

Volunteering for young people



Dorset
Wildlife Trust

*Volunteering
is brilliant fun...
& I can help make
a big difference!*

Mitch Perkins
Volunteer 2021

In this booklet...

- Why volunteer with us?
 - About volunteering and Work Experience
- Benefits of volunteering

Above:
Youth Volunteers clearing Bracken in
Venetia Park © Jonny Owen 2021

For volunteering enquiries please contact:
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Why volunteer with us?

Volunteering with Dorset Wildlife Trust is a great way to help maintain and support the growth of the amazing wildlife in your local area all through the year. Our mission is to maintain, restore and protect vital habitats for the unique and fascinating species that depend on them. Whether it's woodland, wetland, grassland or heathland – come and have a go!



Left:

Volunteers making tern shelters on Brownsea Island © Jonny Owen 2021

What is the required age for general volunteer work?

Age restrictions are in place for young volunteers as follows:

Aged up to 16 years: Must be accompanied by parent/guardian.

Aged 16/17 years: Parental consent form to be completed (a downloadable version is available on our Volunteering Page).

Aged 18 or over: No restrictions.



At what time of year can I volunteer?

Our opportunities are available all year round; however, winter volunteering mostly involves practical work such as shrub clearance with our work parties across Dorset, whereas summer activities are more survey based, recording and monitoring wildlife alongside our experienced team members.

What tasks could I do?

All sorts! There will be a mix of practical tasks and wildlife surveys.

We also get involved in social media, photography and writing. Activities vary seasonally.

Here are some examples of what we could get up to...

Below:
Learning to install fencing



- **Habitats** : Controlling vegetation using hand tools with full training and supervision
- **Bracken-bashing** : A great summer task!
- **Surveys** : e.g. helping us count birds, insects and rare plant species such as orchids
- **Social Media** : helping shout about wildlife!
- **Maintenance** : making and repairing paths, fences, signs and wildlife shelters
- **Workshops** : time with experts getting the know-how!
- **Your Project** : For work experience students on your first day, we will run through the week's structure and we can help you develop your ideas

What **stuff** do I need to bring?

Most of the equipment will be provided. If you are involved in any practical volunteering, you will be told what the task is before you come, with any special advice about what to wear. As a rule, we suggest that you wear / bring:

- **Old Clothes:** stuff you don't mind getting snagged, dirty, or wet.
- **Weather Appropriate Gear:** if it threatens rain, make sure you have waterproofs. You'll often get warm when working, but if it's cold layers are best. In warmer months, bring something cooler to wear, sunscreen and insect repellent.
- **Sturdy Shoes:** walking boots or wellies are generally best. Some people prefer trainers, but they lack ankle support on rough terrain so wear at your own risk.
- **Journal:** For work experience students we strongly advise keeping a simple journal of your activities – your school or college may suggest a preferred format. This will help when writing CVs and in interviews.
- **Lunch:** please make sure you bring enough to eat in a suitable container. We will provide cake/biscuits (assuming no COVID restrictions).
- **Drinking Water:** please bring a full water bottle – we recommend at least a litre - we provide free refills.
- **Medications:** bring any you need (e.g., inhalers or EpiPens). Please tell us about these on the sign-up form.
- **Hand Sanitiser:** to clean hands in the field.



Can I carry out my work experience with Dorset Wildlife Trust?

Yes, we do offer work experience to pupils aged 15 and over (apart from our coastal centres where it is 18). You could be involved in any of our activities mentioned previously, depending on what time of the year your placement is. The placement with us is arranged via the school.

What is a Work Experience Placement?

Young people tell us you want ways to **'think globally and act locally'** to address the ecological and climate emergencies We can help!

Work experience gives students an insight into the world of work and an opportunity to develop employability skills. In contrast to an industrial visit when they are only able to observe, students are able to experience a short continuous spell in a working situation and to gain first-hand knowledge of what particular jobs entail. This experience helps prepare you for the transition from school to college or university or indeed, employment. It can also help students in their own career choice.

Work Experience is fun and varied – we can adjust content based on your aims and preferences... from assisting with wildlife surveys and habitat-based tasks to talking to the visitors to the nature reserve and helping with activities like pond-dipping. If you're into content creation, ask us about social media and learning materials.

Be part of an inspiring team and learn new skills with wardens – all while having fun and making a difference.

This is a great way to see what conservation is about and a stepping-stone to nature-based careers.



Is a Work Experience Placement right for me?

- Are you aged between **15 and 25**?
- Are you interested in **nature and wildlife**?
- Do you enjoy being **outside** even if it's wet out?
- Do you care about the **ecological emergency**?
- Do you want to **learn new skills and identify new species**?
- Are you thinking about a **nature-based career**?
- Are you the next **make a difference** to nature locally?

What are the benefits of work placements?

Students tell us that **Work Placements** are an essential way of building your employability skills. As a provider of conservation traineeships and an employer, Dorset Wildlife Trust recognises the value of work experience.

Make a Difference!
References
Health & Wellbeing
New Skills
Make Contacts
Learn about Wildlife
Record of Achievement
Careers
Fun!
Meet Experts
Try New Things
Help Nature
Can link to Duke of Edinburgh



When volunteering and on placement what do we **expect of you?**

The welfare of the wildlife is paramount. The safety and comfort of yourselves, staff and other visitors are also very important.

- **Knowledge and Skills:** Don't worry if you are a little apprehensive at first – this is normal. We don't expect you to come with any knowledge or skills – this is where you can start from scratch to gain them!
- **Safety:** You must adhere to all safety instructions and tell your activity leader straight away if you are worried about anything.
- **Equality and Diversity:** Everybody is welcome. Bullying or discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated, so you will be safe and respected no matter your race, gender identity, sexuality or any other characteristic.

What can you **expect of us?**

Our staff and volunteers are friendly and well trained. We want to help you get the most from your placement. We all care about the next generation of environmentalists!

You will have the opportunity to come for a recce beforehand and to have regular catch-ups with your co-ordinator throughout your placement where you can express ideas, thoughts and concerns.



- Our key volunteers and staff undergo **enhanced DBS checks** as necessary to ensure your safety. We are trained in Leading Groups, Safeguarding Young People, Health & Safety, Fire Safety, First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Equality & Diversity, Autism & Disability Awareness.
Most importantly, we love what we do!
- **Health & Safety:** We work hard to ensure risk is minimised, although this can never be completely eradicated. **Associated risk assessments and public liability insurance certificate can be made available to you if you wish.**
Tick bites pose a risk of Lyme disease if not removed quickly. We will train participants in Tick Awareness and prompt regular tick checks. Guardians - please refer to the NHS webpage for advice beforehand: www.nhs.uk/conditions/lyme-disease
- **Safeguarding:** No member of staff or volunteer will ever be left alone with a young person. Dorset Wildlife Trust has a robust **Safeguarding Policy** which you are welcome to read.

What if I am a bit **nervous** or I have **additional needs**?

When we try new things, our brains release adrenalin - the 'fight or flight' hormone which can make us feel a bit nervous.

This is 100% normal.

Additional educational needs or disability may increase anxiety.

Again, this is 100% normal.

Everyone is likely to be sharing similar feelings. As you get to know people, you'll probably feel more relaxed. If you'd like support, please talk to the volunteering leader.

We are here to help.

If you would like a pre-visit to help you get settled and to meet the team, please just ask - you can bring a guardian or teaching support if you like.



Where is Dorset Wildlife Trust located?

We have 42 different reserves across Dorset and five centres. Information on our centres and reserves can be found at:

<https://www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves>
<https://www.dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-visitor-centres>



Benefits of volunteering with us...

“By volunteering with Dorset Wildlife Trust you will gain experience in practical activities, which will help improve your employability and enable you to gain the experience needed in the future. If you wish to go to a college or university to study any particular course which links to what we offer, for example conservation of wildlife, this will look great on your application. Working with a team will improve life skills like your communication, teamwork and time management, which will be helpful throughout university and in the workplace.

Not only will this be a huge benefit for you but your volunteering will bring diversity and fresh ideas to our ever growing Trust and allow us to keep on doing what we do, as without volunteers none of the conservation work we do would be possible. Your advice and thoughts help us to improve and become more appealing to younger volunteers, which is a great start towards the futures and aspirations they are moving towards. Also, you are more than welcome to bring your friends or family along with you, the more the merrier!”

Written by work experience students
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