Gamekeeper

Introduction

Gamekeepers look after and manage game such as pheasants, partridges and grouse, as well as ducks, deer and, sometimes, fish. The work involves organising shoots, managing and maintaining the environment, and looking after the health and welfare of the animals.

Also known as

- Keeper, Game
- Warden, Game

Work Activities

In managing wildlife and land for game shooting, as a Gamekeeper you will create and maintain habitats and contribute to the protection of other wildlife.

Different species of game birds need different habitats, so you will be responsible for a range of areas, including woodlands, lowland pastures, upland grass and heather moor lands.

You must create new wildlife habitats, for example, growing kale to provide cover for pheasants or planting new woodlands. Planting new hedgerows is essential to conserve and encourage a broad range of wildlife, such as birds, butterflies and moths.

Managing habitats includes thinning overgrown woodlands, clearing ditches, tidying ponds and mending fences. You will also need to maintain buildings, pens and equipment.

As a Gamekeeper, you will take part in programmes to control pests and predators, such as foxes and crows, that are a danger to chicks and eggs. Controlling predators benefits other wildlife, such as lapwings and stone curlews.

You'll also protect the wildlife and habitats from poachers, prevent trespassing and work with the police to deal with wildlife crime such as hare coursing and badger digging.

Many Gamekeepers breed and rear birds. If you choose to do this then you will feed and care for the young birds, before releasing them into the wild.

On shooting days, you will be in charge of the shoot, along with the Shoot Captain. You must make sure that enough game is available. You'll hire and organise teams of Beaters, who help to push birds out of cover in order to fly over the guns.

You could be involved in specific conservation projects, depending on the habitat you are managing. Projects could be to protect endangered species such as red kites, stone curlews and red squirrels.

You might also provide advice and guidance to countryside users, and help scientists in research projects.

Gamekeepers cover large areas of land on foot or in vehicles. You'll work outdoors in all types of weather, usually on your own. However, you will also spend time talking to people such as Landowners, Farm Managers and Foresters.

Your day is long and physically demanding.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

To become a Gamekeeper, you'll need:

- an interest in the countryside, wildlife and natural habitats
• willingness to work outside in all types of weather
• physical fitness
• practical skills; basic carpentry skills are useful
• self-discipline to work on your own for long periods
• communication skills to work with people such as landowners, farm managers, and the public
• organisational skills for shooting days

You'll need a driving licence for most jobs, as well as a shotgun and firearms certificate. Gamekeepers need a very responsible attitude and must pay attention to health and safety when working with things such as chainsaws, brush cutters, quad bikes and chemicals.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay
The pay rates given below are approximate.

• Starting: £18,000 - £18,500
• With experience: £20,000 - £23,000
• Senior Gamekeepers earn £24,000

Hours of work
Gamekeepers work long and sometimes irregular hours, which usually include early starts, late finishes and work at weekends.

It's quite common for gamekeeping to be a part-time occupation. It might be combined with forestry or farm work, such as tractor driving.

Where could I work?
Employers are Landowners of private estates and farms, and shooting syndicates, which rent shooting rights from Landowners.

Opportunities for Gamekeepers occur in rural areas throughout the UK. Grouse keepers are employed in moorland (grousemoor) areas.

Where are vacancies advertised?
Vacancies are advertised in local/national newspapers, on recruitment and employers' websites, and on Find a Job (www.gov.uk/jobsearch).

The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust runs a Job Register to match employers with people looking for work.

GreenJobs is a job board aimed at people interested in green careers:
www.greenjobs.co.uk/browse-jobs/land-jobs/

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes
An Intermediate or Advanced Level Apprenticeship is a great place to start. You may be able to take an NVQ as part of your apprenticeship.

Competition for entry is very strong, so it is useful to have gained relevant skills through at least some paid or unpaid work experience.

Ideally, this would be in helping a Gamekeeper, for example, as part of a beating team on shooting days, or in a related area such as farming or forestry.

Traditionally, entry is as an assistant or under-keeper to an experienced Gamekeeper, although it can be very difficult to find vacancies.

Various vocational BTEC and City & Guilds qualifications are available and could help you to get into this career - see below for more details.

**Training**

Training is usually on-the-job; you might be able to work towards diplomas in work-based game and wildlife management at levels 2 and 3.

Gamekeepers work with a range of equipment, including chainsaws, brush cutters and quad bikes. You might also work with chemicals. This means you need to have appropriate training. For example, chainsaw qualifications will usually be essential. For these, you will need to train towards City & Guilds land based services awards, certificates or diplomas.

Some Gamekeepers go to college on a part-time or day-release basis to study for a relevant qualification. Entry can also be possible after completing a full-time college course.

The University of the Highlands and Islands runs a HNC in gamekeeping with wildlife management. Bishop Burton College runs foundation degrees in countryside management (gamekeeping).

The BTEC level 3 qualification in animal management is also an option. The course has 5 units for you to study, which include:

- animal welfare and ethics
- practical animal husbandry
- animal behaviour
- animal health and disease
- work experience in the animal sector

Other courses could be available in your area.

**Work Experience**

Previous experience working in a related area such as agriculture or forestry would be really useful for this career.

**Progression**

On larger estates, experienced Gamekeepers can be promoted to Head Gamekeeper positions.

**Qualifications**

To become a Gamekeeper, you don't need any qualifications, although some GCSEs would be useful, for example, in English, maths and science.

To get onto an Intermediate or Advanced Level Apprenticeship, you'll usually need five GCSEs at grade C/4 or above, possibly including English and maths.

Relevant BTEC qualifications include:

- level 3 - countryside management
- level 3 - animal management
• level 3 - wildlife and conservation

Relavant City & Guilds qualifications include:

• level 3 - work-based animal care
• level 2 and level 3 - countryside and environment

Entry to BTEC level 3 qualifications is usually with 4 GCSEs (A*- C or 9 - 4) or a level 2 qualification. However, with all the above, requirements can vary, so please check carefully with individual colleges.

**Adult Opportunities**

**Age limits**

It is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

**Skills/experience**

Some entrants have gained relevant skills through experience of helping a gamekeeper or by working in a related area such as agriculture, forestry or animal care.

**Courses**

You might be able to enter a career in gamekeeping through an Intermediate Level Apprenticeship or Advanced Level Apprenticeship in Game and Wildlife Management.

Colleges will usually consider applications from adults who don't meet their usual entry requirements. You should check the admissions policy of individual colleges.

**Further Information**

**Contacts**

• **Apprenticeships: Get In. Go Far**
  National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
  Tel: 0800 015 0400
  Email: nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk
  Website: [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

• **Skills Development Scotland - Modern Apprenticeships**
  Tel: 0800 9178000
  Email: info@skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
  Website: [www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/modernapprenticeships)

• **Lantra**
  Skills for land-based and environmental industries
  Address: Lantra House, Stoneleigh Park, Coventry, Warwickshire CV8 2LG
  Tel: 02476 696996
  Email: reception@lantra.co.uk
  Website: [www.lantra.co.uk](http://www.lantra.co.uk)

• **City & Guilds Land Based Services**
  Address: Building 500, Abbey Park, Stareton, Warwickshire CV8 2LY
  Tel: 02476 857300
  Email: information@cityandguilds.com
Website: www.nptc.org.uk

**Natural England**
Address: Foundry House, 3 Millsands, Riverside Exchange, Sheffield S3 8NH
Tel: 0845 6003078
Email: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk
Website: www.naturalengland.org.uk

**Countryside Jobs Service (CJS)**
Address: The Moorlands, Goathland, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO22 5LZ
Tel: 01947 896007
Email: ranger@countryside-jobs.com
Website: www.countryside-jobs.com

**Countryside Management Association (CMA)**
Address: Writtle College, Lordship Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3RR
Tel: 01245 424116
Email: cma@writtle.ac.uk
Website: www.countrysidemanagement.org.uk

**Natural Resources Wales**
Welsh enquiries
Address: Ty Cambria, 29 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0TP
Tel: 0300 0653000
Email: enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk
Website: naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

**British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)**
Address: Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham LL12 0HL
Tel: 01244 573000
Email: webqueries@basc.org.uk
Website: www.basc.org.uk

**Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)**
Address: Burgate Manor, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF
Tel: 01425 652381
Email: info@gwct.org.uk
Website: www.gwct.org.uk

**National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO)**
Address: PO Box 246, Darlington DL1 9FZ
Tel: 01833 660869
Email: info@nationalgamekeepers.org.uk
Website: www.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk

**Scottish Gamekeepers Association**
Scottish enquiries
Address: Arran House, Arran Road, Perth PH1 3DZ
Tel: 01738 587515
Email: info@scottishgamekeepers.co.uk
Website: www.scottishgamekeepers.co.uk

**Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust**
Address: Keepers Cottage, Tanfield Lodge, West Tanfield, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 5LE
Tel: 01677 470180
Email: gamekeeperwtrust@btinternet.com
Website: thegamekeeperswelfaretrust.com

**Careers Wales - Welsh Apprenticeships**
Tel: 0800 028 4844
Website: ams.careerswales.com/
Related Careers

- Animal Technologist
- Dog Groomer
- Kennel Assistant
- Assistance Dog Trainer
- Pet Behaviour Counsellor
- Horse Groom
- Veterinary Nurse
- Veterinary Surgeon
- Zoo Keeper
- RSPCA Inspector
- Dog Handler
- Animal Caretaker
- Animal Nutritionist