

CAREER PROFILES:

DAVE WALL

CITIZEN SCIENCE OFFICER



AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR JOB:

I am responsible for the Explore Your Shore! and Dragonfly Ireland 2019-2024 citizen science projects. I also take the lead on developing the Data Centre's work programme on citizen science and all marine biodiversity activities.

WHERE ARE YOU USUALLY BASED?

I mostly work from home, which is in Bangor, Co. Down. However my role takes me all around Ireland and the Irish coast in particular.

A TYPICAL DAY...

There is no typical working day as such. If I am at my desk my day can be spent in managing the Explore Your Shore! and Dragonfly Ireland 2019-2024 citizen science projects. This includes planning events, managing the website, social media etc. I can be dealing with queries that come in or meeting with project stakeholders. A fair amount of my time is also dedicated to validating and managing biodiversity data, checking it for accuracy and/or processing data for upload to our various data sets. If I am away from my desk I can be at stakeholder meetings, running courses or workshops, or on the shore teaching groups how to identify and record marine species.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE

PART OF YOUR JOB?

My favourite part of the job is being out on the coast working with Citizen Scientists and running training courses. But I also enjoy the process of data validation as I am always learning something new while I do it. I still get a kick from adding new, validated, data to our marine and freshwater data sets.

The most challenging part of the job is managing the many demands on my time. Often this means having to say 'no' to doing things that I would rather say 'yes' to... but prioritising your time is an important part of any job.

WHAT'S THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB?





WHAT WORK EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS OR TRAINING WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR GETTING INTO THIS CAREER?

A degree in zoology or a related subject is very useful but not everyone I know who works in marine conservation has been through university. Volunteering is definitely a great way of getting the experience that you need to follow this sort of career.

ONLINE SURVEY

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HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THIS LINE OF WORK?

I have been in this role since 2019



HOW DID YOU GET INTO THIS CAREER?

I graduated with a degree in Natural Sciences (Zoology) from Trinity College Dublin in 1995. I then spent a few years volunteering in a range of posts from surveying otters in West Cork and dolphins off the Galway coast, to radio-tracking badgers in the Alps! I spent around 10 years running my own ecological consultancy, mainly doing badger and otter surveys before spending the next 10 years working offshore on research, survey, and military ships conducting mitigation and surveys for whales and dolphins. I returned to shore when my daughter was born and spent 6 years working with coastal communities on marine conservation in Northern Ireland before taking up my current post in 2019. All along I have also been a scuba diver, and volunteer with the IWDG working on cetacean research and conservation.

BESIDES FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS, WHAT SKILLS ARE MOST USEFUL FOR YOUR TYPE OF WORK?

In my job you need to be good with, and enjoy working with, people, stakeholders and communities. It's also good to be able to communicate well, without using scientific jargon. Good organisational skills are also very helpful.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A YOUNG PERSON INTERESTED IN THIS CAREER PATH?

If it is what you have always wanted to do, then pursue it and be relentless. I had a secondary school Biology teacher who told me that if I did Zoology I would be happy but not rich (she was right!). I knew I wanted to be a zoologist since I was a kid, watching Éamon de Buitléar, Gerrit van Gelderen, and David Attenborough on TV.

My career has been winding, largely unplanned, and often unexpected but I have enjoyed, and continue to enjoy every moment of it. I have studied urban foxes on the Streets of Dublin, sat alone in an Alpine forest at 2AM holding a badger cub until our team arrived to radio-collar it, rescued and rehabilitated seals from Donegal to Kerry, spent a year surveying otters on the islands of Roaringwater Bay, watched blue whales fluke on the Porcupine Bank, beaked whales breach in the abyssal waters of the Rockall Trough, humpback whale calves in the Cape Verdes, Clymene Dolphins frolicking off the coast of Nigeria, and listened to Bryde's Whales calling off the South African coast. I've probably spent the equivalent of 5 years of my life on or under the sea, and enjoyed exploring every nook and cranny of the Irish coast both on the shore and under the water.

As someone (nobody can agree on who!) once said... 'Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life.'

