



Volunteer Role Description: Practical Conservation

Role: Reserve / Practical Conservation Volunteers

Purpose of Role: To assist our Reserves Management team in conservation tasks, improving nature reserves for residents, visitors and wildlife

Location: 15 nature reserves across the Tees Valley

Volunteering Hours: Variable but regular groups are held Monday-Thursday every week from approximately 9:30am – 3:00pm

Duration: Long-term, ongoing

Availability: Please contact our Volunteer Development Manager – Jenny Hagan - as these groups are popular (particularly in summer). Places for transport to and from sites is also often limited.

Reporting to: Reserves Manager, Volunteer Officer or Project Officer as appropriate

Special Requirements: Appropriate clothing and footwear (waterproofs if necessary and safety boots with steel toe caps if possible), a packed lunch and a drink. We do have some safety wear available but this is limited so if you are able to use your own we would really appreciate it! It is helpful if you can arrange your own transport to our sites and claim the expenses for fuel / public transport back from us but if you need to be transported by us we will hopefully be able to arrange to pick you up and drop you off somewhere convenient near to your home.

Skills / Qualifications/Health criteria: Reserve volunteers do not need to have any prior knowledge or experience in outdoor conservation but a basic ability to use hand tools is helpful. All training will be provided. The work can be strenuous at times and although we can arrange tasks according to different levels of fitness we do suggest that for volunteers to get the most out of this role they are able to use their hands and are of a standard of fitness that will allow them to take part in walks on uneven ground, carrying tools and moderate aerobic activity e.g. equivalent to general garden maintenance. We are fully accommodating of carers on these projects and can provide support for people with learning difficulties, although it is important that volunteers can follow simple instructions.

Personal Qualities: Although this role does not principally involve working with the general public volunteers are often in contact with the public using our nature reserves and therefore we expect

them to be polite and helpful wherever necessary, acting as representatives of the Wildlife Trust. Because most tasks on our reserves involve group work we ask that volunteers are accepting of others' differences and see volunteering as an opportunity to develop new relationships as well as learn individual skills. We need our reserve volunteers to be fairly organised in themselves, to be ready for being picked up for work parties on time. A good sense of humour is always welcome too!

Main Duties:

Conservation tasks are varied in response to the habitat management required on each site but often include the following:

- Strimming and grass-cutting
- Using small hand tools
- Litter-picking
- Planting trees
- Laying paths
- Clearing scrubland and meadows
- Hedge-laying
- Erecting fences
- Felling trees and pruning

The tasks involved can be spread over one day or several months depending on demand for the work being done and the number of people on each volunteer group to do it! Some tasks involve new projects and others are more about site maintenance, but all are for the benefit of the wildlife as well as improving access and enjoyment for visitors. Volunteers are supported fully in all tasks by the Reserves team.

Potential Risks:

Risks under this role are identified in specific risk assessments discussed with volunteers as and when appropriate. Generally this role can involve physical work so volunteers need to be aware of safe manual handling procedures and understand their own limitations (communicating these to supervising staff when necessary). We expect all volunteers to use equipment only when trained fully to do so (and in line with risk assessments), be responsible in operating machinery and using tools, aware of others and their environments and also contribute to general good housekeeping (not leaving obstructions or spillages which can lead to accidents). We have registered first aiders, first aid boxes, accident recording procedures and a health and safety policy available for all volunteers to read in the administration office or can be sent electronically.

Other Notes: Reserve volunteering at Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is particularly special because of its connections with good health and well-being. We have been involved with a number of organisations over the years who refer people to us who may have suffered from poor mental health, and we offer them a safe and relaxing environment through which they can engage with other people, nature and their local community. We are continuously conducting research into the impacts this type of volunteering has on well-being and we encourage all new volunteers to take part, regardless of their health background (all data is completely confidential of course). More information on this project is provided during our first meetings with new volunteers.