

Voluntary Officer Training Scheme 2008/9.

Voluntary Officers (VOs) work primarily with the reserves staff, assisting with all aspects of management on our 45 nature reserves across the county, with opportunities to experience other areas of the Trusts conservation work i.e. wider countryside (planning and biodiversity) and biological records centre. VOs will be based with staff at the Northampton office and work on nature reserves across Northamptonshire.

The placement period covers typical aspects of the seasonal work required to manage the wide range of habitats including woodland, wetland and grassland found on our rural and urban nature reserves. Voluntary placement is designed to offer valuable “on the job” training and experience in practical reserve management skills and related office work with the opportunity to attend in-house training workshops and externally certificated courses in first aid, brushcutter and chainsaw operation.

VOs gain experience in the practical skills involved with the management of the Trust's nature reserves, including; woodland ride and grassland mowing; scrub clearance and coppicing; plant id; fencing, tree felling, access improvements and working with livestock.

Applicants need to have an enthusiasm for nature conservation and wildlife and a desire to get involved in the environmental sector. Good team working and communication skills are essential, as well as a keenness to learn. Applicants require a full driving license and a basic level of computer literacy. Some background in ecology, natural history or conservation would be desirable. Applicants should be able to commit to five days a week (minimum of 3), preferably for 6 months (up to 1 year), with a provisional start date of mid September '08. Two Voluntary Officer placements are available.

An outline of the training offered under the Voluntary Officer (VO) placement programme is shown below. The aim of the training is to produce competent and experienced conservationists. The training is time-tabled throughout the year and VOs will gain a more rounded experience by committing to the scheme full-time for the whole year.

Training available:

- Tool use both hand and power including
 - Chainsaw [Units 30,31 36]
 - Autoscythe
 - Brushcutter
- 1 day appointed person's First Aid at Work.
- Tractor and trailer driving (if driving licence allows).
- Practical habitat management skills
- Access/Visitor management skills
- Working with Livestock.
- Volunteer tasks management.
- Plant identification
- Health and Safety/Risk Assessments.
- I.T. in conservation

This training will be linked with the Trust's normal work programme so that most of the training will be delivered "on the job". Each Monday morning specific tasks and activities for the week ahead will be planned and discussed.

VOs will be also able to take advantage of free training on our wildlife training workshop programme of over 80 short courses. These evening and weekend courses are run by specialist trainers covering various natural history subjects from plant, dragonfly and ground beetle identification skills to how to bat detectors and butterfly monitoring. They also include practical conservation skills like drystone walling and hedgelaying. Find out more at <http://www.wildlifebcnp.org/documents/WildlifeTrainingprogramme2008.pdf>

Any additional support training will be provided so that Voluntary Officers can begin their own projects as soon as they feel able. If after the initial training if VOs decide they would like to specialise in another area of the Trust work e.g. wider countryside planning, then these opportunities can be explored.

All work and training completed can be reviewed at the end of each month. Voluntary Officers should indicate additional areas of interest to them. Such additional projects and training can be arranged where possible and if appropriate and relevant to the Trust's objectives.

As stated above, the purpose of the Voluntary Officer programme is to prepare volunteers for careers in conservation through on-the-job training. Conservation work is seasonal and because of this volunteers will receive the maximum training if they commit for a year. Unfortunately, the Trust is unable to offer any remuneration for these positions and so it is truly a voluntary role. Furthermore, the Trust is not able to provide any accommodation or subsistence support in relation to the Voluntary Officer scheme. There is however the ability for reimbursement of petrol expenses where the VOs own vehicle has been used for Trust business.

The Wildlife Trust has an equal opportunities policy.

To apply please send a CV with covering letter to:

Paul Evans
The Wildlife Trust
Lings House
Lings Way
Billing Lings
Northampton
NN3 8BE

Or via email paul.evans@wildlifebcnp.org.

Applications by 12 noon 26 August 2008

Reimbursement for travel to interviews will be arranged on an individual basis.