
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.

This pack has information on:

- Volunteers and DWT
- Why volunteer for DWT
- What you can expect from DWT
- What DWT expect from you
- Volunteering and COVID
- 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 mission of bringing wildlife back across Devon's landscape, rivers and seas. This makes volunteers one of our most valuable resources. The partnership of volunteers and DWT staff accomplishes much more for 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 first established by volunteers in 1962 and remained volunteer led for many years; without those first far-sighted volunteers, Devon Wildlife Trust would not be the thriving organisation it is today.

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 'Volunteer Newsletter'.

The Four Principles of Volunteering

1. **Choice:** Volunteering must be a choice freely made by everyone. No coercion or compulsion will be used when encouraging volunteers. Volunteers are free to refuse tasks and staff will make no unreasonable demands.
2. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity:** DWT welcomes volunteers of all backgrounds and abilities. DWT will proactively strive to ensure that we reach diverse audiences, will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate those with additional needs, and will ensure that our volunteer base reflects the composition of Devon's communities. We will not tolerate prejudice or behaviours that exclude or marginalise others.

3. **Mutual Benefit:** Volunteers will benefit from their contribution to DWT and feel their contribution is personally fulfilling. Benefits could include a sense of worthwhile achievement, gaining or making use of skills, gaining experience and contacts, meeting others and having fun. We want volunteers to feel part of the life of the organisation and a valued part of the DWT community. DWT will endeavour to find out what volunteers wish to achieve through their volunteering and support them to do this where possible.
4. **Recognition:** We believe that explicit recognition of the value of what volunteers contribute to the organisation, to the environment and to the community is essential.

Our Organisational Values

Part of volunteering for Devon Wildlife Trust is working within the spirit of our organisational values, which are as follows:

- **Everyone Counts:** giving everyone a chance to discover and enjoy Devon's wildlife, wherever they live, whatever they believe and whatever barriers might exist
- **An atmosphere of Trust:** creating an environment where people feel their views and ideas count and where they are willing to take responsibility for leading
- **Going the Extra mile:** staying the course and delivering above and beyond what our stakeholders would expect
- **Passion with reason:** pursuing our work with drive and zeal, but making sure our arguments are reasoned and based on sound evidence
- **Considerate partners:** being aware of the needs and concerns of those we work with, recognising mutual strengths and sharing credit
- **Inspiring minds:** developing, experimenting and broadening our work, sowing enthusiasm with abandon bringing everyone under wildlife's spell.

Why volunteer for DWT

We have a Vision of a Devon rich in wildlife across its landscape, rivers and seas in which:

- Nature is everywhere
- Nature is normal
- We have wilder cities
- Wildlife is abundant
- Our seas are protected and thriving
- Whales and dolphins are regular sights around our coasts again
- Our rivers are vibrant
- Our uplands are restored

Volunteers play an essential role in making this happen.

As a volunteer, 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. You will:

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- 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

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- 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 Role Description(s) and/or as agreed with your supervisor.
- Ask for advice, support or adaptations to your role 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, Safeguarding, Data Protection and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policies
- 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 and submit the number of hours you volunteer for DWT
- 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

If you are on benefits, you are free to volunteer as much as you like as long as you can still meet the requirements of the benefit you are on. It is advised to tell your benefits office about your volunteering. You are welcome to talk to the Volunteers Officer if you are unsure about volunteering and benefits. There is more information on the government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/volunteering-and-claiming-benefits>

Reimbursement of expenses

DWT can pay out-of-pocket expenses to volunteers that are agreed in advance. This will include expenses incurred in the course of your volunteering, and also most travel expenses to your volunteering location if they were incurred wholly and exclusively for the purpose of volunteering for DWT.

Travel expenses

Our travel expense policy tries to minimise our carbon footprint. 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 reasonable 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 45p 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.

Motorbike mileage can be reimbursed at a rate of 24p per mile, and bicycle use at 20p per mile.

There remains discretion for project officers on a case-by-case basis, e.g. if you are in a rurally isolated area, they maybe be able to offer an additional 25 miles at 20p a mile.

How to claim: Your supervisor will give you an expenses claim sheet. Fill this in and return to your supervisor with the relevant receipts. Expenses claims are usually paid via BACS. Currently this takes about three weeks which is by far the simplest way for staff to manage. However, if you would like it sooner do ask that we have petty cash ready for you instead.

Benefits of volunteering

As a volunteer for DWT, you are able to use the website 'Charity Worker Discounts', which provides a fantastic selection of discounts for charity staff and volunteers. The website address is <https://www.charityworkerdiscounts.com/> and you can sign up with your email address.

Driving as part of your volunteering

Some of our volunteering roles involve driving in order to be able to complete the tasks. In these instances, to make sure you are covered by our insurers, you will need to provide DWT with a drivers licence check.

<https://www.gov.uk/view-driving-licence> You will need to follow this link and generate a unique driver's licence check code. Once this is generated, you will be prompted to save the document. Please save it and send it to the volunteering team. If you use your private vehicle for these tasks (**this does not include commuting**) we require your full vehicle registration, make and model, and a copy of your Motor Insurance, which has to show that business use is included in your coverage.

Health and Safety and Insurance

Every role is covered by a risk assessment, and your supervisor will tell you what you need to know to keep yourself and others safe.

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. There is not usually a charge for adding volunteering to an insurance policy.

Volunteering and COVID

COVID is clearly here to stay, and while there are now no legal restrictions in place, measures to protect us all from COVID now feature in risk assessments and standard practice. The measures we expect all volunteers to take to minimise the risk to everyone of infection and spread are detailed below:

- Do not volunteer if you have tested positive for COVID or are displaying symptoms
- Please regularly sanitise hands and socially distance where possible, particularly in enclosed spaces
- We are encouraging all staff and volunteers to continue wearing facemasks in enclosed spaces and also where social distancing is difficult (unless you have a health condition).
- Ensure enclosed spaces are well ventilated

Resolving Problems

DWT has developed problem-solving procedures to ensure that volunteers are treated fairly. These are available in full on request or, if you wish to make a complaint, by searching 'How to make a complaint' on the website. In general, complaints by or against a volunteer will be dealt with in the first instance by their supervisor and/or the Volunteers Officer, as appropriate. At all times, we are looking to resolve the problem and will keep the volunteer fully informed of progress. If necessary, the CEO and Trustees will be involved and volunteers always have a right of appeal to them.

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 Volunteering Team. **All volunteers are welcome to contact the Volunteering Team about anything to do with their volunteering.**

What do volunteers do?

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. They organise many 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 local level.

Events

There are often events throughout the year for which extra help is useful. 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.

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. A small team of full-time volunteers are trained up to support the Nature Reserves Team each year.



Surveying

The Devon Wildlife Trust is rightly renowned for the high quality of its survey work and stores wildlife data in the Devon Biodiversity 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. You can request a paper records forum, or input them directly here: <https://www.dbrc.org.uk/>



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 activities. 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. We also have a number of volunteers who kindly service collecting tins like the one pictured in their local shops.

Office work

There are often admin tasks with which we need help. From time-to-time various members of staff require help with a range of tasks including database work, research work and general office administration.

Wildlife Helpdesk

Wildlife Helpdesk Volunteers run the Wildlife Helpdesk, responding to enquiries from the general public on any aspect of wildlife conservation, including planning, management, welfare, species identification. Helpdesk volunteers receive 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 Group

Garden Group is a friendly 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's also great fun too!

Project Volunteers

We have a number of projects such as the Devon Beaver Project, Northern Devon Natural Solutions, Saving Devon's Treescapes and the Avon Valley Project that involve volunteers in a variety of ways such as practical conservation, citizen science (survey), tree nursery, admin etc.

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.

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. Do please let us know if you have a specialism you would be willing to share.

How to register as a DWT volunteer

- If you are applying for a specific role, contact volunteering@devonwildlifetrust.org or Volunteering Assistant, Cricklepit Mill, Commercial Road, Exeter, EX2 4AB and we will send you a form to complete and return. Unfortunately, unless you are applying for a specific role, we are not able to register you as a volunteer.
- Once registered, your supervisor will sort out a start date and induction with you.
- We will send you our quarterly newsletter for DWT volunteers with news, information, and new volunteer roles. We will also invite you to events such as the Volunteers Forum.
- 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 to see if you would be interested in that role.
- 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 Tanya Hutchings at Cricklepit Mill volunteering@devonwildlifetrust.org or 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 36,000 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 59 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