

Role Description for volunteer.



Devon
Wildlife Trust

Opportunity: Practical conservation volunteer group member, working across the Northern Devon Nature Improvement Area (NIA).

Culm grassland (or Rhos pasture) is a nationally important type of purple moor grass and rush pasture, of which a large proportion of the UK's total is in the Culm National Character Area in north Devon. Despite significant conservation efforts, Culm grassland is still under threat, and the current habitat resource is fragmented.

Through the Culm Grassland Natural Flood Management Project, Devon Wildlife Trust are working to maintain and restore North Devon's Culm grassland habitats as a valuable resource for wildlife and for people. One major threat to Culm grassland is encroaching scrub: willow, birch, bramble and gorse. If left unchecked, grassland can become completely scrubbed over, losing its diversity of wildflowers and invertebrates. You can help to protect these amazing local habitats and contribute to this exciting project by joining a practical work party, carrying out scrub clearance work on important Culm sites.

Purpose:

This volunteer role will help deliver practical conservation works across privately owned holdings and common land, primarily as part of the Culm Grassland Natural Flood Management Project. The volunteer group will help to restore management on Culm grassland sites to improve biodiversity and increase the natural flood management value of these habitats. The volunteer group will also assist with the Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project's work to stabilise river banks, in order to improve the riparian habitat. There may be other tasks depending on needs and projects within the NIA team.

What the task involves:

Scrub Clearance on privately owned or common land across North Devon:

- Use of hand tools (e.g. bowsaws, loppers) to cut down and process scrub.
- Fires on site to burn up the arisings from the clearance work.
- Working safely around staff members using chainsaws and herbicides.

Work is likely to be on difficult to access sites, with very wet ground conditions and potentially in bad weather.

Swaling Culm grassland habitats:

- Controlled burning under supervision of experienced personnel.
- Lighting the controlled burn using a butane gas torch.
- Extinguishing small fires using a fire beater.

Tree planting on riverbanks:

- Use of hand tools to plant trees (mallets, spades, bars, sledgehammers).

Skills and abilities

All levels of ability welcome, although volunteers need to be able to work outdoors in bad weather conditions. All training in techniques and hand tool use will be provided by experienced project staff and regularly refreshed through tool talks. Previous experience of the practical operations is desirable but not necessary.

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Where:
Scrub clearance and swaling operations will be across North Devon, but particularly focussed in the Taw and Torridge Catchments. The first work party will be at Langtree Moor. For meeting place and further details contact Tom Parsons (details below). Tree planting will be in the Freshwater Pearl Mussel Project area, which covers several areas along the Torridge and its tributaries.
When and how often:
One day per month between January and March. First work party will be Tuesday 23 rd Jan, 1000-1600.
Who is the supervisor:
Supervised by NIA staff, in particular Tom Parsons. Izzy Moser will supervise any works through the Freshwater Pearl Mussel project.
Expenses/equipment available:
Gloves, hearing protection, safety spectacles if required Travel expenses
Health and Safety/ Risk Assessment
Risk assessments will be provided for each site by the supervising project staff. A generic risk assessment is attached. During scrub clearance volunteers will be working around staff using chainsaws and felling trees and so need to be aware of safe working distances at all times.
What's in it for the volunteer?
Biscuits. Contribute towards saving Culm grassland habitats where management is difficult. Gain practical conservation skills. Learn more about the Culm grassland habitats and species.
What do I need to bring?
Stout footwear: work is often on wet sites so sturdy waterproof boots or wellies with steel toe-caps are recommended. Appropriate clothing: wear something which you won't mind damaging or getting muddy. Bring plenty of layers to keep warm. Waterproofs. Lunch and water: bring food and drink for a full day's outdoor work.
How to apply
Contact Tom Parsons at the Cookworthy Office (01409 221823 or tparsons@devonwildlifetrust.org)

Task start date: 1st January 2017

Task review date: 2nd February 2018

Task end date: 15th April 2018