

## Telephone Interviewing Tips

### Phone Interview Basics:

- Keep your resume in clear view, on the top of your desk, or tape it to the wall near the phone, so it's at your fingertips when you need to answer questions
- Have a short list of your accomplishments available to review
- Have a pen and paper handy for note taking
- Turn call-waiting off so your call isn't interrupted
- Clear the room - evict the kids and the pets. Turn off the stereo and the TV. Close the door.
- Unless you're sure your cell phone service is going to be perfect, consider using a landline rather than your cell phone to avoid a dropped call or static on the line

### During the Phone Interview:

- Don't smoke, chew gum, eat, or drink
- Do keep a glass of water handy, in case you need to wet your mouth.
- Smile. Smiling will project a positive image to the listener and will change the tone of your voice
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly

### Three stages of the interview: prep, interview, follow-up

- Clothing and appearance (Yes, even for phone interviews)
- Research organization
- Know the position and your unique qualifications
- Read paper, blogs, news
- Know your interviewer and their organization
- Arrival
- First impression
- Elevator speech
- Body language awareness
- Answering and asking questions
- Conclusive monologue

# ***Biologist, Endangered Species Interview Questions***

**Job Title:** Biologist (Endangered Species)

**Department:** Department of The Interior

**Agency:** Interior, US Fish and Wildlife Service

**Job Announcement Number:** R8-14-934853-RM

## **Instruction:**

1. Familiarize yourself with the job announcement and questions prior to conducting the interview.
2. Please use the questions below as a guide to conduct your interview. Feel free to ask additional clarifying questions as a follow-up to the interviewee's response.
3. Start the interview with introducing yourself; explaining your position and discussing the way the next 30 minutes will be structured.
4. Don't forget to leave time for questions from the interviewees.

## **Questions:**

1. Please introduce yourself, and tell me/us about yourself?
2. Tell me/us about your background experience with endangered Species?
3. Describe a time when you included someone in your team, or a project because you felt he, or she would bring a different perspective?
4. What does it mean to have a commitment to diversity, and how would you develop and apply your commitment at this company?
5. Tell me/us about an achievement you are most proud of and why?
6. What is essential for a team to be successful?

7. Describe a time when you performed a task outside your perceived responsibilities. What was the task? Why did you perceive it to be outside your responsibilities? What was the outcome?
8. Have you received any academic, job related, or extracurricular awards or recognitions that you would like to share?
9. What is your definition of leadership?
10. Please tell me/us about a recent team you've worked on. What was the team's objective, what was the outcome and what was your role?
11. What skill would you like to develop while working for US Fish and Wildlife Service?
12. Do you have experience, or education in preparing, and reviewing environmental assessments? Please give an example of an assessment you have completed.
13. Please tell me/us about your experience in regards of reviewing permits, or proposals for land development projects to help determine the environmental impacts to fish, wildlife, and/or habitat?
14. Have you ever had to persuade a group to accept a proposal or idea? How did you go about doing it? What was the result and how did you feel about it?
15. Why is it important to protect endangered species?
16. Are you familiar with the Endangered Species Act?
17. Please tell me about the Bald and Golden Eagle Act?
18. Please tell me about the Migratory Bird Treaty Act?
19. Why do you want to work for the US Fish and Wildlife Service?
20. Why do you believe you are the ideal candidate for this particular position with US Fish and Wildlife Service?

## Example Questions and Possible Answers for Interviews

By Julie Burwell, SPHR, Gundars Kaupins, SPHR, and Rachel Prine, SPHR

### **Example questions to ask any employee:**

**Q: If you saw a coworker doing something dishonest, what would you do?**

A: According to the employee handbook, contract, or past practice, inform the most relevant authority(ies) about specific behaviors witnessed.

Follow handbook, contract, or past practice concerning handling the potential dishonest behavior.

Don't immediately assume that the coworker is guilty of dishonest behavior. Use appropriate compliance hotlines if available.

Contact human resources for compliance help.

Don't spread the potential dishonest activity news to employees or others who do not have responsibility over the matter.

Blount, E. C. (2003). Occupational Crime: Deterrence, Investigation, and Reporting in Compliance with Federal Guidelines. New York: CRC Press.

Johnson, R. A. (2003). Whistleblowing: When It Works and Why. Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

**Q: What would you do if someone in management asked you to do something unethical?**

A: Determine how the candidate defines ethics.

Determine how the candidate views their role in cases of ethics.

Determine how the candidate views power.

Blount, E. C. (2003). Occupational Crime: Deterrence, Investigation, and Reporting in Compliance with Federal Guidelines. New York: CRC Press.

**Q: Tell me about a time that you have experienced a loss for doing what is right.**

A: Determine how the candidate defines "what is right."

Determine how the candidate defines "a loss." Is there a loss in terms of fundamentalism, social institutions, moral agency or virtuous organizations as a whole?

Fundamentalism: Financial and legal responsibility only “Business of business is profit.”

Social Institutions: Social contract exists beyond economics and legalities. Need to accommodate stakeholders’ interests.

Moral Agency: Moral obligations similar to people. Morality and ethics are part of culture: The ‘right thing to do.’

Virtuous Organizations: Organizations that foster the good society. Obligation to build a better world.

Hatcher, T. (2002). Ethics and HRD: A New Approach to Leading Responsible Organizations. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

Sims, R. R. (2003). Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility: Why Giants Fall. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

Ulrich, D. (2003). Why the Bottom Line Isn't: How to Build Value Through People and Organization. Hoboken, N. J.: John Wiley.

**Q: In what business situations do you feel honesty is inappropriate?**

A: In the Movie “Liar, Liar,” the actor Carey portrayed a lawyer who shared his honest feelings to all around him. Sharing honest feelings, especially ones of anger, frustration, and hate, may be inappropriate and also based on inadequate information about another person or situation.

**Q: If you knew that your supervisor was doing something unethical, what would you do?**

A: Follow handbook, contract, or past practice concerning handling the potential dishonest behavior.

Don't immediately assume that the supervisor is guilty of dishonest behavior.

Use appropriate compliance hotlines if available.

Contact human resources for compliance help.

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Blount, E. C. (2003). Occupational Crime: Deterrence, Investigation, and Reporting in Compliance with Federal Guidelines. New York: CRC Press.

Fischman, W., Solomon, B., Greenspan, D., & Gardner, H. (2004). Making Good: How Young People Cope with Moral Dilemmas At Work. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

**Q: Describe from an ethical standpoint, what should the relationship between a supervisor and their employee consist**

**of?**

A: The relationship should be an honest, open, and trusting one where questions can be asked and opinions can be expressed without concern of retaliation.

Watkins, M. (2003). The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.

***Example questions typically asked of management personnel:***

**Q: You have recently been promoted to a manager position. You are aware of another employee who is using the computer in an unethical way. This other employee used to be your co-worker. How would you handle this?**

A: Follow handbook, contract, or past practice concerning handling the potential dishonest behavior.

Don't immediately assume that the supervisor is guilty of dishonest behavior.

Use appropriate compliance hotlines if available.

Contact human resources for compliance help.

Don't spread the potential dishonest activity news to employees or others who do not have responsibility over the matter.

Blount, E. C. (2003). Occupational Crime: Deterrence, Investigation, and Reporting in Compliance with Federal Guidelines. New York: CRC Press.

Fischman, W., Solomon, B., Greenspan, D., & Gardner, H. (2004). Making Good: How Young People Cope with Moral Dilemmas At Work. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

**Q: How far is too far for monitoring employee movement, within and outside the confines of the company?**

A: There should be a balance between the need to know information about the whereabouts of employees and the need for privacy. Keep up with employee handbook policies and laws concerning this matter.

Persson, A. J. & Hansson, S. O. (2003). Privacy at work: ethical criteria. Journal of Business Ethics, 42, 59-70.

Teicher, S. (2003, December 22). It's 2 a.m. Do you know where your workers are? Christian Science Monitor, 14.

**Q: You feel that you are a very good employee and others, including your boss, are telling you that you don't measure up – what would you do in this case?**

A: Find out what specific behaviors are inadequate. Even if the impressions are wrong about you, do not retaliate.

Baumeister, R. F. (1999). Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty. New York: W. H. Freeman.

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***Example questions typically asked of HR personnel:***

**Q: How do you deal with employee handbook policies that have contradictory values? (or are ambiguous)**

A: If the handbook is inadequate, there are several other ways to deal with contradictions such as

1. Consider past practice.
2. Consider joint recollection of what the parties intended to mean when the handbook was written.
3. Consider letters of understanding that help explain the handbook policies.
4. Consider what other arbitrators, companies, or court cases have done in that, or similar, situations.
5. Consider costs (financial, social, ethical, etc.) of doing things in different ways.

Consult with management and human resource management concerning potential contradictory policies.

Zack, A. M. (1989). Grievance Arbitration: Issues on the Merits in Discipline, Discharge, and Contract Interpretation. New York: American Arbitration Association.

**Q: There is a former employee of your company who wants to come back to work for you. You have an opening for which the former employee is qualified. Should you post the position? Why or Why not?**

A: Find employee handbook, contract, and legal constraints to not posting jobs first.

**Q: If a company has a diversity policy, including sexual orientation, and there were employees who complained about**

**this facet of the policy, what would you do?**

A: According to the Hewlett Packard Case, a company has a right to enforce such diversity policy.

Clark, M. M. (2004, August). Religion vs. Sexual Orientation. HR Magazine, 49, 54-59.

**Q: A Company provided beeper includes several different tones, including the song, "Dixie," and an employee is offended by the fact that a beeper holder chose this option. What would you do?**

A: Follow handbook, contract, or past practice concerning handling potentially offensive behavior.

Don't immediately assume that the employee is guilty of offensive behavior.

Contact human resources for policy help and interpretation.

**Q: If you were new to a company that did not have an ethics or compliance program, where would you start for information?**

A: Check the SHRM website for reports specifically on this subject

Type "Ethics Programs" or "Compliance Programs" on a search engine.

Find existing ethics compliance programs published through the Bureau of National Affairs, Commerce Clearing House, etc.

Check your local library for ethics books and texts.

Check the Journal of Business Ethics.

Find model ethics programs such as the Office of Government Ethics

([http://www.usoge.gov/pages/about\\_oge/ethics\\_program.html](http://www.usoge.gov/pages/about_oge/ethics_program.html)) and

Corporate Ethics Programs: Inspiring the Workforce by Bruce A. Hamm (<http://www.refresh.com/!bahinspiring.html>)

**Q: Your boss has a principle that he/she strongly believes in and the program has decayed. The program is hurting the organization and the boss wants you to still push this program with the employees, what will you do?**

A: The buck stops at the top. Contact the boss to discuss specific concerns about the program. Discuss alternatives.

Baumeister, R. F. (1999). Evil: Inside Human Violence and Cruelty. New York: W. H. Freeman.

## Top Interview Do's and Don'ts

3/13/2014

By Allen Smith

Some of managers' worst job-interview slip-ups happen as the interviewers are innocently trying to break the ice and get applicants to relax, according to Barbara Hoey, an attorney at Kelley Drye in New York City.

### TMI

"Nine times out of 10, the questions are innocent," she said, but they can leave a bad impression.

For example, a manager may see an applicant's address on her resume and say: "I see you're in this area. There's a great club there. Do you go?"

If the candidate responds, "No, I'm Muslim and don't drink," the conversation may become chillier, and the applicant might wonder later if religious discrimination factored into a rejection.

Or, Hoey added, the manager may say, "I go to church just around the corner from where you live," to which the applicant may respond, "I'm Jewish."

The attempt to break the ice was innocent, but, suddenly, the manager may be on the brink of too much information (TMI). Even if the manager drops the subject, the applicant may think later that, because the manager talked about her church, someone else was selected for religious reasons.

"It's unreasonable to expect managers not to engage in any conversation with the individual," Hoey said. "But avoid personal politics, religion, ethnicity and race."

"It's unrealistic to think there will be absolutely no unexpected conversation," agreed Christine Walters, SPHR, an HR consultant at FiveLCompany in Westminster, Md. "It's amazing what candidates will disclose in an interview. We've heard it all, right? From financial to family to substance [abuse] to medical—all sorts of problems, and most of which go to some protected status."

She advises employers to "train the managers in what questions to not ask and how to promptly redirect conversation that strays back to the person's ability to perform the essential functions of the job. And when all else fails and you find you've landed in an unsafe conversation about personal issues, don't panic; just be sure the candidate took you there and you did not lead the candidate there by asking an inappropriate question.

"I often remind managers that we cannot discriminate against what we do not know," Walters continued. "So you don't want to know

that a candidate sings in his local synagogue; belongs to a professional association that indicates race or national origin; graduated from high school in 1978; quit his last job because his boss wouldn't let him try to organize a union; was fired from his last job for excessive absenteeism because he was clinically depressed and couldn't get out of bed."

### **Essential Job Functions**

Sometimes an applicant has an obvious disability or medical condition that may cause the employer to wonder if the person can perform the essential job functions.

Hoey doesn't worry about questions around the common cold. A manager can just say something like, "Oh, that's going around. Hope you're OK."

But what if someone has a cast on his leg? It also would be fine for the manager to ask, "Are you OK? Comfortable sitting there?" She cautioned, though, that an employer should "not go any further in their conversation about it" other than to find out if the applicant can perform essential duties. Otherwise, the manager could be viewed as violating the Americans with Disabilities Act's prohibition on pre-offer disability-related questions.

Hoey suggested that a hiring manager say, "If you get past this round and are hired, we'd want you to start May 1. Is that a problem?"

If it's a desk job, the crutches and cast may not be a problem. But for other positions, they may be an insurmountable barrier. If the candidate isn't able to start on the suggested date, but the employer is still interested, the manager could offer to have the individual join the company with the next group of new hires, say on July 1, provided that subsequent interviews go well.

Avoid questions about marriage, children and family responsibilities, Hoey cautioned, calling these "very problematic." In New York these queries could raise sex-discrimination as well as marital-status-discrimination claims. So don't ask, "What do you do for child care?" or questions along those lines, she warned.

And if an applicant's resume notes participation in a club or affinity organization with some connection to race or ethnicity, don't ask questions about it, she said.

### **Say 'Maybe'**

Do be clear about expectations. If overtime will be required, ask the candidate about her availability to work longer hours or on weekends.

It can be tricky if the business has seven-day-a-week operations, as hospitals do, but managers should be able to handle this issue if they are trained not to immediately say no and not to immediately eliminate someone from competing for a job based on his

unavailability on certain days, even if the manager is certain it won't work out.

"Remember," Hoey advised, "Say 'Maybe.' You win the battle if you get managers to say, 'I'm not sure. We will consider.'" But when managers instead say, "No, this won't work," there is a risk that the applicant may bring a discrimination claim that the employer did not go through the interactive process to reach a reasonable accommodation.

*Allen Smith, J.D., is the manager of workplace law content for SHRM. Follow him [@SHRMlegaleditor](#).*

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## Tips for Jobseekers

1/31/2014

Read these articles for tips and guidance on crafting good resumes, acing interviews and landing a job:

### **Common Communication Mistakes ... and How to Fix Them**

According to this year's annual Job Outlook Survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the top skill employers are seeking from 2013 grads is the "ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization." The same holds true regardless of how long ago you graduated.

The job-search process is all about communication. Sometimes it can be the "little things" that trip you up the most—inadvertent missteps that you're making that you may not even be aware of.

### **Don't Let Bad References Hold You Back**

You're out of a job and actively seeking new employment. Unfortunately your last job didn't end well and your relationship with your former manager is not a good one. Inevitably potential new employers and their HR staff members will ask "May we contact your former supervisor?" When they do, and you're not certain of the type of recommendation you'll receive (and fear it may not be a good one), what should you say?

### **Responding to Tough Interview Questions**

It's the most dreaded part of the interview—and for good reason: Dealing with questions you don't expect from potential managers and their HR colleagues. Even if you don't know what those questions will be, there are steps you can take to anticipate and deal with tough questions

### **Lessons in On-ramping from Someone Who Has 'Been There, Done That'**

Veressa Hendrix, PHR, is an HR professional with 20 years of experience who is on-ramping back into the workforce after choosing to take a break four years ago from a progressive career. While she seeks a new role, she volunteers with (and is a client of) Charlotte Works, a workforce development board for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County in North Carolina.

### **Tattoos and Piercings: The Pros and Cons of Personal Expression**

Body art is becoming increasingly prevalent. It's also increasingly problematic for both job seekers and their prospective employees. While some organizations in sectors like the entertainment industry embrace body art, many employers still believe such expression conflicts with customer and client expectations.

### **Job Seeker Tips: Be First, Explore All Channels**

Amanda Augustine is a job search expert with TheLadders, in New York. She offers some tips for HR professionals seeking employment in today's competitive job market.

### **You're Not Alone: Most Fear Something About Job Interviews**

Do you get nervous just thinking about an impending job interview? Are you worried that you will be considered overqualified? Do you wake up in the middle of the night worried about the potential tough—or tricky—questions you might be asked?

### **Promote Yourself**

In today's continuing competitive work environment, HR job seekers are understandably concerned about standing out from the competition. Yet many fail to adequately promote themselves and their talent to prospective employers.

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