

State Game Warden Cadet

Career Information Booklet



Please visit our website at pa.gov/pgc for additional information.

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State Game Warden

Career Information

Interested in Law Enforcement?

Individuals with an interest in law enforcement are encouraged to explore the dynamic and rewarding field of wildlife conservation, where they may find exciting career opportunities as Pennsylvania State Game Wardens! These dedicated professionals are responsible for enforcing laws that protect our natural resources and regulate outdoor recreational activities, specifically hunting and trapping.





Prospective candidates should carefully consider both the appeal of working in the outdoors and the inherent challenges and risks associated with this career. Success in this role requires a strong sense of duty, the ability to meet demanding expectations, and a willingness to adapt to a paramilitary work environment. The following information is designed to help you determine whether you possess the qualities and commitment necessary to thrive in this challenging yet deeply fulfilling profession.

DUTIES OF A STATE GAME WARDEN

Pennsylvania State Game Wardens serve as the Pennsylvania Game Commission's field officers, each assigned to a district encompassing approximately 350 square miles. They are responsible for administering a diverse range of Commission programs, with duties that vary based on the day, season, and regional needs. Although State Game Wardens are credentialed law enforcement officers with police authority and statewide jurisdiction, their primary focus is enforcing the Commonwealth's Game and Wildlife Code, as well as applicable federal laws and state regulations related to natural resource conservation.



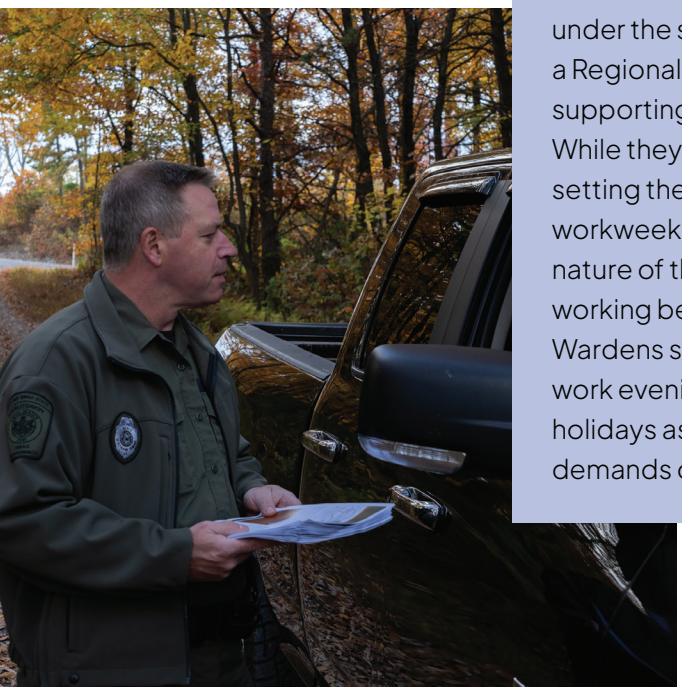
In the course of their patrols, Game Wardens may identity violations, apprehend and arrest offenders, conduct investigations, and prepare cases for prosecution. They are expected to present their findings and evidence in court, maintaining detailed and professional records that reflect the standards of a sworn law enforcement officer.

Beyond enforcement duties, Game Wardens are actively involved in servicing nuisance wildlife complaints, providing conservation education, and administering the Hunter-Trapper Education Program. They also participate in wildlife management activities, which may include handling deceased wildlife and collecting biological samples for research and monitoring purposes.
As frontline representatives of the agency, Wardens must be prepared to engage with landowners, stakeholders, and the general public to address concerns related to wildlife and conservation.



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To support their duties, the Game Commission provides State Game Wardens with all necessary equipment, including uniforms, worn in accordance with grooming standards, firearms maintained in a state of operational readiness, a fully-equipped patrol vehicle, personal computer, etc. Game Wardens operate from their residences and receive a subsidy for rental office space.



State Game Wardens operate under the supervision of a Regional Director and supporting supervisory staff. While they have flexibility in setting their own 40-hour workweek schedules, the nature of the job often requires working beyond standard hours. Wardens should expect to work evenings, weekends, and holidays as needed to fulfill the demands of the position.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

State Game Wardens have a variety of career advancement opportunities within the Pennsylvania Game Commission, including promotion to supervisory, specialized, and managerial roles. These may include positions such as K-9 Special Investigators, who are responsible for conducting complex wildlife crime investigations, providing technical and K-9 support for evidence recovery and tracking, and assisting other law enforcement agencies. Wardens may also move into roles such as Law Enforcement Coordinator, which involve administrative oversight of the agency's law enforcement and training programs.

SALARY

A first year State Game Warden makes $68K on average. This number can be higher or lower based on the area and schedule of the Warden.

This number is made up of the list below and does not include any bonuses or additional stipends:

- Base Salary
- Voluntary Overtime
- Standard Overtime
- Stand-by time

Additionally, some may serve on the Woodland Tracking Team, a specialized unit trained to track individuals and conduct search and rescue operations in remote and challenging environments. In addition to these roles, there are numerous other opportunities, such as a variety of instructor roles, that allow Wardens to expand their professional expertise and take on greater responsibilities in support of the agency's mission to protect and conserve Pennsylvania's wildlife resources.

BENEFITS & INCENTIVES

- Health Care Coverage
- Vision, Dental & Prescription Plans
- Paid Annual & Sick Leave, including Holidays, in First Year
- Flexible Shifts and Scheduling
- In-Home Office & Office Reimbursement
- Meal Allowance
- Take Home Patrol Vehicle
- Early Retirement
- Training, Promotion & Career Advancement Opportunities
- All Uniforms & Equipment Provided

SELF ASSESSMENT

A career as a Pennsylvania State Game Warden offers unique opportunities to engage in meaningful and rewarding work. However, it also presents significant challenges, and it is important that you carefully consider these realities early in the selection process. Before pursuing this career path, please ensure you are prepared to:

- Perform the full range of law enforcement duties, including enforcing state and federal wildlife laws and regulations, conducting patrols, investigation violations, issuing citations, making arrests, executing search warrants, testifying in court, and collaborating with other law enforcement agencies.
- Work evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays.
- Spend extended periods outdoors in all weather conditions.
- Enter remote and potentially hazardous areas alone to confront, question, or arrest individuals—some of whom may be armed, physically larger, or uncooperative.
- Remain professional and composed when faced with verbal abuse or confrontation.

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- Investigate serious incidents, including fatal hunting-related shootings.
- Use deadly force when absolutely necessary to protect yourself or others.
- Successfully complete demanding physical and academic training requirements.
- Relocate within the Commonwealth, which may involve changes that affect your family, such as new schools or employment for a spouse.



If, after careful self-evaluation, you are confident in your ability and willingness to meet these demands, we encourage you to continue reading for detailed information on the qualifications, requirements, and testing process for becoming a State Game Warden Cadet.

State Game Warden

Cadet Information

BASIC REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Graduation from high school or an accredited GED certification
- Possession of an active Class C driver's license
- Proof of successful completion of a state-level hunter safety course
- Note: Candidates do not have to be a Pennsylvania resident to apply. Applicants are required to be at least 21 years of age as of the date of admission to the Ross Leffler School of Conservation.

Applicants for these civil service-covered positions must be at least 21 years of age as of the date of admission to the Ross Leffler School of Conservation and in excellent physical condition, possess a solid understanding of hunting and outdoor activities, and demonstrate the ability to maintain effective working relationships with colleagues and members of the public.



DISCLAIMER

Please note: The Pennsylvania Game Commission is not responsible for this information. Individuals are strongly advised to consult with a physician before beginning any health-related, physical fitness, exercise, running or swimming program. All the information included is intended solely for educational and reference purposes.

TESTING OVERVIEW

Applicants must successfully complete a competitive written examination administered by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Office of Administration. Exam questions are based on information in Today's Hunter & Trapper in Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Hunting & Trapping Digest. In addition to reading these publications thoroughly, a study guide can be found on our website. Candidates must also pass a series of pre-employment evaluations conducted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, including a physical fitness test, medical examination, and psychological evaluation. A comprehensive background investigation, including a review of character and criminal history, is also conducted prior to final appointment.



The physical fitness/agility assessments and medical examination are designed to determine a candidate's ability to perform the essential job tasks of a State Game Warden Cadet safely and effectively.

The following is an explanation of the physical fitness/agility testing process and how the tests are evaluated as well as standards a candidate must meet.

The following information provides an overview of the physical fitness assessment, medical examination, and psychological evaluation. It includes recommended exercises to help you prepare independently for the physical fitness test, along with the detailed explanation of the testing process. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review this information in its entirety to gain a clear understanding of the expectations and to adequately prepare for the physical fitness test and medical examination.

State Game Warden Cadets must effectively perform physically demanding tasks which include:

- Using sidearms, rifles, shotguns, and other devices commonly used in law enforcement
- Walking/running over difficult terrain in all weather conditions
- Climbing over, crawling under, or moving around obstacles
- Lifting, carrying, pushing, and dragging up to 120 pounds
- Forcing your way through barriers
- Subduing and restraining combative subjects
- Using defense and control tactics and disarming
- Kneeling, squatting, bending, twisting, and jumping
- Swimming/wading

YOU ARE STRONGLY ENCOURAGED TO BEGIN TRAINING EARLY IN PREPARATION FOR THIS TESTING.



PHYSICAL FITNESS/AGILITY TESTS AND MINIMUM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS:

- Bench Press
- Vertical Jump
- Sit-ups (one minute reps)
- Push-ups (one minute reps)
- 300 Meter Run
- 1.5 Mile Run

These exercises will be administered in approximately the order listed above, with a cool-down/recovery period provided after each event. Candidates should arrive in comfortable workout attire and bring water for hydration. Headphones and smartwatches are permitted during testing.

PREPARATION FOR TESTING

To ensure optimal performance on testing day, candidates are encouraged to follow these preparation guidelines:

- **Get Adequate Rest**
  Ensure a full night's sleep prior to testing. Arrive at the test site well-rested and alert.
- **Plan Your Arrival**
  Allow sufficient travel time to avoid rushing. Plan to arrive at least 20 minutes before the scheduled reporting time.
- **Warm-Up Routine**
  Engage in a proper warm-up before testing. This should include stretching the major muscle groups, including the arms, shoulders, legs, back, and abdomen. Consistent warm-up routines enhance flexibility, improve test performance, and reduce the risk of injury.
- **Dress Appropriately**
  Wear comfortable, flexible clothing that allows for unrestricted movement. Bringing a bottle of water is also recommended.
- **Meal Considerations**
  Avoid consuming a heavy meal within 2–3 hours prior to testing.
- **Avoid Tobacco Use**
  Refrain from smoking or using tobacco products for at least one hour before the test. Smoking or tobacco use is not permitted at any time during the testing process.
- **Recovery Between Tests**
  Active recovery is recommended between test components. Light walking and gentle stretching can help maintain flexibility and circulation.

PERFORMING THE PHYSICAL TESTS

The procedure and scoring of each test is explained below. The tests are scored according to age and gender norms.

EVENT	Male requirements by age				Female requirements by age			
	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59
Bench Press (% bodyweight)	.93	.83	.76	.68	.56	.51	.47	.42
Push-Ups (1-minute reps)	26	20	15	10	13	9	7	n/a
Sit Ups (1-minute reps)	35	32	27	21	30	22	17	12
Vertical Jump (inches)	18	18	14.5	13	13.5	11.1	9	n/a
300 Meter Run (seconds)	62.1	63	77	87	75	82	106.7	106.7
1.5 mile Run (time)	13:15	13:44	14:34	15:50	15:46	16:42	17:29	19:10

VERTICAL JUMP

1. Candidate stands with one side toward the wall and reaches up as high as possible to mark his/her standard reach on the yardstick.
2. Candidate jumps as high as possible and marks the spot on the wall above his/her standard reach mark. Prior to jump, one foot must remain stationary on the floor.
3. Score is the difference between the standard reach and top of the jump mark, to the nearest half inch.
4. The best of three trials is the score.

PUSH-UP TEST

1. The hands are placed slightly wider than shoulder width apart, with fingers pointing forward. A three-inch sponge or block will be placed under the sternum.
2. Starting from the up position (elbows extended), the candidate must keep the back straight at all times and lower the body to the floor until the chest touches the sponge or block. Candidate then returns to the up position. This is one repetition. Resting should be done only in the up position. Both hands must remain in contact with the floor at all times.
3. The total number of correct push-ups in one minute is recorded as the score.

SIT-UP TEST

1. The candidate starts by lying on the back, knees bent, heels flat on the floor, with the fingers laced and held behind the head. Avoid pulling on the head with the hands. The buttocks must remain on the floor with no thrusting of the hips.
2. The feet are held down firmly (by another person).
3. The candidate then performs as many correct sit-ups as possible in one minute.
4. In the up position, the candidate should touch elbows to knees and then return until the shoulder blades touch the floor.
5. Score is total number of correct sit-ups.
6. Breathing should be as normal as possible; making sure the candidate does not hold his/her breath.
7. Neck remains in the neutral position.
8. Do not pull on the head or neck.

BENCH PRESS (FREE WEIGHTS)

1. Candidate will be weighed in pounds.
2. Age and gender percentile ratio will be used to determine their minimum lift standard. The standard weight may be rounded down no more than four (4) pounds if the exact weight cannot be placed on the bar. Their minimum standard weight must be lifted for one repetition using the instructed technique.
3. The proper technique will be demonstrated, and instructions given before any attempts are made.
4. Candidates will perform several warm-up repetitions at approximately half their standard weight (or less).
5. Candidates will position themselves on the bench and obtain a grip that is slightly wider than their shoulders. Feet should remain on the floor.
6. With the aid of spotters, the bar will be lowered until the candidates' elbows reach a 90–degree angle. The bar will be aligned across the middle of the chest, just below the approximate nipple line.
7. Candidates will be instructed to breathe out and press the bar up to a "lock" position with elbows near full extension. Spotters may not assist in lifting any weight during an attempt unless needed for safety after a failed attempt. After the attempt, spotters will rack the bar.
8. Candidates will have up to three attempts at their standard weight after warming up.
9. While attempting to lift, candidates may not move their feet or lift their buttocks off the bench (arching). The lift will not be counted if they do.

300-METER RUN

1. Candidate should warm up and stretch thoroughly prior to the test.
2. Candidate runs measured 300 meters at maximal level of effort. Time is recorded in seconds.
3. Upon test completion, candidate should walk 3–5 minutes to cool down. This is an important safety measure.

1.5 MILE RUN

1. If possible, each candidate should have experienced some practice in pacing prior to the test. Often candidates will attempt to run too fast early in the run and become fatigued prematurely.
2. The candidate runs 1.5 miles as fast as possible.
3. During the administration of the test, candidates will be informed of their lap times.
4. Upon test completion, a mandatory cool down period is enforced. The candidate should walk slowly for about 5 minutes immediately after the run to prevent venous pooling (i.e. pooling of the blood in the lower extremities which reduces the return of blood to the heart and may case cardiac arrhythmias).

MEDICAL TESTING

Candidates who successfully complete the fitness and agility assessment will advance to the background investigation phase. Those who pass the background check will be invited to participate in a face-to-face interview. Candidates selected through the interview process will receive a conditional offer of employment and will be provided with detailed information regarding the required medical, vision, hearing, swim evaluations, and psychological evaluations.

The medical examination includes a comprehensive review of the candidate's medical history, which evaluates current health status, recent or chronic illnesses or injuries, medications, resting blood pressure and heart rate, height, weight, smoking history, and overall level of physical activity.

Candidates will complete a Medical History Questionnaire provided by the Pennsylvania Game Commission to supply all necessary information. All medical information submitted will be kept strictly confidential.

Candidates who do not meet the required physical fitness/agility standards, or who are determined to be medically or psychologically unfit, will be removed from the State Game Warden Cadet eligibility list. In such cases, the conditional offer of employment will be rescinded, and the candidate will receive an explanation for the disqualification.

TIPS FOR YOUR MEDICAL EXAMINATION

DO

Get a good night's sleep the night before your medical examination.

Come to the examination site **well-rested.**

Bring any corrective eyewear or hearing aids that you utilize for improved vision or hearing. (If you wear contact lenses, bring case and solution, as you will be required to remove them for testing)

Allow yourself enough time to get to the medical examination site without rushing.

Arrive twenty minutes before the stated reporting time.

DO NOT

Eat or drink anything immediately preceding your medical examination. However, you may drink water.

Smoke or use chewing tobacco Neither is permitted within one hour prior to, or at any time during, the medical examination.

Consume caffeine and nicotine as it may alter your heart rate and blood pressure.

THE FOLLOWING TESTS WILL BE ADMINISTERED AS PART OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINATION AFTER A CONDITIONAL OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT IS MADE:

- VO2 MAX
- DRUG SCREENING
- SWIM TEST
- PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION
- VISION TEST
- HEARING TEST
- MEDICAL EXAM

TRAINING OVERVIEW

Established in 1932, the Ross Leffler School of Conservation serves as the Pennsylvania Game Commission's premier training facility for State Game Wardens.

The training program is part academic institution, part police academy, and part field school. It is specifically designed to mirror the responsibilities and challenges of a modern State Game Warden.



MEDICAL TESTING DETAILS

VO2 MAX

This test is conducted on a treadmill under controlled conditions and is used to determine the candidate's cardio-respiratory fitness by measuring the amount of oxygen used during increasingly intense exercise. Performance on this test can be improved by regular cardio-respiratory exercise prior to the test.

DRUG SCREENINGS

Samples for this screening will be taken during the medical examination.

SWIMMING TEST

The candidate will begin in the pool and swim laps the length of the pool the equivalent of 100 yards. Using the pool wall to turn and push off is acceptable. Immediately after completing this phase the candidate must continue to tread water for five minutes. Touching the bottom or using the pool walls or equipment for support at any time during the test will be considered a failure.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

This will consist of a standardized psychological evaluation and a follow-up interview with a licensed psychologist.

VISION

Applicant must meet all listed standards with no exceptions:

Visual acuity

- 20/70 or better in the dominant eye WITHOUT correction
- 20/200 or better in the weak eye WITHOUT correction
- 20/20 or better in the dominant eye with corrective lenses, if necessary
- 20/40 of better in the weak eye with corrective lenses, if necessary
- Applicants shall have normal depth perception, normal color vision and field of vision

HEARING

Applicant shall have sufficient audio acuity to distinguish a normal whisper at a distance of 15 feet. The applicant shall be required to take and pass a decibel audio test independently conducted for each ear. The applicant may not use a hearing aid or other aid to perform the test.

SELF-EVALUATION

Candidates considering a career as a State Game Warden are strongly encouraged to evaluate their personal lifestyle, family responsibilities, and long-term career goals to ensure they are fully prepared for the unique demands of the position. The role requires a high level of independence, commitment, and adaptability—qualities that are essential from the very start of the training program.

The transition into a Cadet role represents a significant lifestyle change. The Pennsylvania Game Commission's training program is rigorous, immersive, and structured in a paramilitary format. For approximately 44 weeks, Cadets reside at the Ross Leffler School of Conservation in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania during the week, returning home only on weekends.Daily schedules are demanding, with extended hours, minimal personal time, and leave granted only under exceptional circumstances. Cadets live and train in shared quarters, where discipline, mutual respect, and strict adherence to policies are essential for maintaining a positive and cooperative environment.



This training is not only academic but also physical, emotional, and social. Candidates must be prepared to adapt to a structured environment, follow detailed instructions, and collaborate with a diverse group of peers. The goal is to develop the skills, judgment, and behavioral discipline needed to manage complex situations, make independent decisions, and interact effectively with the public.

Cadet Training Program Highlights:

- **DURATION & STRUCTURE**
  Training lasts approximately 44 weeks and includes over 1,400 hours of instruction across 140+ subjects. Cadets are required to attend all classes, both indoor and outdoor, and participate in supervised field assignments throughout the Commonwealth.
- **INSTRUCTION & EVALUATION**
  Topics include wildlife management, game laws and regulations, law enforcement techniques, public relations, natural history, and land management. Instruction is provided by nearly 200 professionals, including experienced State Game Wardens and subject matter experts. Cadets are evaluated through written exams, inspections, and field performance reviews. A minimum score of 70% is required on individual tests, with an overall average of at least 80% needed to graduate. Certain critical topics require 100% proficiency.
- **PHYSICAL TRAINING**
  In addition to academic requirements, Cadets engage in a progressive physical training program to build strength and reduce injury risk. Participation in physical training (PT) is mandatory, and Cadets must pass an exit fitness test to complete the program successfully.

Cadet Information

- **DAILY ROUTINE**
  Cadets report to the school Sunday evening and remain until Friday afternoon. Each day begins at 5:15 a.m. and includes PT, classroom instruction, evening sessions, and detail assignments. Cadets must maintain clean quarters, adhere to strict grooming standards, and be respectful of all staff and peers. Cell phone use is limited and regulated.
- **FIELD ASSIGNMENTS**
  Practical fieldwork is integral to the program. Under supervision, Cadets gain hands-on experience in wildlife law enforcement, public outreach, habitat management, and other essential duties of a Game Warden. Authorized field-related expenses are reimbursed.
- **COMPENSATION & BENEFITS**
  Cadets are paid bi-weekly and receive full Commonwealth employee benefits. Meals and lodging are provided at no cost. Cadets must supply their own basic attire (e.g., tactical pants and black T-shirts), while official uniforms and necessary equipment are issued during training.



Cadets must:

- Reside at the **Ross Leffler School of Conservation** and at field assignment locations as required.
- Be willing to **work irregular hours in all weather conditions**, including nights, weekends, holidays, and during emergencies.
- Be comfortable **interacting frequently with hunters and related organizations.**
- **Work independently and in isolated area**s, often encountering potentially armed or confrontational individuals.
- **Demonstrate self-motivation, reliability, and the ability** to meet deadlines without direct supervision.
- **Adhere to uniform, grooming, and appearance standards.**
- **Successfully complete training in unarmed self-defense and firearms**; carry and use weapons as required.
- **Support the mission and operations of the Pennsylvania Game Commission.**
- **Perform all essential functions** of the position effectively.
- **Cadets must Maintain a high standard of conduct,** professionalism, and courtesy throughout the training program. Failure to meet academic, physical, or behavioral expectations may result in dismissal.

Candidate Profiles:

Training classes are typically composed of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds, including college graduates, military veterans, former Deputy State Game Wardens, and prior Commission employees. No particular background guarantees success—personal integrity, commitment, and a genuine interest in wildlife conservation are key to thriving in this role.



POST-TRAINING APPOINTMENT

Upon successful completion of the Cadet Training Program, individuals are promoted to the position of State Game Warden. New Wardens are assigned to fill vacancies throughout the Commonwealth and must be willing to:

- Accept assignment to any district within Pennsylvania.
- Relocate and maintain a home office in the assigned district.
- Be available for emergency duty at any time, including nights, weekends, and holidays.
- Patrol their assigned district independently, often in remote areas.
- Enforce game laws, interact with the public, and represent the Game Commission professionally.
- Maintain documentation, meet deadlines, and complete administrative duties without daily supervision.
- Wear the official uniform and adhere to grooming and conduct standards.
- Demonstrate proficiency in the use of defensive tactics and firearms, and carry weapons as required.

If you are unable or unwilling to meet these training and employment expectations, you are strongly encouraged to reconsider your candidacy or withdraw from the selection process.

Cadet Information

After reviewing this information, if you have any questions, please contact :

The Pennsylvania Game Commission's Test Coordinator: Ashley Boylan 717-787-7836

DISCLAIMER

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