

“Being paid to pursue a hobby...”

Bio-economy Career Profile

Position: Terrestrial Biologist

Name: Mike Crowell

Company: Jacques Whitford

Salary Range: \$30,000 to \$60,000 per year

What I do:

I work as a Terrestrial Biologist. I conduct natural history surveys identifying species sensitive, rare, or vulnerable to human contact; I am sort of a nebulous naturalist who works in identifying plant and wildlife ecology for government or private organizations seeking environmental approvals for projects such as highway building.

From May to September, I work in the field about 90 per cent of the time. I conduct bird, mammal and plant surveys to identify whether rare species exist in the prescribed area. My survey determines whether the proposed project will have adverse effects on the environment or impact on socio-economic activities in the area. It is my role to ensure that the project will cause a minimal impact on the environment.

From October to April, I usually work at my office preparing proposals and reports from the field research conducted earlier in the year.

What education and skills do candidates need for this position?

I have a Masters in Forest Ecology from Dalhousie University. Many people in this industry have a Masters degree, but not all. University can only develop your ability to work in this area.

Candidates should have good report writing skills and natural-history knowledge. A large part of the job involves



report writing, so it is important that you have the technical knowledge while also being able to write well for the client. You must also have natural history skills and abilities, and be a student of lifelong learning, so that you are up to date in the field. A specialized skill that is very useful in this position is the ability to identify birds just by hearing them. The more natural history skills you have, the more flexible you can be.

You should find out as much as you can about the job before diving in headfirst. At first, you may think that the job sounds great, but after researching the position, you may discover some aspects might not be to your liking. I encourage you to develop your natural history skills by joining a field naturalist club. Also remember: this is a career that is developed over time.

What are the best parts of your job?

For me, it is really about being paid to pursue my hobby. I enjoy working outdoors and look forward to field season every year.