Wildlife Biology, MS, PhD

Department: Wildland Resources Department
College: S.J. & Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources

Overview

About This Degree

USU is the only university in the state with a college devoted to the study of natural resources, and the degree in wildlife biology is one of the few academic programs in the nation where students can study the management of human-wildlife conflict. Professors in the department have a wide array of interest areas in wildlife biology that students can study and are renowned for securing research grants and publishing their research. The department promotes a particular focus on current issues and concerns in natural resources, such as climate change, endangered species, restoration of sagebrush steppe systems and other landscapes, and human-wildlife conflict.

Utah State is at the nexus of the Intermountain West. With field study opportunities in diverse habitat zones, students have the unique opportunity to work in various landscapes. This geographic situation attracts high-caliber scientists as faculty at USU, allowing students to work with recognized experts in their fields. Students are supported in their research and encouraged to participate at conferences, and the travel expenses and costs to participate are often provided by the department. Additionally, graduates in wildlife biology have an excellent track record for career placement.

Career Options

Graduates in wildlife biology are able to work in the following careers:

- Researchers for government agencies
- University faculty and academia (with the PhD)
- Environmental consultants
- Extension specialists
- Research biologists
- Conservationists
- Wildlife managers
- Administrators in wildlife services
- Non-government organizations

What it takes

Admissions Requirements

Students with undergraduate degrees in natural resources or sciences are preferred.

To be accepted to the program, it is recommended that applicants first contact a specific faculty member with whom they are interested in working. If the faculty member is accepting graduate students and agrees to work with the student, the student can then apply by completing the following application requirements:

Application Requirements:

- Complete the online application
- Pay the $55 application fee
- Score at or above the 40th percentile on the GRE
- Have a 3.0 or higher GPA on your last 60 semester or 90 quarter credits
- Provide transcripts of all college/university credits
- Provide three contacts for letters of recommendation

International students have additional admissions requirements.

Admissions Deadlines

Applications for graduate programs are accepted year-round. However, chances for acceptance are best if students apply between October and January of each academic year. It is also encouraged that students begin in the fall if possible.

Master's Degree Plan Options

Students can receive the MS by pursuing one of two options:

- In the **Plan A** option, students complete graduate-level coursework and must write a thesis.
- The **Plan B** option requires the production of a paper or creative work of art and is expected to reflect equivalent scholarship standards as a thesis.

Financial Assistance

The Department of Wildland Resources provides funding for most of its graduate students through research assistantships, available through professors having contracts, grants, or other awards.

A variety of additional funding opportunities are available, including fellowships, scholarships, tuition awards, and travel support. Additionally, students may be eligible for subsidized health insurance through qualifying assistantships.

Program Requirements

Click here to see course requirements for the **Master of Science**.

Click here to see course requirements for the **Doctor of Philosophy**.

PhD Qualifying Exams:

PhD students must pass comprehensive examinations. This exam is used to assess whether a student is prepared to successfully conduct independent research. The assessment depends upon the student's knowledge in his or her area of emphasis and in supporting areas, understanding of philosophical perspectives on scholarship, and ability to communicate this knowledge effectively.

It is recommended that the comprehensive exam be taken by the end of the student's second academic year, and it must be passed no later than one year prior to defending the dissertation and before candidacy will be recommended.

Contact

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Get Involved

Professional Organizations, Honor Societies, and Clubs

Wildlife Society: The Wildlife Society is a professional international nonprofit scientific and educational association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Its mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. The Wildlife Society encourages professional growth through certification, peer-reviewed publications, conferences, and working groups.

Labs, Centers, Research

Berryman Institute: Housed at USU, the Berryman Institute is a national organization dedicated to improving human-wildlife relationships and managing human-wildlife conflicts through teaching, research, and extension. The Berryman Institute gives students hands-on field experience with human-wildlife conflict management professionals, offers field trips to human-wildlife conflict project areas, and allows students to gain experience in wildlife conflict management techniques, such as trapping and aerial gunning. The Berryman Institute is open to all students, regardless of major.

Center for Integrated BioSystems: The CIB leads a progressive, interdisciplinary effort in research, core services, and education serving agriculture and life sciences. The CIB is where the first hybrid animal, a mule, was cloned, and was named one of “30 Awesome College Labs” by Popular Science magazine. The CIB has a research program with several active projects in diverse areas of life science that encompass plant, animal, and microbe functional genomics.

Ecology Center: The Ecology Center is an administrative structure in the university that supports and coordinates ecological research and graduate education in the science of ecology and provides professional information and advice for decision makers considering actions that affect the environment. The Ecology Center at USU has had a string of directors known nationally and worldwide as premier scientists in the field of ecology, and students graduating with a degree in ecology are able to make important contacts with influential faculty that can help them go on to prestigious post-doctoral programs and faculty positions at universities around the world.

S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney Natural Resources Research Library: The Quinney Library maintains collections of materials pertaining to natural resources and the environment in a number of formats that support the programs of study and research in the College of Natural Resources and several partnering centers. The library has more than 60,000 items, both print and electronic, as well as videos, images, and more.

Utah Agricultural Experiment Station: The UAES is part of a network of researchers and facilities at the nation's land-grant universities and is committed to improving agriculture and managing natural resources for the people of Utah. At research facilities on the USU campus and throughout the state, UAES supports hundreds of research projects that promote agriculture and human nutrition and enhance the quality of rural life.