Information for Volunteers

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Volunteering for the Devon Wildlife Trust

Thank you for expressing an interest in volunteering for the Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT). This information pack is for anyone who is interested in finding out more about being a volunteer with DWT.

“Volunteers are extremely important to DWT. The partnership of volunteers and staff accomplishes a great deal of action for protecting Wildlife for the future in Devon.” said Harry Barton, DWT CEO

This pack has information on:

- Volunteers and DWT
- Why volunteer for DWT
- What you can expect from DWT
- What DWT expect from you
- The practicalities of being a volunteer
- How volunteers help DWT
- DWT membership
- How to register as a DWT volunteer

Volunteers and DWT

Volunteers give their time and skills to help DWT achieve its charitable objective of a Devon rich in wildlife. They are one of our most valuable resources. The partnership of volunteers and DWT staff accomplishes much more in Devon than either could manage alone. Volunteers bring a broader point of view, help us to build strong links with the communities we engage, and enrich our organisation with a wealth of experience, expertise, infectious enthusiasm and energy. .

DWT was established in 1962 by volunteers and for many years there were no paid staff. The thriving organisation of today would not exist without those far sighted volunteers. There are Devon Wildlife Trust volunteers all over the county helping to protect wildlife for the future.

We value all the help you offer, and every little helps! We will keep you in touch with DWT and volunteer opportunities through our regular internal newsletter, *Network News*.

The Four Principles of Volunteering

There are 4 principles fundamental to volunteering:

1. **Choice:** Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. No coercion or compulsion will be used when encouraging volunteers.

2. **Diversity:** Volunteering is open to all, no matter what their background, age, race, sexual orientation, faith etc. In encouraging volunteers, DWT is committed to developing and maintaining an organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued, and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute.

3. **Reciprocity:** Volunteers will benefit from their contribution to DWT. Benefits could include a sense of worthwhile achievement, useful skills, experience and contacts, sociability and fun, and inclusion in the life of the organisation.

4. **Recognition:** Explicit recognition of the value of what volunteers contribute to the organisation to the community to the social economy and to wider social objectives is fundamental.

Why volunteer for DWT

We have a Vision of a Devon made up of Living Landscapes and Living Seas in which:

- Wildlife is plentiful, varied and widespread
- Its future is secure
- Its benefits are understood, valued and enjoyed
- Human activity is kept within the carrying capacity of the environment

Volunteers play an essential role in making this happen.

You will be part of The Wildlife Trusts, the national voice of the 46 county Wildlife Trusts and 50 urban Wildlife Groups. That means joining forces with over 65,000 volunteers, 300,000 members and 700 staff all working together locally and nationally to create a better future for wildlife and for people.

- Use your skills and knowledge to benefit wildlife
- Be actively involved in protecting wildlife for the future in Devon
- Make new friends
- Acquire new skills or brush up on skills you already have
- Gain valuable work experience
- Share your enthusiasm for wildlife with others
- Learn more about Devon's fascinating wildlife
- Enjoy the beautiful Devon countryside

Volunteering can build confidence, can help you develop or share skills, and is a great way of staying healthy, connected with others and of feeling purposeful and valued.

DWT will involve volunteers to maximise the impact of its annual work programme for the benefit of wildlife and will seek to provide opportunities for volunteers to take part in all aspects of its work.

DWT is committed to supporting the efforts of volunteers and recognises them as a valuable resource. DWT aims to achieve a positive environment for involving volunteers. It will manage its whole network of volunteers to a high standard and will provide guidance and support for individuals and groups.

Volunteers Agreement

What you can expect from DWT

- Information about current opportunities for volunteering.
- A clear brief about what you will be doing and what will be expected of you, including how long the task will last and how often it will happen.
- Training as appropriate to each task.
- Regular and constructive support and feedback on your voluntary work and the opportunity to discuss your ideas.
- For any changes to the task description to be negotiated
- Travel and other expenses that are agreed in advance.
- Health and safety guidance plus safety clothing and equipment as appropriate to each task.
- Employer's liability insurance.
- Equality of opportunities within its volunteering.
- Respect for the fact that you are giving DWT your time and skills.
- Thanks for your time and effort.

What DWT will expect from you:

- Carry out tasks reliably at the time(s) agreed, as detailed on the relevant Task Description(s) and/or as agreed with your supervisor.
- Ask for advice or support if needed.
- Understand that in time tasks will change or come to an end.
- Inform your supervisor if some reason you can no longer carry out your voluntary task or come in at the agreed times
- At all times, act within DWT's Health & Safety guidelines and Equal Opportunities Policy
- Take good care of DWT's resources and equipment.
- Claim promptly, supported by relevant receipts, all expenses that have been agreed in advance with your supervisor.
- Record the number of hours you volunteer for DWT on the volunteer hours forms
- Observe confidentiality where appropriate.
- Support the aims and objectives of DWT and act in its best interest, as an ambassador for wildlife, without representing your views as that of the charity. How you appear to others is how they will judge DWT.

There is no intention to create a legally binding contract or employment relationship between volunteers and DWT.

Practicalities

Volunteering and benefits
DWT understands that you can do as much voluntary work as you like provided you remain available to take up paid employment and actively seek it. That means your Jobseeker's Allowance payments won't usually be affected by voluntary work so long as:

- You continue to look for employment
- You can be contacted promptly if a job opportunity arises
- You are willing and able to start a job
- You are able attend an interview at 48 hours notice

You should always keep your benefits office up-to-date with your volunteer work. Please check your exact status with the appropriate agency.

Reimbursement of expenses
DWT can pay out-of-pocket expenses to volunteers that are agreed in advance. Your supervisor will tell you the kind of things for which you can claim.

We will reimburse travel expenses that were incurred wholly and exclusively for the purpose of volunteering for DWT. However, we encourage local volunteering and the use of public transport wherever possible. If you have to use a car, www.carsharedevon.com is a useful site.

When public transport is available, DWT will reimburse tickets up to £10 a day. If the volunteer chooses to use a car instead, DWT will reimburse up to 25 miles at a rate of 20p a mile.

Where there is no public transport available and the volunteer has no choice but to drive, DWT will reimburse up to 25 miles in a day at a rate of 40p a mile. There remains discretion for project officers on a case by case basis, eg if they are in a rurally isolated area, they can offer an additional 25 miles at 20p a mile.

How to claim: Your supervisor will give you a expenses claim sheet. Fill this in and return to your supervisor with the relevant receipts. Normally a cheque is sent to you within a couple of weeks, but you can ask that we have petty cash ready for you.

Insurance

Volunteers working within DWT guidelines are covered by DWT Employer's Liability and Public Liability insurance policies. This applies to all volunteers who are working to instructions and within guidelines from their supervisor. DWT will cover you if you are injured or if you cause any injury or damage while carrying out agreed duties. (Children under 12 years old are not covered by this insurance, if they take part in any Wildlife Trust activities a parent or guardian must acknowledge that they will be responsible for the child). The complete DWT Health and Safety Policy is available on request. We also hold Professional Indemnity Insurance which covers volunteers whose role includes giving advice on our behalf.

If you are using your own vehicle for DWT business then you will need to check with your insurance company to see if you require extra cover.

Equal opportunities

The Devon Wildlife Trust is an equal opportunities employer and this policy includes the recruitment of volunteers.

Resolving Problems

DWT has developed problem-solving procedures to ensure that volunteers are treated fairly. These are available in full on request and on the "For Volunteers" section of the website. In general, complaints by or against a volunteer will be dealt with in the first instance by the person for whom they are volunteering and/or the Volunteers Officer, as appropriate. If necessary, the CEO and Trustees will be involved.

Support and supervision

DWT is quite a big organisation, and many volunteers end up doing a number of different things. The main contact for each role is responsible for introducing you to the role and relevant people and for supporting you to do it. However, you could end up volunteering for several different people or with self-managing volunteer groups. If you are ever unsure about who to contact, speak to the Volunteers Officer. All volunteers are welcome to contact the Volunteers Officer about anything to do with their volunteering.

What help is needed?

DWT updates its list of volunteer vacancies every two months. This is published on the website, and sent to all registered volunteers. This section explains the kind of ways in which volunteer become involved, and you can register your interest in the different areas on the accompanying registration form.

DWT Local Groups
These are groups of DWT members and volunteers who actively and enthusiastically spread our message: protecting Devon's wildlife for the future. The eight groups organise the majority of DWT's walks and talks, help with DWT projects and reserves in their area, and support DWT initiatives. They raise the profile of DWT in their area and are an important link between their local communities and DWT at a county wide level.

Events
There are a number of events throughout the year for which extra help is useful, notably Nature Reserve Open Days. Volunteers need to be happy to muck in where needed, help set up, pack away, meet and greet, direct, make tea, bring up the rear of guided walks and/or help with activities from face painting to web counting. From time to time the opportunity arises to join our team of Volunteer Millers to help on Milling Days.

Practical conservation work
The Devon Wildlife Trust manages nature reserves across the county. It takes a lot of work to maintain and enhance their wildlife value, and we need volunteers who are available primarily during the week to help at the various work parties at our reserves.

Voluntary wardens keep a watch over DWT nature reserves and are involved in practical work, wildlife recording and education work. They are an important link between local people and DWT. A small team of full-time volunteer trainees support the Nature Reserves Team.

Surveying
The Devon Wildlife Trust is rightly renowned for the high quality of its survey work and stores wildlife data in the Devon Biological Records Centre (DBRC). Volunteers have played and continue to play a very important role in this. From time to time, volunteers are asked to take part in significant land and sea

surveys, and training may be given in survey techniques, so you don't always need to be a wildlife expert to take part.

DBRC are also interested in hearing from people who keep records of wildlife who might be interested in sharing their findings and people who have computer skills who could help manage data by entering species and habitat data into databases and file records. It offers two full-time voluntary traineeships from April each year, focussing on Devon's County Wildlife Sites.

Education

Local Wildlife Watch Groups are run by volunteers and provide monthly wildlife activities for children. Volunteers receive support, guidance and training from the DWT office and must undergo some official checks to ensure they are safe to volunteer with children. Wildlife Watch is about learning through fun and is for anyone who has an enthusiasm for wildlife and enjoys working with children. All leaders and helpers are police checked.

Volunteers are also sometimes invited to help deliver environmental education in schools, both through developing resources and direct involvement.

Fundraising

One of the most important parts of DWT's work is fundraising to enable the crucial conservation work to take place. Local Groups play an important role in this and often need extra volunteers to help with their Street Collections (Flag Days). Individuals can also contribute by helping to organise events, undertaking a "Charity Challenge" or sponsored event, and by distributing leaflets and change boxes. If you have any fundraising ideas of your own, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

Office work

There are often admin tasks with which we need help, mostly at Cricklepit Mill. From time to time various members of staff require help with a range of tasks including database work, research work and general office administration such as photocopying and stuffing envelopes.

Voluntary Information Officers

VIO's run the Wildlife Helpdesk, responding to enquiries from the general public on any aspect of wildlife conservation, including planning, management, welfare, species identification. VIO's receive some training and have a wide

range of resources from which to draw information. They deal with enquiries via telephone, email, letter and in person.

Garden Club
Garden Club is a very informal group of volunteers who tend Cricklepit Mill's Wildlife Garden on Wednesday afternoons.

Wembury Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA)
Wembury VMCA, near Plymouth was set up to protect marine habitats through raising public awareness, particularly of school children, of the beauty and fragility of the coastal environment. The VMCA is managed by DWT and in 1994 the Wembury Marine Centre was opened, providing a valuable interpretation resource and acting as a focus for all of DWT's activities at Wembury. The centre is open April to September.

The work of DWT at Wembury VMCA provides volunteers with an invaluable opportunity to gain experience in a wide range of activities including working with schools and leading guided walks along the area's rocky shore, as well as the day-to-day running of the Wembury Marine Centre, whilst making a contribution to the conservation of one of the country's richest marine wildlife areas. It can be great fun too. In addition to the team of "casual" volunteers who help out as and when it suits them, we take on three full-time trainees. A biological or educational background is useful but training is provided.

***Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project (DGHBP)**
DGHBP operates over 11 key areas. Volunteers get involved with community events, survey, data analysis, practical conservation, education, leading walks and so on.

***Seaton Jurassic**
Seaton Jurassic is more than just an Interpretation Centre – it aims to nurture a constantly developing connection between people and the wonderful natural heritage of Seaton and the surrounding Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site through a range of events and activities. Volunteers help welcome visitors, provided costumed interpretation, help with the wildlife garden and with various events and activities.

***River Otter Beaver Trial (ROBT)**
ROBT is looking at the viability of maintaining a population of beavers on the River Otter. Volunteers help with practical work, various kind of survey,

education and events.

***NB** Because these three projects involve significant numbers of volunteers, they do have additional/alternative registration forms so that you can indicate your specific interests. These will be sent to you if you select any of these projects on your registration form, or simply ask for the alternative version.*

Photography
If you are interested in photography and can demonstrate proficiency, let us know. From time to time we are keen to engage a photographer in a particular task or to keep our photo and slide library up-to-date.

Short-notice volunteers
Very often, a need for help arises at short notice. This could be for anything from helping at a nature reserve open day or on guided walks to helping with flag days, other fund-raising events or stuffing envelopes. If you are happy to be contacted occasionally at very short notice (and feel comfortable saying no if it's not convenient) please select this option.

Professional specialists
Though DWT employs staff who are experts in particular conservation fields, DWT relies upon external advice from specialists in key areas. Many professionals in fields such as education, research, agriculture, land-use planning, law and accountancy volunteer to share their expertise.

How to register as a DWT volunteer

- If you would like to register as a DWT volunteer, please return the volunteer reply form at the back of this pack to the Volunteers Officer at the DWT office. Returning this form does not commit you to anything more than finding out more about volunteer work.
- Once registered, we will keep you up-to date with current voluntary opportunity via Network News, our bi-monthly news sheet for DWT staff and volunteers. Volunteer opportunities are also published on the website. No need to wait for your first mailing; you can begin volunteering right away;

- This registration form is NOT an application for a specific role. Some roles have an application procedure, for others you can just turn up.

- Occasionally, we seek volunteers in particular parts of Devon or for specific areas of voluntary work. While most roles are filled by volunteers

responding to our adverts, we may sometimes contact you directly, based on the preferred areas of work you record on your form.

- If you provide an email address, we would usually use that to contact you as we can quickly and easily add you to an email list. Please do not give an email address if this form of communication does not work for you.

- If you have any queries about volunteering, please do not hesitate to contact Dawn Lenn or Natasha Sprague at Cricklepit Mill, tel. 01392 279244.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope you enjoy volunteering with the Devon Wildlife Trust to help protect wildlife for the future in Devon.

Membership

By joining Devon Wildlife Trust as a member, you would be adding your voice to that of 33,000 others who care about Devon's wildlife. You don't have to be a Trust member to volunteer with us, but every new supporter really does make a difference. Thanks to the regular income from our members, Trust staff and volunteers are able to continue protecting habitats and species on our 47 nature reserves and advising other landowners on how best to manage land to benefit wildlife. Equally important, by giving us the strength in numbers we need to campaign successfully on behalf of Devon’s wildlife, all our members make a real difference to the future of our beautiful county.

As a member you'll receive a guide to the Trust's best nature reserves, along with our magazine *Wild Devon* and invitations to special events.

To find out more and join online by Direct Debit or credit card, visit www.devonwildlifetrust.org