

## Fish Careers and Education

**Bonus content from the December 2009 AFI magazine article "Careers for Fishlovers."**

What type of education does it take to get a fish-related career? Here are some of the educational requirements for careers being a public aquarist, marine biologist, wholesaler and fish photographer, along with a very helpful hint on being a fish retailer.

### Educational Requirements

#### Public Aquarist by J. Charles Delbeek

To become an aquarist, it helps to also be a plumber, electrician, biologist, mechanic and even an animal psychologist. While many institutions require at least a college degree, some will accept equivalent experience, such as being an accomplished hobbyist with a specialty in a certain group of animals; in some cases, a degree in biology is not even a requirement.

#### Marine Biologist by Neale Monks

You will need a broad scientific education, not just courses in marine biology. Study mathematics, statistics, computer modeling, biochemistry, genetics, geology and oceanography. Foreign languages help, too. Your postgraduate degree is where you'll specialize. Choose a school with a good reputation and a course you'll enjoy. Expect to spend every hour of your time working in the lab or on your dissertation. Above all, make yourself useful! Reputation is everything, and if your professors recognize your enthusiasm and ability, that will open doors for you in the future. Not only will they write great letters of recommendation, but they'll also introduce you to potential employers.

#### Fish Photographer by Ed Greenberg

While photography does not require a trade education, it's definitely a great idea to take at least some beginner classes to understand the photography terminology and basic uses of most popular equipment. Even though advances in digital photography have made it easier to learn photography "on the fly" (using the instant results a digital camera provides to receive feedback), nothing can give you a better foundation of photographic principles than a course taught by a professional photographer. Another way to learn is to join one of the many online photography communities, including at least one specialized in the art of aquatic and aquarium photography ([aquatic-photography.com](http://aquatic-photography.com)). Learning from your peers can accelerate your learning curve by leaps and bounds. This also gives you real-time feedback from a large group of individuals.

#### Fish Wholesaler by David A. Lass

Knowing about fish and how to deal with people make up the only education you need to be in the fish wholesaling business. My education of four years of college and three in graduate school have nothing to do with wholesaling fish. Be aware that keeping fish as a hobbyist and being successful keeping and selling fish on the wholesale or retail level are completely different. In the business, you are handling large quantities of fish, usually fairly crowded in 30- or 40-gallon breeder tanks at a wholesaler and in smaller tanks at retail. Medicating the fish is a necessity much of the time, and you really have to know what you are doing in this department. It would, of course, be helpful if you have gotten some education in the life sciences, either biology or ichthyology. Some colleges have courses on aquatics, and a few even have courses on fish diseases. Anything you can learn in these areas will be very helpful.

### Helpful Hint

#### Being a Successful Retailer by Mike Wickham

Let me tip you to some common mistakes made by hobbyists turned into business people. Maintain store hours that suit customer schedules — not yours. Sell the products that customers want and need, not just your favorites. Lose your hobbyist mentality — buying cheap isn't always a good thing. Don't be afraid to stock top-quality, high-end goods. People will pay more for the good stuff if you tell them why they should. And the biggest mistake: Don't start too small. Undercapitalized businesses are not as likely to succeed.

Want to read the full story? Pick up the December 2009 issue of Aquarium Fish International, or subscribe to get 12 months of articles just like this.