



wildlife management

Conservation, Restoration and Active Management

YOUR PLACE IN THE WORLD



Photo: Jacinda Amey (PGDipWILM 2002)

Wildlife management boils down to managing densities of target species: sustaining or increasing numbers of rare or threatened species; reducing excess numbers, controlling or eradicating pest species; or maintaining numbers of a harvested species.

A fundamental decision relates to the level of intervention needed to achieve the stated objectives, from simply monitoring to ensure desirable densities, distributions and population structures through to highly intensive interventions such as captive-breeding and reintroduction. Deciding on the appropriate level of intervention and assessing the effects of that intervention are the stuff of day-to-day wildlife management. The ways in which you investigate these needs and outcomes are the techniques of wildlife management.

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DIVISION OF SCIENCES

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Some reasons for studying Wildlife Management

Otago University is one of New Zealand's leading research-oriented universities and provides an excellent base for wildlife studies, being within easy reach of largely untouched mountains, fiords, rainforests and wetlands, as well as landscape modified by urbanisation and agriculture. There are a number of rare or threatened species within a few kilometres of the campus, including albatross, yellow-eyed penguins, native passerines, skinks and geckos. The University has a concentration of ecologists active in research on wildlife species and endangered habitats. University staff maintain strong links with conservation and research agencies, both within New Zealand and internationally.

You will be given the opportunity to study the processes and interactions at work in ecological communities, and to develop your understanding of the principles of wildlife population persistence, change, or decline. You will also be provided with a toolkit of techniques with which to gather and analyse information and answer questions about wildlife populations, and you will be challenged to apply your skills to address real-life problems in the messy world of politics, personalities, and penny-pinching. Above all the course emphasises the development of critical thinking, scientific rigour, and a systematic approach to the management of wildlife.

Wildlife students at Otago have become known as "Wildlifers", which nicely hints at a long-term commitment to wildlife issues.

Career Opportunities

The Diploma in Wildlife Management is an ideal qualification for those seeking employment as:

- Conservation Officers – Department of Conservation (DoC)
- Fish and Game Officers – Fish and Game Council
- Pest Control and Resource Managers – Regional Councils
- Scientific Research Technicians – Department of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture (MAF), Ministry of Fisheries (MFish), Universities, private consultants
- Scientific advisers for government and non-government research and conservation organisations

How will I study?

Course content is an even mix of seminar/lecture material and "hands-on experience" in the field. Students are responsible for designing and carrying out various wildlife surveys, and then writing reports about the outcome.

Background required

Most of the students taking the Diploma in Wildlife Management have a BSc, a BSc (Hons), or some other diploma or degree course with a significant biology and/or ecology component. However, recent years have seen engineers, lawyers, vets, mathematicians, forestry graduates and journalists taking the Diploma.

Those already employed in the wildlife or ecological management area are also welcome to apply on the basis of relevant experience. They need not have a university degree but must be confident in, and able to demonstrate, their ability to cope with post-graduate papers. The Diploma can be taken part-time over 2-3 years to allow you to work at the same time as studying.

What will I learn?

The major objective is to train students for employment in some aspect of wildlife or ecological management or research – developing

- an understanding of the ecological basis of conservation management.
- skills in handling, marking, observing and counting wild animals.
- knowledge of the ecology and behaviour of wild animals in New Zealand.
- an appreciation of the practical realities of wildlife management.
- skills in communicating about management and scientific research of ecological communities.
- statistical and analytical skills to collect, analyse, and interpret ecological data.
- critical evaluation of existing wildlife management practice and options for the future.
- an ability to co-operate well in teams, as well as work on one's own.
- an appreciation of the different roles and needs of managers and researchers

Postgraduate Diploma or MSc?

Many incoming postgraduate students face a choice of whether to do a MSc in Wildlife Management or only the Diploma in Wildlife Management. What's the difference?

- Diploma students can take several fourth year papers with a specialist wildlife focus that are not available to other students, including Techniques of Wildlife Management, Biostatistics for Wildlife Management, and Practice of Wildlife Management.
- Diploma graduates can go on directly to do a "Masters by thesis only" (ie. your Diploma year counts for the papers part of a MSc in Wildlife Management). Accordingly, you can graduate with both a Diploma and a MSc in the same time as those pursuing a standard MSc course.
- Taking the Diploma signals to your prospective employer that you have specialised training in wildlife management. If this is your chosen career path, the Diploma should offer a competitive advantage for employment.

profile

DANIELLE SHANAHAN

Working in the wild is, for many people, the dream job. The University of Otago's Postgraduate Diploma in Wildlife Management is one way to make that dream a reality. The longest running programme of its kind in New Zealand, the Diploma was introduced at Otago in the 60s and since 2000 the option to continue on to Masters level has also been available.

For Danielle Shanahan the Wildlife Management course was the perfect stepping stone as she pursued her passion for conservation.

"I originally undertook the Postgraduate Diploma and Masters degree in Wildlife Management to learn the techniques that I might need for work as a researcher in New Zealand. I got more than I bargained for, developing an inquisitive mind and a tendency not to merely accept standard practices and theories."

Since studying at Otago, Danielle's passion and the skills acquired through the course have taken her around the world, allowing her to contribute to conservation in many countries: she has completed a PhD on birds in the spectacular rainforests of Queensland, tracked Asian elephants through the jungles of Myanmar, assessed the suitability of reintroduction sites in China and Mongolia for wild horses, and investigated conservation issues for bellbirds and other native birds on remote New Zealand islands. Danielle now works for the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and is helping set the direction for the growth of Queensland's national park system.

"The course teaches you to actively seek better answers and solutions to wildlife issues – skills that are sought after all over the world. The exciting opportunities that have come my way are attributable to the fantastic grounding I received through the Wildlife Management courses."



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