Are you into nature, outdoor activities, or adventure sports? Do you care deeply about protecting wildlife, natural resources, and the environment? If so, a career in the great outdoors may be just right for you.

People who work outdoors tend to be hardy types who enjoy physical activity. Their workday unfolds in a variety of natural settings, from city parks and suburban golf courses to forested campgrounds and remote harbor islands, and in all weather conditions.

To find out what it's like to work outside every day, Career World talked with people happily employed in different outdoor jobs—a national park ranger, an Outward Bound wilderness instructor, and a turf manager for a Big Ten football field. Read on to find out what they do, how they got started, and why they look forward to going to work every day.

Park Ranger: Working With Wonders

Yellowstone National Park is a long way from the South Side of Chicago, where Kelli English, 32, grew up, but it feels like home to her now. From her post at the visitor center near Old Faithful, English, a park ranger, leads adventure hikes, runs science and nature programs, and regularly roves the park to answer visitors' questions and ensure public safety. During the busy summer months, she supervises 15 other park rangers.

"Being a park ranger means being part scientist, part teacher, part historian, performer, and psychologist," explains English. "At Yellowstone, I've become an expert on geology, plants, wildlife, geysers, Native American history, park history, [and] even fire."

English's love of science, animals, and nature led her to her outdoor career. "I'm a city kid, so I didn't grow up camping or hiking," says English. "But my parents were teachers, and we were members of all the museums, the zoo, and the aquarium. I was always fascinated by the big mammals." Now she sees elk, buffalo, bears, and wolves on almost a daily basis.

English often starts her workday pedaling her bike from one of the park's hundreds of geysers to the next, collecting overnight water temperature readings. In the winter, she uses cross-country skis to get around. The readings help her predict when the geysers will gush. After all, "What time will Old Faithful erupt?" is one of the questions I get asked the most," says English.

What English especially loves about her job is being rooted in one of the last big wilderness areas in the world. "It's nature in its purest state," says English, who has a bachelor's degree in anthropology and a master's degree in natural resources. "I love seeing people young and old react to the natural wonders."

Wilderness Instructor: Strength, Stamina, Sunshine

If you want to reach Casey Montandon, forget about using a cell phone, e-mail, or IM. What you really need is a pair of hiking boots, a backpack, and outdoor survival skills. Montandon, 25, is a wilderness instructor for Outward Bound. He spends most of his time leading expeditions across canyons, mountains, rivers, and deserts in the Southwest. The job takes physical strength, emotional stamina, and technical expertise in camping, adventure sports, and first aid.

"I lead expeditions from seven to 80 days long," says Montandon. "During the trips, we're hiking, rock climbing, and white-water rafting. Usually we sleep under tarps, but if it's a clear night, we might sleep under the stars. I see people who have never been out of the city fall in love with the wilderness and change their whole lives."

http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=T003&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&searchType=AdvancedSearchFor…
Montandon's life-changing decision to become a wilderness instructor came five years ago, during his sophomore year in college. He took a semester off from studying architecture to take a backpacking course with Outward Bound through New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. "I wasn't sure I wanted to work at a desk all day," recalls Montandon. "During the trip, I realized I was truly happy outside and under the sun ... and that I could get paid to be outside playing, teaching people about the wilderness, and helping them discover more about themselves and how to work as a team."

Upon his return, Montandon underwent several weeks of training with Outward Bound and has been working ever since. The hardest part of the job is not seeing or talking to his family for long periods of time.

The best part? "Sitting on top of a canyon and watching the sun come up over 800 miles away," sums up Montandon. "I never get tired of it."

Turf Manager: Prepping the Field

Every time the Michigan State University Spartans play a football game at home without field-related injuries or accidents, Amy Fouty scores a personal touchdown of her own. As athletic turf manager for Spartan Stadium, she is responsible for the safety and playability of the stadium's 75,000-square-foot grass field. "I never want to see a guy go down because of a poor playing surface. The field should be smooth, firm, dense, and even, no rocks, no divots, and no slippery spots," says Fouty.

Fouty, 33, has been managing fields for Big Ten Conference teams for nine years--four years at Michigan State and five years at the University of Michigan. Between March 1 and Thanksgiving Day, she works eight to 12 hours a day, seven days week. With the help of one full-time employee and two interns, she does the rigorous, physical work needed to maintain a safe, playable, attractive surface.

"We nurture the grass throughout the year by irrigating, fertilizing, aerating, managing disease, top dressing, and seeding," explains Fouty, who took a two-year certificate course in turf management to learn the science and math behind soil management and grass care. She says helping her grandparents out with yard work from an early age came in handy too.

Although Fouty meets top athletes and coaches on game days, she's quick to point out that being a turf manager isn't a glamorous, high-profile job. "It isn't what you see on the ESPN highlights," she says. "In this job, the most important work happens when the players aren't on the field.... It's a culmination of 365 days of preparation."

Outdoor Jobs To Explore

Curious about how to turn your love of the great outdoors into a career? Here are just a few of the opportunities available outside. You can read about one more outdoor job at www.weeklyreader.com/outdoorcareers.

* ecologist

* environmental scientist/engineer forest manager

* geologist

* land surveyor

* organic or dairy farmer

* recreation or camp director

* tour guide

* wildlife photographer

SOURCE: OUTDOOR CAREERS: EXPLORING OCCUPATIONS IN OUTDOOR FIELDS, BY ELLEN SHENK (STACKPOLE BOOKS)

Classroom Extension

* Before reading, have students brainstorm a list of jobs that allow people to work outside. Have them discuss whether working outside is appealing to them. What would be the pros and cons?
* Follow up the discussion by having students keep a log, for one week, of people they see in their community working outdoors. What jobs are they doing? What is their work environment like?

* What does each person profiled like about his or her job?

Resources

* Outdoor job profiles at Gorp.com gorp.away.com/gorp/eclectic/jobs.htm

* Employment and internship information from the National Park Service

www.nps.gov/personnel

* Read about a landscape architect at www.weeklyreader.com/outdoorcareers.

Markarian, Margie

Source Citation  (MLA 8th Edition)

Gale Document Number: GALE|A170927453