



Volunteer Handbook



Northumberland
Wildlife Trust



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“ Wildlife needs all the help it can get right now; if we all do a little bit we can make a difference. ”

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A woman with long brown hair in a ponytail, wearing a white t-shirt, is smiling and looking to her right. She is standing in a lush field of tall green plants with white, flat-topped flower heads and smaller purple flowers. In the background, another person is partially visible, and a green and black bag or tarp is on the ground.

SECTION 1

Before volunteering

“ Well worth giving my time for, extremely rewarding! ”

Contact details



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 NorthumberlandWT
 @NorthWildlife

Foreword from Mike Pratt (NWT Chief Executive)



Volunteers are often referred to as ‘the lifeblood of an organisation’ and that is certainly true in NWT’s case. Volunteer vision and effort is where the Trust comes from and we owe everyone who has volunteered or continues to do so an enormous thank you for all they have done and are doing for us. As we move forward, volunteers are central to the future effectiveness of our organisation in delivering our mission to re-engage people with the natural world and to improve the state of nature.

Volunteers are making a real difference all of the time, whether it is helping to build the new Hauxley Wildlife Discovery Centre, managing nature reserves, helping in our marketing team, or supporting education and events activities, volunteers touch every part of what we do.

The role of NWT volunteers will continue to expand in range and diversity, adding capacity and reach to what we are able to achieve in what will be challenging times of financial squeeze, but where we have ambitious plans, where we aim to create healthier and more diverse places, for people and wildlife.

Volunteers like you are simply the future at NWT. Long term it is you, working alongside staff and supporters, that will achieve major changes, like developing an enormous ‘wildwood’ at Kielderhead, or connecting a new generation of children to their cities’ greenspaces and helping people care for, understand and enjoy our seas. You are the ‘lifeblood’, but even more, you are an intrinsic part of the energy and momentum of the Trust.

Welcome and general information

Welcome to Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT). We would like to thank you for donating your precious time to support our work. Without the on-going support of our volunteers, NWT would not be the organisation it is. We know that you will prove to be an invaluable part of the team and we really hope you enjoy your time here.

The aim of this handbook is to provide you with a reference guide to support your volunteering and has been developed to ensure that you have a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

Why volunteer?

Volunteers are an important part of NWT and we hope to give everyone a fun and rewarding experience. We have an action force of over 300 volunteers who contribute around 350 days of work for us each month. Whatever your background, we can hopefully find a role to match your interests and abilities.

Volunteering with NWT is a great way for you to do something you enjoy or to help you find new interests. It’s an excellent way to meet new people, develop skills and get healthy whilst giving something back to the community. Volunteering with us brings many other benefits such as the opportunity to attend training courses, from first aid to brushcutting, join in social events and reading Call of the Wild, our quarterly volunteer newsletter which keeps you up-to-date.

In addition to helping you learn new skills or giving you the opportunity to practise the skills you already have, volunteering can help you become more confident, allow you to put some volunteering experience on your CV and show employers you can keep regular hours and stay committed to a task. You can pick up good ideas from other volunteers, meet people who can help you find paid work and get reliable references.

Who can volunteer?

Anyone can volunteer at NWT! With over 60 nature reserves, an active community and events programme, and a busy office, we really appreciate help from our dedicated volunteers.

We have a wide range of roles here at NWT; some take place on reserves, some in the office, in the community, on-line or at home. Activities and time commitments vary between roles. A role description is available for every opportunity and are all available from our Volunteer Co-ordinator or on-line.

Equal opportunities

NWT recognises the importance of Equal Opportunities in all its activities and undertakings. The Trust's principal assets are its members, volunteers, trustees, staff and supporters. We are committed to ensuring that our workplaces are free from unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of, including but not limited to, sex, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, religion or belief, marital or civil partner status, or disability.

Volunteering and jobseeker's allowance

You can volunteer for as many hours as you want as long as you meet the conditions to get your benefit or tax credits. Please talk to Jobcentre Plus before you start to volunteer. Usually the basic rules are that if you are in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, you will still need to be looking for paid work and free to go to an interview with 48 hours' notice.

About Northumberland Wildlife Trust

Northumberland Wildlife Trust is a charity dedicated to saving wildlife and wild places and helping people to get closer to nature within Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle.

This region needs more wildlife on land and sea. We help to create and protect wildlife-rich landscapes and seas by working in partnership with landowners, local authorities, businesses and communities; by maintaining over 60 nature reserves and delivering projects to help wildlife; and by defending wildlife when it comes under threat from development and harmful policies.

***Nature is central to our own health, happiness and economic prosperity.
We believe the North East should be rich in wildlife for the benefit of everyone.***

We aim to create a society where nature matters - where people understand the value of nature and take action for it. To do this, we educate and inspire thousands of people every year, reconnecting them with their local environment through our visitor centres, volunteering, events, campaigns and engagement programmes.

We are one of 46 Wildlife Trusts, a grassroots movement working across the UK to make life better – for wildlife, for people and for future generations.

Staff structure

Chief Executive Mike Pratt	
Head of Living Landscapes and Conservation Duncan Hutt	Marketing and Fundraising Head of Marketing and Fundraising Sheila Sharp Membership Officer Christine O'Neil Communications Officer Fiona Dryden Marketing Officer Liz Lovatt Marketing Assistant Richard Clark Membership Recruiter Ann Colman Community and Donor Relations Assistant John Gibbon Volunteer Co-ordinator Lou Chapman Reception and Volunteer Assistant Susan Wilson Reception and Admin Assistant Paul Heathcote
City to Coast Living Landscapes (LL) City to Coast LL Manager Post on hold Northumberlandia Visitor Centre Manager Alex Lister Northumberlandia and Weetslade Reserves Assistant Peter Ernst Northumberlandia and Weetslade Events Co-ordinator Lynette Friend (sabbatical) Northumberlandia Events and Site Officer Claire Darcy Visitor Centre Assistant Jared Auld Catering Assistants Sally Brown Jane Hassie Jaqui Reading	Finance and Central Service Director of Finance and Business Development Dan Venner Finance Manager Ian Bush Finance Officer Tania Knibbs Human Resources and Payroll Officer Paula Turner
Druridge Bay Living Landscapes (LL) Druridge Bay LL Manager Alex Lister Senior Reserves Officer Geoff Dobbins Reserves Officer Anthony Johnston Reserves Assistant Duncan Hoyle Visitor Experience Assistant Jenna Berry Catering Assistants Christine Shotton Mo Wright Sarah Huck Sarah Chattaway Carol Gray Lynda Durham Carol Gray Josh Brown Susan Nelson Georgia Brown Development Officer Elaine More Catch My Drift Assistant Sophie Webster	Red Squirrels Northern England (RSNE) RSNE Project Manager Simon O'Hare RSNE Ranger RSU Matt Stuart Jack Edmondson Elliot Lea RSNE Officer Heinz Traut Data and Monitoring Officer Bonnie Sapsford
Kielder Living Landscapes (LL) Kielder LL Manager Katy Barke (Mat. leave) Northumbrian Water Reserves Officer Dan Chapman Restoring Ratty Officers Kelly Hollings Graham Holyoak Wildwood Project Co-ordinator Heinz Traut Wildwood Project Assistant Steven Lipscombe	Other Projects Coast Care Project Manager Becky Bass Coast Care Project Assistant (Training and Conservation) Vacant Coast Care Project Assistant (Volunteer Engagement and Communication) Emma Witcutt Flexigraze Stephen Comber Redesdale Wildlife and Farming Officer Jennifer Care Conservation Assistant Alice McCourt

Map and list of reserves

NWT owns or manages over 60 nature reserves across the county. By working with landowners, local businesses and communities we aim to restore, recreate and reconnect fragmented natural habitats to achieve a 'living landscape' where wildlife can flourish, and people can lead happier and healthier lives, engaging with the natural environment.

North

- 1 Annstead Dunes
- 2 Arnold Memorial
- 3 Evelyn Howick Memorial
- 4 Flodden Quarry
- 5 Ford Moss
- 6 Holburn Moss

East

- 7 Big Waters
- 8 Cresswell Foreshore
- 9 Cresswell Pond
- 10 Druridge Pools
- 11 East Chevington
- 12 East Cramlington Pond
- 13 Fencerhill Wood
- 14 Hauxley
- 15 Holywell Pond
- 16 Linton Lane
- 17 Newsham Pond
- 18 Northumberlandia
- 19 Prestwick Carr
- 20 St Nicholas Park
- 21 Weetslade Country Park

South

- 22 Beltingham River Gravels
- 23 Briarwood Banks
- 24 Close House Riverside
- 25 East Crindledykes Quarry
- 26 Greenlee Lough
- 27 Grindon Lough
- 28 Juliet's Wood
- 29 Priestclose Wood
- 30 South Close Field
- 31 Tony's Patch
- 32 Whittle Dene
- 33 Williamston

Central

- 34 Bakethin
- 35 Barrow Burn Wood
- 36 Bell Crag Flow
- 37 Benshaw Moor
- 38 Butterburn Flow
- 39 Falstone Moss
- 40 Fontburn
- 41 Grasslees Burn Wood
- 42 Harbottle Crags
- 43 Holystone Burn
- 44 Holystone North Wood
- 45 Mill Burn
- 46 Whitelee Moor



Local members' groups

Local groups are an external voice for NWT and make a real difference, giving time, energy and enthusiasm to supporting and promoting our work. Their meetings are a great opportunity to meet like-minded people and find out more about conservation issues and work in the region.

Many groups deliver a range of walks, talks and activities throughout the year, and are pleased to welcome newcomers. Have a look at the What's On section of our website to see various upcoming events with different groups.

Alnwick & District Natural History Society

Contact: Dave Bonser
Tel: (01665) 576 512
E-mail: david@dbonser.plus.com
Web: adnhs.org.uk

Alnwick Wildlife Group

Contact: Richard Poppleton
Tel: (01665) 578 346
Web: alnwickwildlifegroup.co.uk

Berwick Wildlife Group

Contact: Molly Hardie
Tel: (01289) 332 655
E-mail: bwg@berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk
Web: berwickwildlifegroup.org.uk

Border Natural History Society

Contact: Anne Middleton
E-mail: anne2middleton@gmail.com
Web: bordernats.wordpress.com

Friends of Brierdene

Contact: Steve Stone
Tel: (0191) 251 2149
E-mail: steve.stone2@btinternet.com
Web: friendsofbrierdene.org.uk

Friends of Red House Farm Ramble

Contact: Cheryl Savage
Tel: (0191) 297 2973
E-mail: info@redhouseramble.org.uk
Web: redhouseramble.org.uk

North Northumberland Bird Club

Contact: Liz Harrison
Tel: (01289) 302 554
E-mail: ringouzel@northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk
Web: northnorthumberlandbirdclub.co.uk

Northumberland & Tyneside Bird Club

Contact: Martin Davison
Tel: (07962) 720 616
E-mail: martindavison3@gmail.com
Web: ntbc.org.uk

NWT Coquetdale Group

Contact: Lorna Aiken
Tel: (01669) 640 237
E-mail: lornaholystone@gmail.com

NWT Gateshead Wildlife Group

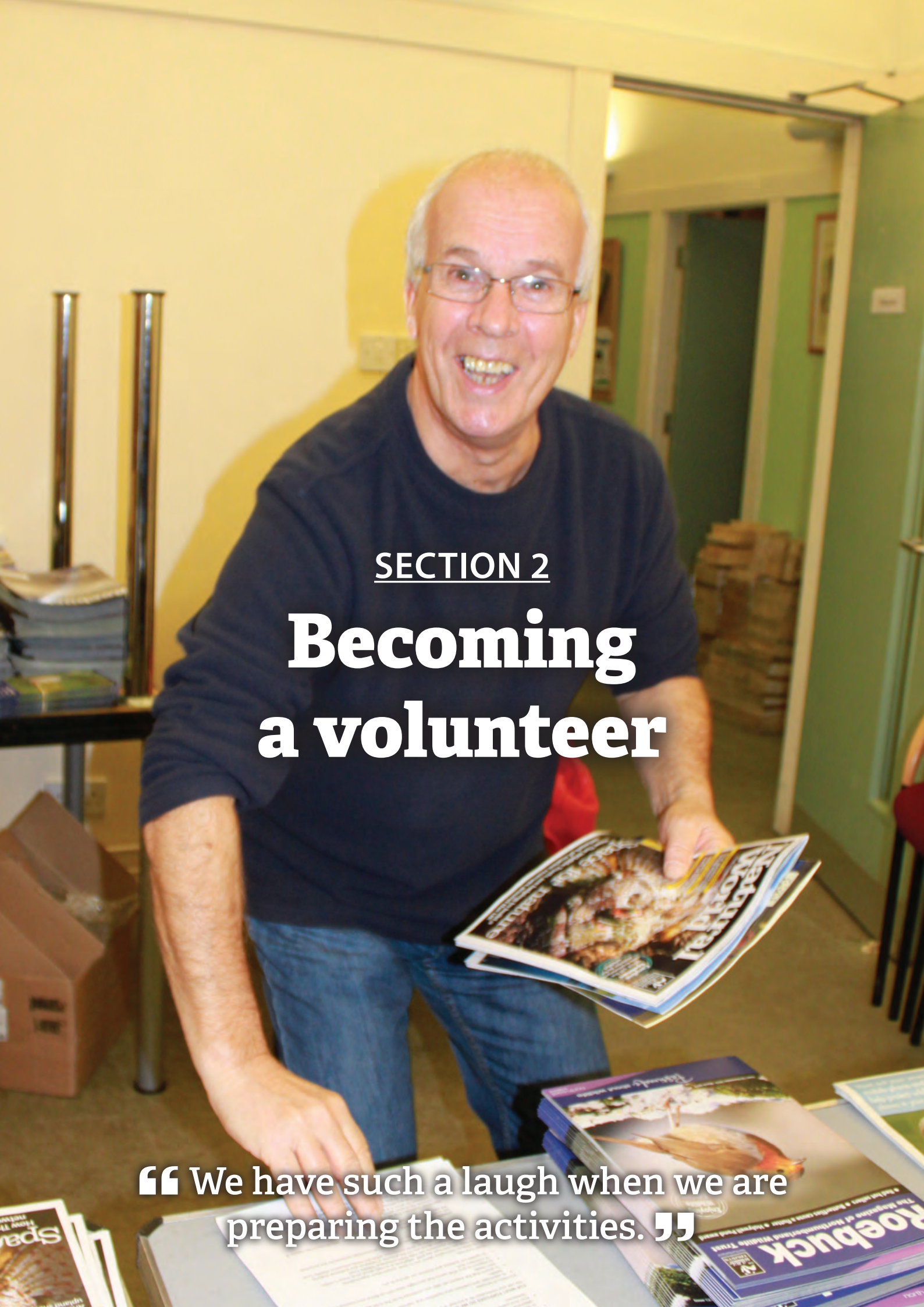
Contact: Judy Summerson
Tel: (07811) 927 330
E-mail: judith.summerson@blueyonder.co.uk
Web: gatesheadwildlifegroup.weebly.com

NWT Hauxley Wildlife Group

Contact: Jenna Berry
Tel: (01665) 568 324
E-mail: jenna.berry@northwt.org.uk

NWT Ponteland Group

Contact: Chris Wright
Tel: (01661) 822 210
E-mail: pontelandwildlifegroup@gmail.com
Web: pontelandwildlife.wixsite.com/pontelandwildlife



SECTION 2

Becoming a volunteer

“ We have such a laugh when we are preparing the activities. ”

Starting out

To volunteer with us, whether you have a particular skill or resource or a general enthusiasm to help local wildlife, there are a few simple steps to follow:

1. Find a role/roles that suit(s) your requirements and availability.
2. Complete the online enquiry form, nwt.org.uk/volunteer-enquiry-form.
3. Come to a new volunteer session.
4. Have a go at an activity to see if you like it.
5. Register as a volunteer if you enjoyed your trial activity.

New volunteer session

Once we receive your enquiry form we will invite you to come along to the next new volunteer session. The session is designed to give you the opportunity to meet with NWT staff and volunteers to discuss the role(s) you have opted for in more detail and to book onto a trial activity. New volunteer sessions are held once a month, usually on a Thursday. A telephone discussion can also be arranged if you cannot make it to the session.

Try an activity

Before registering fully as a volunteer with NWT we will give you the opportunity to 'have a go' at a role first. This trial activity will show you what it's like to volunteer with us, and will hopefully guide you in your decision on whether it's the right role for you.

Volunteer registration

When you have decided that volunteering with NWT is right for you, register your details on MyVolunteerPage, our online volunteer management system. This system allows you to book onto tasks and activities online and have all of your volunteering activities with us in one place, so for those of you who perform multiple roles with us it's a one stop volunteering shop.

If technology is not your thing or you don't have access to a computer, don't worry, we will create an account for you then see if you can find a 'Volunteer Page Buddy' to book your tasks and access your account for you, or come into NWT offices where we have computers available for you to access your account, or contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator to book your tasks and activities for you.

Data protection

NWT holds volunteer details and work records. All details we hold can be seen and edited by you on MyVolunteerPage. The Trust complies with Data Protection Legislation. Please see Your Guide to Data Protection for more information.

Volunteer agreement

NWT recognises that as a volunteer you have offered your time freely, however there is an element of responsibility on both sides. It is important that you understand what NWT expects of you as a volunteer and what you can expect from us.

NWT key responsibilities

- To provide a clear induction on the nature and purpose of all activities.
- To provide personal protective equipment appropriate to the task.
- To give clear instructions on the correct use of tools and equipment.
- To make volunteers aware of all key health and safety issues.
- To make volunteers aware of all appropriate policies and codes of practice.
- To provide regular opportunities for a review of the activities with every volunteer.
- To provide appropriate training to develop a volunteer.
- To reimburse reasonable documented expenses.
- To provide public liability insurance.

Volunteer key responsibilities

- To seek any clarification needed relating to task activities.
- To raise any issues of concern with the relevant staff member.
- To use tools and equipment safely according to instructions given.
- To adhere to all relevant NWT policies including health and safety, equal opportunities, confidentiality and data protection.
- To provide reasonable notice when cancelling a task in order to allow another volunteer to fill the space.



SECTION 3

Being a volunteer

“ I enjoy assisting in such worth while causes with like-minded people. ”

Signing up for activities

Firstly log on to MyVolunteerPage.com and click on the "OPPORTUNITIES" tab.

Here you will find all the activities listed for the role(s) you are registered for and any additional activities open to everyone including training and social events.

Detailed instructions on filtering activities can be found at the bottom left hand side of the home page when you are logged in.

For each shift you would like, click in the "Sign Up" checkbox beside the desired date. If the activity has no space available, click on "Add me" to the back-up list in case you ever need extras at the bottom of the screen. Click on the "Save" button at the bottom of the screen.

Adding or moving volunteer roles

When you begin to volunteer you usually start with one or two roles. After a while you may wish to try another role or move to a completely different role. You will only be able to see tasks and activities relating to the roles you are registered for on MyVolunteerPage. To add or remove a role you will need to contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Information about where we are looking for volunteers to try out different roles will be given out through Call of the Wild, our quarterly newsletter or by email. If you have any particular interests please make sure the qualifications section of MyVolunteerPage is kept up to date to receive specific information that may interest you.

Print out a schedule (to post on the fridge)

Log on to MyVolunteerPage.com and click on the "SCHEDULE" tab. Scroll down to the "Monthly Calendar Schedule" section. For an on-screen report select the appropriate "Paper Size" and "Start Date" for the monthly schedule report and click the "View Calendar" button or the "Download Calendar" button to produce a PDF file of your scheduled activity assignments for the month.

Logging hours

It is really important to us for projects and funders to be able to accurately show how much volunteer time we have supporting our work. Please help by recording the hours you have volunteered by logging on to MyVolunteerPage.com and click on the "HOURS" tab.

Select the activity for which you are logging hours by selecting if from the drop-down beside "Activity". You can change which activities display in the drop-down by clicking on the desired button below the list:

- Recent: your recent assignments
- Active: active activities that are visible to you
- Inactive: inactive activities that are visible to you

Enter the date you worked in the field beside "Date Volunteered", then enter the number of hours and minutes worked. Please answer the feedback questions associated with the activity (if there are any) and click the "Save" button to create the hours log entry.

Setting a goal (on how many hours you would like to do...)

1. Log on to MyVolunteerPage.com (if you are not logged in already).
2. Click on the "MY PROFILE" tab.
3. Click on the "Goals" section.
4. Optionally enter a date (start and/or end) that you want to accomplish your hours goal.
5. Enter the number of volunteer hours you wish to achieve.
6. Click the "Save" button.

Feedback on how you're doing toward a goal?

In the "Goals" section of the "REPORTS" tab, you can track how you are doing in achieving your goals.

Update qualifications

1. Log on to MyVolunteerPage.com (if you are not logged in already).
2. Click on the "MY PROFILE" tab.
3. Click on the "Qualifications" section.
4. This tab contains some fields to track things like what training you have had or certifications you hold or anything else that might help define the roles you are able to fill. You may only select one option from the drop-down list for each

qualification. Some qualifications may also have an expiry date associated with them. If more information is available on a qualification, you can move your mouse over the "Info" button displayed beside it. Some qualifications may also require you to send a copy of your certificate in to NWT before it can be verified (i.e. for Chainsaw users or First Aid).

5. Click the "Save" button when you have finished.

Meeting points

Meeting or start points for our volunteering activities are specific to the role which role you have decided to do. The general meeting point will be described on the role description however different activities might have specific requirements. All the information will be displayed in the activity information on MyVolunteerPage.com. Please contact reception or the Volunteer Co-ordinator if you would like to meet onsite, en route or arrange transport if this differs from what the activity information says.

Benefits

As a volunteer we would like to say thank you for donating your time to NWT. We can offer you:

- Discounts on our range of NWT volunteer clothing
- Annual summer BBQ
- Annual volunteer festival and celebration event; Volfest
- Call of the Wild (our newsletter)
- NWT membership (after 10 full days of volunteering)
- A record of your volunteer involvement that could help to enhance your CV
- References for employment
- A chance to get healthy

Free membership

Volunteers who donate more than 10 full days of volunteering (70+ hours) verified and logged on MyVolunteerPage will be able to claim 1 year's free NWT membership. The qualifying period runs from January to December then the free membership will run from April to March. This can be claimed every year if the volunteer continues to volunteer for 10+ days every year. Membership is the way regular donors support NWT. If you wish to donate regularly in addition to volunteering, you can opt for a £10 voucher towards volunteer clothing.

Volunteer awards

Our annual awards ceremony takes place at Volfest, including for the volunteer who has donated the most time (Outstanding Achievement), volunteer who is the most versatile (Jack of all Trades) and the Special Recognition award.

Communication

NWT values your opinions and would like to hear your suggestions and comments on what we do. You can tell us what you think by talking to or e-mailing the Volunteer Co-ordinator, the task or activity leader, or Volunteer Representative. You can pop a comment in the suggestion box (in the volunteer area at Gosforth) or you can write an article for Call of the Wild.

'Call of the Wild'

'Call of the Wild' is our quarterly volunteer newsletter. It aims to involve, update and entertain all the volunteers who give their time and energy to the Trust. If you wish to receive Call of the Wild by email, you can sign up for this through MyVolunteerpage.com.

Each newsletter features task updates, upcoming events, training and opportunities, and articles submitted by volunteers and members of staff. In addition, there are regular competitions, quizzes and photographs.

Expenses

NWT volunteers may claim reimbursement for agreed travel expenses, including travel from home to the place of volunteering. You can claim 38p per mile for car travel, 24p per mile for motorbike and 20p per mile for bicycle travel. If you would like to be reimbursed for bus or metro tickets please provide them when claiming. All expenses must be submitted on a Volunteer Expenses Claim form with supporting receipts. Usually claims are made on a monthly basis. Forms can be downloaded from

MyVolunteerPage.com or collected from the Volunteer Co-ordinator. When you volunteer at Hauxley and go by car, you will need to collect a barcode from the Visitor Centre so you do not pay parking.

Toilets

We have toilet facilities at our office in Gosforth, Northumberlandia and Hauxley Nature Reserve only.

Training

NWT is committed to ensuring that you receive on-going support and training and recognises the value of investing time and effort into the development of volunteers. We provide a mixture of informal and formal training from visits to our reserves to certified first aid training. The majority of training will be 'on the job' during your volunteering activities, however we do run volunteer leadership, tools training and driver training in-house. We can also offer certified training courses such as brushcutter, chainsaw and first aid training to regular volunteers. Keep an eye out in Call of the Wild to find out about all our up and coming trips or training.

NWT also has trained learning staff who can carry out basic training needs analyses and how to source funding to help support learning and development. It doesn't have to be related to wildlife, nature conservation or the environment. Do you need help with basic skills, such as maths and English? The learning Rep can help with that too. Please contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator for more information or to arrange a personal development review.

In the NWT Activity Centre, Gosforth there is a Learning and Development area with information about how you can get into learning and up and coming courses, so keep an eye out.

Personal development reviews (PDR)

Volunteers can opt to have an annual PDR. The aim of this system is to provide an effective mechanism for supporting volunteer development and the objectives are to:

- focus on the needs of the individual
- review the role which the individual plays in the Trust
- identify training and development needs
- identify action points and agree a timescale for development

Volunteer leaders

At NWT we have a huge range of voluntary activities and many volunteers wanting to take part. To try and increase volunteering activity we have some volunteers who are trained as volunteer leaders. Our volunteer leaders lead practical conservation tasks and educational activities or events. If you would like to become a volunteer leader please contact our Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Volunteer officers

Our Volunteer Officer scheme enables volunteers to build up skills and training to enhance their CV. Each Volunteer Officer (VO) will work with the Trust at least two days each week, for a minimum period of 6 months, on a variety of projects. Positions are advertised on our website when they become available.

Volunteer drivers

Many volunteers drive our vehicles. To do this all volunteers must attend our driver training and vehicle inductions, then complete the driver declaration form annually.

Volunteer experiences



Brian Rouse

Practical Conservation Volunteer and Weetslade Warden

"I'm one of the many volunteers who gives a little time each week to help the Trust. I have spent the last five fascinating years come rain, shine or snow working on some of the best jobs I have ever had.

Six years ago I was offered redundancy, and when I worked out my pension I realised we could manage, and looked forward to having some time for myself. After about six months I was getting overweight, lacking exercise and going stir crazy being in the house most of the day, so I thought 'why not volunteer?' While listening to the radio one day, I heard a programme on volunteering and how so many charities relied on volunteers to keep going. The list of opportunities was huge, but I wanted to work outside so I looked into volunteering with NWT. This is it, I thought, a nice job out in the countryside conserving the environment, that will do me!

So what have I been involved with to make the last five years pass so quickly? Well, on the first day I started as a Practical Conservation Volunteer I was a bit disappointed. I was told we are going to dig over an allotment in Ashington. This can't be conservation, I thought, but the plot was to be prepared for planting tree seed gathered from one of the Trust's many reserves. I soon cheered up, and the team was friendly and made me welcome. I thoroughly enjoyed my first day and made several new friends to boot. It's never been boring on any of my days out, and there's always something new to see or do. I still recall my first visit to Mill Burn; the task was to cut back the bracken that covers everything up. The route to the site involves walking alongside a shallow stream and on this morning the sun shone on the water, and it was like walking up a flow of liquid gold - breath-taking! I always took a camera on the tasks after that day.

In my time I've learned tree felling, fencing, hedge planting and repaired footpaths and riverbanks, built board walks, bridges and bird hides. I have also danced on Himalayan balsam and pulled out a million ragwort plants. There is also a lot to be said about enjoying a packed lunch with friends in the open, with some of the most spectacular views you will ever see.

There have also been plenty of learning opportunities. I have been on courses for first aid and brush cutters, I've had instruction in photography, wildflowers, bird and butterfly identification, and had a go at night-time newt and bat surveying. Last year I completed an NVQ in Environmental Conservation and this year I got my licence to drive tractors. Quite a list!

These days I work with the Estates Team which is responsible for the infrastructure on reserves. We construct and maintain fences, gates and bridges. I'm also one of the wardens at Weetslade Country Park. We keep the area tidy and maintain the site for visitors. The wardens also help run a full programme of events and walks throughout the year.

Volunteering with NWT is great fun, there's no pressure, everyone works at their own pace and we stop and admire the scenery when we like. There's never a dull moment and you're always in very good company."



Danny Morris

Volunteer Conservation Officer

"I worked in retail for 6 years before deciding to follow my ambition of working in conservation, something which has interested me from a young age. Despite completing a degree in Geography it has been difficult to find a job in conservation due to lack of practical experience and so I began searching the internet for volunteer roles, which is when I saw the Volunteer Conservation Officer post advertised with the Trust. Soon after applying I was interviewed and I began my role in the summer, working around my current job 2 days a week.

Working alongside and assisting the staff has helped me to understand their role in the Trust and helped me to identify which skills I needed to learn in order to boost my CV to find a similar job. The experience I've gained has been invaluable and I've enjoyed every minute. Every day at the Trust is different and I have often found myself expecting to spend the day in the office and ending up out in the countryside surveying plants, planting reeds or building boardwalks. Working at the Trust has not only helped me to develop my practical skills but has allowed me to utilise knowledge learnt throughout my degree course, such as creating maps and identifying different species in a way which will benefit local wildlife. As well as these tasks I also attended formal training sessions such as volunteer leadership, drivers and tools training. The guidance from the team I worked with has been fantastic and all of the staff and volunteers are friendly, approachable and more than happy to help if I have any questions.

My two days a week at the Trust were by far the most exciting of the week and I got a real sense of doing something positive and I felt as though I was developing my own skills and abilities while contributing to the fantastic work the Trust carries out."



Cathy Bell
***Practical Conservation Volunteer, Wildlife Gardener,
Educational Activities Volunteer and Holywell Warden***

"I have been a member of NWT for many years and always had an interest in wildlife and conservation. One October day, a few months after I took early retirement from 40 years in the Inland Revenue as a manager and project leader, I saw an advert in the local press for help needed with the SENSE Project at Holywell Pond, which is near where I live. I went along on a taster practical task and became hooked.

I signed up as a Practical Conservation Volunteer and regularly go out on Tuesday task days doing an amazing variety of jobs, seeing many of the Trust's reserves and working with some interesting and fun people. I am never left to struggle with anything, and the staff are excellent at using your individual strengths as part of the team. Job satisfaction is guaranteed! You get a real sense of doing something worthwhile and you're always valued and thanked for your efforts. I have also been involved with educational activities, and I regularly help out at family and community events. I have recently started volunteering with the Wildlife Gardening group and enjoy that too.

As part of the SENSE project in April 2009, the former Holywell Pond wardens group was reformed to provide a better link between NWT and the pond. As I had an interest, I became a member of the group. I regularly fill the bird feeders and have done several events to raise awareness of the reserve, and joined many task days to help improve the site.

Some of my female friends ask how I can work with groups of men and keep up. The answer is you don't – you work to your own abilities and as part of a team. It's not competitive; you contribute what you can. Volunteering for NWT has opened up so many positive things for me and keeps me fit. I know I am helping wildlife for future generations and have a great time with like-minded people."

A woman with long blonde hair tied back, wearing a dark blue jacket and work gloves, is kneeling in a wooded area. She is using a hand saw with an orange handle to cut through a tree stump. The ground is covered with dry leaves and branches. The background shows more trees and a wooden fence.

SECTION 4

Health and safety

🗨️ The range of opportunities to get involved are massive, and a lot cheaper than gym membership! 🗨️

Health and safety at work

NWT is committed to providing for the health, safety and welfare of all employees and to maintaining standards at least equal to best practice. The Trust will observe the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all relevant regulations and codes of practice made under it from time to time. The Trust will take into account any recommendations made by the Health and Safety Executive with regard to health and safety issues and where appropriate will liaise with the Health and Safety Executive on health and safety issues which are of particular relevance to the Trust.

This commitment to Health and Safety is a management responsibility equivalent to that of any other management function. It is the duty of the Trust's Chief Executive to ensure that policy is upheld at all times and to provide the necessary funds and personnel required.

A copy of the Trust's Health & Safety policy is available to all volunteers. All volunteer roles have an accompanying risk assessment/competency form.

It is the responsibility of all of our staff and volunteers to take care of their own health and safety and that of other who may be affected by their actions. NWT will work with people to ensure this is achieved.

Insurance

All NWT registered volunteers are covered by NWT's insurance policy whilst carrying out your volunteer roles.

Confidentiality

As a NWT volunteer, you will be in a position of trust, you may come across confidential information whilst carrying out your volunteering activities. Please keep this information confidential and don't communicate it outside NWT.

Smoking

NWT has a duty to ensure compliance with the Health Act 2006. All of the Trust's premises are therefore smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in any of the Trust's premises, vehicles or whilst on any customer's property.

Personal property

You are responsible for your own personal property and must safeguard it by ensuring that you keep it in a secure place. The Trust cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage. If you lose, or find, any property on the Trust's premises or sites, you should report it as appropriate.

Accidents

If you suffer an accident on the Trust's premises you (or someone on your behalf) must report it as soon as practicable after the event. All accidents should be reported however minor. The accident must be recorded in the Trust's Accident Book (Please ask your activity leader for book location). Any incidents where an accident or injury did not occur, but where it might have done, should be recorded using the Trust's Near Miss recording system.

Alcohol and drugs

It's NWT's policy to forbid the consumption of alcohol on the Trust's premises except at designated events. The possession, use or distribution of drugs for non-medical purposes on the Trust's premises is also strictly forbidden. If you are prescribed drugs by your doctor which may affect your ability to perform your voluntary work you should discuss this with our Volunteer Co-ordinator or task/activity leader.

Fire procedure

Details of the procedures, exit and assembly points, and the appointed Fire Wardens for each building, are displayed on notice boards around each building. You must familiarise yourself with the Trust's emergency procedures to minimise the dangers caused by fire.

You should ensure you are aware of the nearest fire exit, and its alternative, for emergency use.

On hearing the fire alarm:

- Do not delay — evacuate the building immediately
- Do not stop to collect personal possessions
- Walk quickly, do not run
- Remain calm and proceed in an orderly manner
- Obey the instructions of the Fire Wardens
- Do not re-enter the building until a Fire Warden is satisfied that the premises are safe to re-enter

Harassment

Harassment pollutes the working environment and can have a devastating effect on the health, confidence, morale and performance of those affected by it. It may also have a damaging effect on other staff or volunteers not themselves the object of unwanted behaviour, who are witness to it, or who have a knowledge of the behaviour. Everyone is entitled to a working environment which respects their personal dignity and which is free from such objectionable conduct at the hands of their colleagues, superiors and third parties.

Tool safety

If you use tools wisely and look after them then you'll keep not only yourself safe but those around you too.

1. Safety checks

Always check the tool you are about to use to make sure it's in good condition (preferably before you reach the far side of the woods!). Check blades are sharp and attached properly and shafts are not split. If it's broken **DON'T USE IT**. Wrap hazard tape around it and place it on the benches in the tool store. Don't put it back for someone else to use!

2. Getting your tools to site

Carrying your tools safely is just as important as using them properly. Ideally tools should be carried down by your side and not over your shoulder. Blades should be pointed downwards and forwards so you can't fall on them. Don't overload yourself and only carry one tool per hand as it could impede your grip. Remember safe lifting techniques if you need to pick up heavy tools such as pinch bars.

3. Protective clothing

You should wear suitable clothes which you don't mind getting dirty and steel toe capped boots or wellies to protect your toes. Gloves will be made available but remember never to use gloves with swinging tools such as a hammer, mallet, axe, bill hook etc. as it impedes your grip and endangers those around you.

4. Safe working distances

All tools have the potential to cause harm so it's best not to use them too close to other people. Make sure you are aware who is nearby and how close they are. Safe distances for all are two arm lengths plus the length of the tool. If people are too close, either move to further away or ask people to move instead.

Power tools like chainsaws and strimmers are very dangerous as debris can be picked up and fired from the blades like bullets. Power tools have **exclusion zones** around the operator which you **must not enter**. Exclusion Zone for Strimmers = 15m, Exclusion Zone for Chainsaw = 15m when logging or 2½ tree lengths when felling.

Whatever you do, **never walk up to someone using a tool without catching their attention first**. If someone approaches you stop using the tool and give them plenty of room to get past.

5. First aid box

There is a regularly maintained first aid box in every vehicle and a welfare bag. Make sure a first aid box and welfare bag goes out onto site with you; it's no good in the van ½ mile away when you cut yourself.

It's always good practice to identify qualified first aiders at the start of the day so you know who to approach in case of an accident.

Additional tools safety

Certain tools can only be used by qualified operators such as chainsaws and brushcutters. If you are qualified and would like to use these items please make sure the qualifications section in MyVolunteerPage.com is up to date.

Through our H&S policy on PUWER (Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations), volunteers can only use powered tools which are:

- Trade quality
- On our equipment log
- Accompanied by maintenance records
- Included within HAV (Hand and Vibration) assessment
- Only used by those with recognised competencies

Naturally occurring hazards

Tetanus

Cuts, scrapes and prickles may expose you to bacteria which cause tetanus. The dormant bacterium exists in the soil and can sometimes cause fatal illness when it enters the body by attacking the Central Nervous System. Renew your booster every 10 years.

Leptospirosis or Weil's Disease

There are two strains of this dangerous disease. Lepto. Icteorhaemorrhagiae is carried by rats and passed on by contact with their urine. It can be fatal. As rats frequently live near open water the disease can be found in ponds and streams. Lept. Hardjo is associated with cattle and is found in areas frequented by these animals. When working in or near water or cattle, wear waterproof dressings on any cuts, use rubber gloves and if your hands get wet, wash them before eating or touching your mouth or eyes. If you develop flu-like symptoms after working near water or cattle visit your doctor and mention Weil's disease.

Lyme Disease

This is an infection caused by Borrelia bacteria and passed by infected ticks when they bite. Ticks are usually active between April and October in moorland, grassland, marshland and woodland. They wait on vegetation such as bracken for a host animal to pass onto. Check for ticks after working in these habitats.

Poisonous and dangerous plants

There are a number of native plants which you may come across when out on reserves which have the potential to cause harm.

<i>Plant</i>	<i>Harmful if Ingested</i>	<i>Harmful by Contact</i>
Bluebell	X	
Bracken	X	X
Black Bryony	X	X
Buttercup	X	
Cuckoo Pint	X	
Daffodil	X	
Dog's Mercury	X	
Fool's Parsley	X	
Foxglove	X	

<i>Plant</i>	<i>Harmful if Ingested</i>	<i>Harmful by Contact</i>
Giant Hogweed		X
Hemlock	X	
Horse Chestnut	X	
Ivy	X	X
Nettle		X
Nightshade	X	
Spurge	X	X
Water Dropwort	X	
Yew	X	

Poisonous fungi

There are a number of dangerous and deadly fungi on Trust reserves. You should not eat any wild fungi unless you are experienced in fungi ID or have had the ok from an expert. Please don't collect or eat wild fungi from reserves without prior permission.

Dangerous animals

There are no animals in Britain which have deadly bites or stings however some people may be susceptible to anaphylactic shock as a result of a bee or wasp sting.

Adder

This is a venomous snake found on heath, bog, coastland and woodland, active from late February to late September. An adder will only bite if startled. Consult a doctor straight away.

Wasps and bees

These are stinging insects. Wasps nest on the ground so it's worth checking over an area before starting any work. Bees nest in trees so check any tree before doing any work. Singly a sting would just be an annoyance, however the collective stings of a colony may become more problematic.

Weather

Heat

During the Spring and Summer the weather can be quite hot. Working outdoors for long periods of time without shelter can lead to heat exhaustion, sun burn, dehydration and sunstroke. Take precautions by wearing sunblock, a hat and keeping your skin covered. Drink regularly to replenish fluid loss through sweating and take plenty of breaks in the shade (where possible).

Cold

Some of NWT sites are exposed and can feel much colder than when you leave the city. Always take plenty of warm clothes to add layers if you start to feel cold. Extreme conditions can lead to hypothermia and frostbite. Keep moving to generate heat in your muscles but if you feel uncomfortable go back to the van to warm up.

Working with the public

Quite often during volunteering activities you will be visible to the public. Please act responsibly and abide by our policies and codes of practice and be polite and courteous. Most members of the public will be interested in what you are doing. Some may be rather wary of you and others may approach you quite boldly to find out what is happening. Do be prepared to answer any questions and explain...

1. You are volunteering for NWT
2. The activity has been carefully planned as part of a work program/management plan
3. How to become a member or volunteer
4. How to contact NWT for more information
5. What difference you are making
6. Refer any formal enquires to reception

Whistle-blowing policy

Northumberland Wildlife Trust makes every effort to conduct itself with professionalism, complying with all legal standards and codes of practice. However, where volunteers have reason to suspect the charity of serious wrongdoing, they are encouraged to report it. This might, for example, include illegal or fraudulent activity, environmental degradation, a serious breach of health & safety, or inappropriate fundraising activity.

If you suspect illegal activity, such as terrorism or abuse, please contact the Police.

In other cases, please complain in writing, providing as much information as you can, to NWT's Chief Executive or Chair who will treat the matter in complete confidence and investigate it. They will respond to you directly within 2 weeks. If you are not satisfied with the explanation or response given, you should raise the matter with the appropriate organisation or body, e.g. the Police, the Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, Social Services Department, Charity Commission, or Fundraising Regulator.

If you prefer not to report your concerns to the Chief Executive or Chair you may take them directly to the appropriate organisation or body.

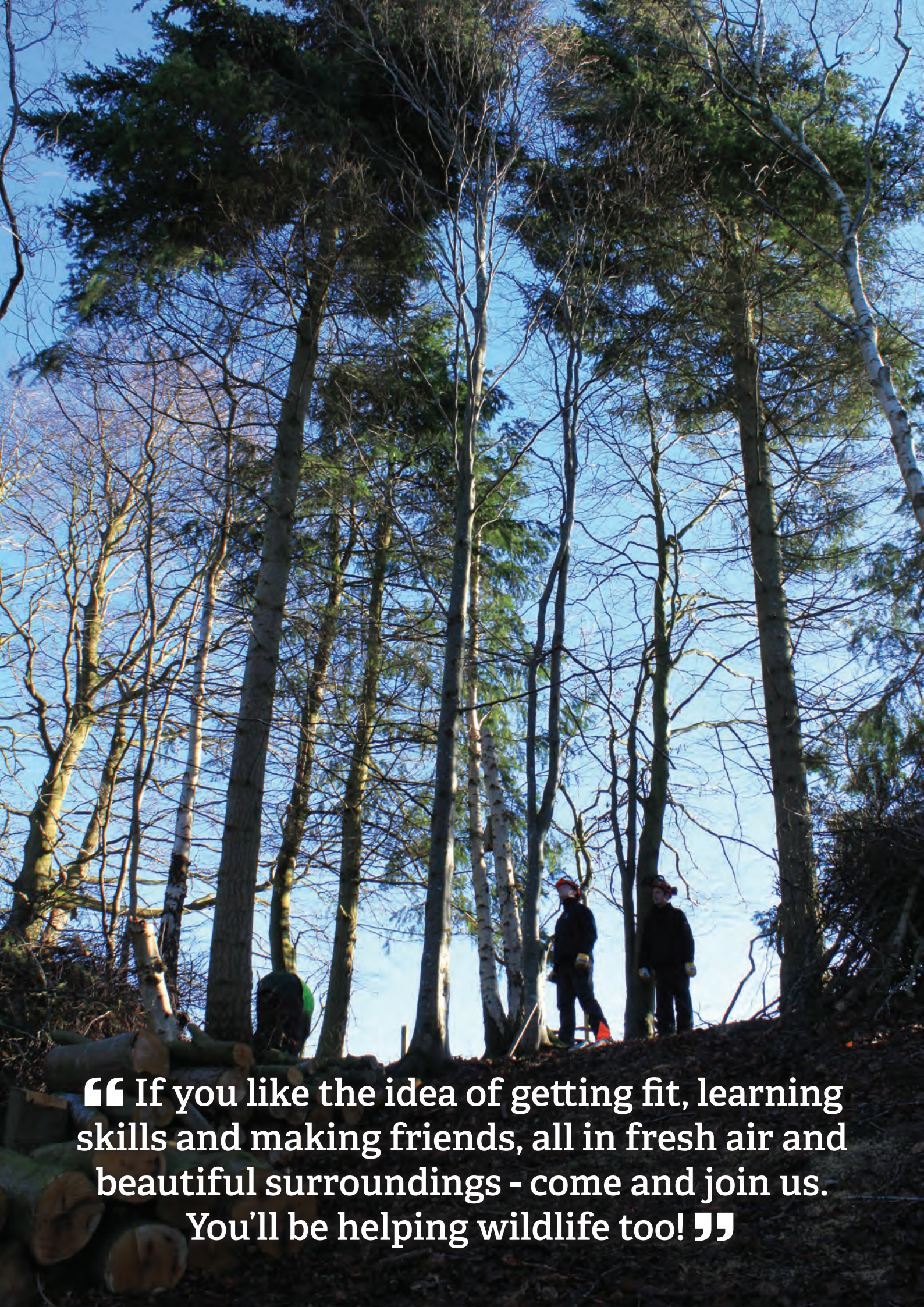
You must have reasonable evidence that serious wrongdoing has happened, or is likely to happen. If the above procedure has not been invoked in good faith (eg. for malicious reasons or in pursuit of a personal grudge), then the Trust reserves the right to take legal or other action that may be appropriate in the circumstances.



Thank you!

For helping to create a healthier
environment for people and wildlife

“ It is great to be able to stand and look and say, I was part of creating this.... ”



“ If you like the idea of getting fit, learning skills and making friends, all in fresh air and beautiful surroundings - come and join us. You'll be helping wildlife too! ”