



Survey and Monitoring Volunteer's Handbook for Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust



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Introduction

The Trust was formed in 1961 by a group of local people who had concerns about the increasing loss of wildlife in the county. The Trust has since gone from strength to strength and now has 26,500 members and up to 500 volunteers on its database. From the beginning, the Trust has relied on the vital contribution made by volunteers. The scale and diversity of volunteering provides the Trust with flexibility and a wide skills base to call upon. We hope that volunteering and the opportunity to contribute to the work of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust will bring you enjoyment and new challenges.

Volunteering

What is a Volunteer survey and monitor?

We need to monitor the health of our wildlife and their habitats to ensure we can protect them from current and future pressures. Our reserve managers and reserve volunteers ensure habitats are maintained, repaired and improved across all our nature reserves, however to ensure we are correctly managing them we need to monitor and survey species and their habitats. Survey and Monitoring volunteers are there to help get this much needed work done to ensure we are providing the best future for wildlife. We also need to monitor the wildlife outside our nature reserves to ensure areas are connected up allowing for long term movement and a more sustainable future.

Duties/ Responsibilities (these are examples of potential roles you may have, you are not expected to take part in all these responsibilities)

- To assist with seasonal and long term projects.
- Identify a variety of species from plants to animals (you do not need to be an expert as we are happy to provide training).
- Undertake a variety of survey methods from phase one, quadrats, nut hunts, population and kick sampling to name but a few.
- Undergo all the appropriate training so that you can confidently carry out your role.
- Input collected data into a digital format.
- Analyse collected data
- Access to own transport due to many of our reserves being far away from public transport. We can sometimes offer lift shares however this will need to be discussed separately.

Insurance and safe guards

Volunteers are insured under our public liability insurance. Risk assessments will be completed for all activities so that potential hazards are prepared for.

You will generally be working on Trust owned sites which are open to the public however if you are asked to undertake a project off of Trust land permission will be sought by GWT beforehand. You will generally be accompanied by a member of staff during your volunteering however there are some survey groups who work separately from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. In these cases it is advised you always undertake survey work in groups.

Who to report to:

You will be assigned a main point of contact depending on your survey area. If you have any issues you are welcome to contact your Volunteer Coordinator. Contact information is available at the end of this document.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's aims for volunteers

- Recognise volunteering as an established area of the Trust, valuing their contributions to the Trust and their local community.
- Provide and maintain a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers and staff and to give appropriate training, induction and supervision for their welfare.
- Recruit volunteers for specific roles, matching Trust needs with volunteers' skills, knowledge and experience.
- A commitment to equal opportunities and believes for all volunteers and staff. Further details can be found in the Trusts Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Recognise Volunteer contribution to Trust and individual volunteer's motivations within the scope of the Trust's needs and resources.
- Appreciates that all offers of help should be acknowledged, but realises that not all offers can be taken up.
- Ensure all volunteers are trained correctly so that they can carry out their role to best effect.
- Committed to implementing and improving standards and best practice for the management and resourcing of voluntary activity by carrying out an annual Volunteer Investment and Value Audit.
- Look for new opportunities for volunteers to become involved in the work of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

Volunteering Guidelines

As a volunteer you have a designated member of staff or fully-trained volunteer to guide and advise you in your role. Your role description names that person and you should try to have regular contact with them. We also aim to hold at least one social event for all volunteers each year. This is an opportunity to meet other volunteers and Trust staff.

A Volunteers Coordinator is also available to give advice, information and support and to deal with any complaints by or about volunteers.

Representing the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

As a volunteer you are an important ambassador for the Trust and should always try to represent its best interests. Volunteers are often seen as "the face" of the Trust and offer the first point of contact for many members of the public who are potential new Trust members and supporters. It is therefore important when representing the Trust that anything you do say to the public reflects the aims, objectives and visions of the Trust. Training will be provided if you are in a public speaking role. If you are ever asked a question you are not sure about, please refer it onto a member of staff. You can also find a brief overview of our aims in the Trust's Strategic Plan, which can be found on our website, on our [who we are page](#)

Attendance

Attendance is not compulsory in voluntary positions however it is important to inform us if you cannot attend so that alternative arrangements can be made. Some projects will need regular commitment from volunteers if you feel you can only offer ad-hoc volunteering please let us know as we can offer other opportunities. The Trust realises that volunteers can decide to leave their voluntary position at any time. If you feel unable to continue volunteering for the Trust, we would be grateful if you could let us know as soon as convenient. Likewise, we will inform you if we can no longer make good use of your contribution.

Confidentiality

As a volunteer you may be party to information about other volunteers, Trust members or information which is not in the public domain. This information must be kept confidential at all times and not be misused. If you are unsure, please ask your supervisor. Where needed, we can provide data protection training.

Communication

It is vital to ensure that such a large organisation works effectively. Trust staff aim to keep volunteers informed of current developments within the Trust and of any matters which affect volunteer roles on a regular basis. We have a monthly volunteer e-newsletter, sent out to all registered volunteers and contains important information for volunteers about the Trust, including upcoming events, potential training

opportunities, volunteer stories and new volunteer roles. Please do take the time to read this publication! Your assigned supervisor will also provide you with regular updates about the Trust.

Claiming Expenses

All volunteers can claim out-of-pocket expenses which must be agreed with your supervisor when you start volunteering. This includes claiming mileage for travel to and from your place of volunteering (up to a 40 mile round trip at 35p per mile). You are asked to complete a Volunteer Expenses Form and submit this to your supervisor for authorisation on a monthly basis.

Recording your Contribution

Your contribution to the work of the Trust is greatly appreciated. In order for us to allocate resources to volunteers and the work that is carried out, it is helpful to know the amount of time you spend volunteering. While out on site with us we will ask you to sign the risk assessment. This not only gives you the opportunity to read the risk assessment but allows us to record your volunteer activity. For those volunteers not part of a practical group, we will instead ask you to complete a record of your hours through the Volunteer Hours Form or by completing our quarterly online volunteer hour's survey.

Vehicle Usage

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has a limited pool of vehicles which may be available for use by volunteers for certain tasks. Volunteers who wish to use a Trust vehicle should ask their supervisor for further information. Any person who drives a Trust vehicle must submit a copy of their driver's license for inspection, have an acceptable claims and conviction record and sign a copy of the Trusts vehicle policy.

Health & Safety

In terms of health and safety, there is no difference between a paid member of staff and a volunteer. The Trust is committed to providing a safe working environment and will provide appropriate instruction, supervision and training to ensure the health and safety of its staff, both paid and unpaid. As a volunteer, you have a duty of care for your own safety and that of others around you.

You should always ensure that your own actions do not affect the safety of other volunteers and staff with whom you are working. You should always report any defects to equipment or any accidents that have occurred, to your supervisor.

Health and Safety Information for Outdoor Workers

This information must be read and understood by all parties carrying out practical work on Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves and should be read before arriving on site.

First Aid

- Make sure that you know the location of the First Aid Box and mobile phone.
- The task leader or another nominated person will be qualified in first aid.

Protective Clothing

- Strong boots or Wellingtons, preferably steel toe-capped, must always be worn.
- Always have a waterproof jacket with you on site.
- In winter: - wear warm clothing in plenty of layers rather than thick bulky items, as these restrict movement.
- In summer: - wear lightweight, practical clothing but not loose fitting, with a hat to protect from strong sun, and wear sun screen.
- Always tie back long hair and remove loose jewellery.

General Health

- Always inform the task leader if you have any allergies or conditions such as asthma.
- Never overwork yourself. Always remember you can do as little or as much work as you feel able to do. Take frequent breaks and do not allow yourself to get too hot or cold.
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Outdoor diseases

The following are conditions which may be contracted whilst working in the countryside. Simple precautions will ensure that you are not put at risk. The task leader will inform you should there be a risk present on the site you are working.

- Tetanus can be contracted through a dirty wound. Ensure that you are up to date with your tetanus immunisation and check your suitability for the injection with your doctor.
- Weil's Disease can be contracted through water in rivers, ponds and ditches. Always ensure that you wash your hands thoroughly before eating and keep cuts covered.
- Lyme Disease can be passed to humans by ticks which live on sheep or deer. Try to keep skin covered when working in areas where these animals are found.

These diseases are very uncommon and there are no known cases of conservation volunteers contracting any of the above.

For further information on these and other diseases which can be contracted whilst working in the countryside, please obtain a copy of the Health and Safety Strategy.

It is very important to take advice from the task leader and always ask if you are unsure about anything.

The above guidelines are for safe working practices and must be observed at all times.

Practical conservation

If you decide to undertake a more practical role please read the following guidelines and refer to the "Using Hand Tools" guide which can be found on our [current volunteers](#) page on our volunteering page of the website

- Every tool has a specific use and must only be used for what it is intended. Using tools in the wrong way can be dangerous to yourself and other workers.
- Please read the booklet "Using Hand Tools" before starting work.
- Power tools such as brush cutters may only be used on production of the relevant certification and with prior permission from Trust staff.

General Risk Assessments

Hazard	Action required
Use of hand tools	Ensure tools are used as instructed.
Weather conditions	Hot and cold drinks will be on sale, volunteers advised to dress in warm clothing. Weather will be monitored in the morning of the event, if extreme weather predicted event may be cancelled
Heavy lifting	Always use correct technique.
Steep banks	Take extra care when working on slopes.
Slips, trips, falls & uneven surfaces	All volunteers will be advised that due to recent heavy rainfall the park is very muddy and slippery. Caution must be taken when walking around. Volunteers are also advised to watch out for trip hazards, uneven ground and low branches
Proximity to water	Wash hands before eating to avoid risk of Weil's disease.
Cattle & sheep	Leave gates as you find them.

	Lyme disease can be contacted through tick bites so keep skin covered. Brucellosis can be contacted through cattle. Ensure loose dogs are controlled.
Lyme disease	Lyme disease can be contracted through tick bites. Advise attendees to: wear a long-sleeved shirt, tuck trousers into socks, use insect repellent, check for ticks after the event.
Public footpaths	Stop work when public passing by.
Public highway/traffic	Volunteers are advised to be cautious when walking around the car park area. Cars will be monitored to ensure everyone is driving at a sensible speed.

Contact details

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