportunity to undertake a PhD working with Blue Whales in Mexico.'

