

Habitat & Biodiversity Survey Volunteer

Role description:

The Habitat & Biodiversity Survey Volunteer role is a seasonal role to help us out during the busy survey seasons of spring and summer. The surveys are varied and cover anything from generic hedgerow, woodland or habitat surveys to more specific bat, lizard or frog orchid surveys. These tasks will cover the full range of the Belfast Hills, from Carnmoney to Slievenacloy.

Purpose:

Volunteers help conserve the natural beauty of the Belfast Hills by assisting the Belfast Hills Partnership team with the practical management of the Hills. Surveys are an important part of this as the results determine what management plans to put in place to help conserve, maintain and enhance the sites in the hills. Everyone who is capable of a little light work and enjoys spending time outside is welcome to join us regardless of age, ability and motivation.

Tasks and duties:

There are a range of surveys that need to be carried out, for example:

- hedgerow
- general habitat
- woodland
- orchid species
- bat
- specific wildflowers

When:

Spring and summer months, usually on Monday mornings though this is subject to change. If the task day changes, you will be notified in advance.

Location:

The tasks will be located across the Belfast Hills, from Slievenacloy to Carnmoney.

Why volunteer:

- Gain valuable survey experience
- Get to know your local environment on a new level
- Learn new species and how to identify them
- Learn new survey techniques and methods
- Explore new areas
- Meet new people

Who will you volunteer with:

The survey tasks are led by our Volunteer Officer and/or our Hills Project Officer, who, amongst other things, works on biodiversity projects in the Belfast Hills. You will work as part of small but



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lovely team of volunteers of diverse ages and backgrounds who come together to help us carry out essential surveys which will help influence our management plans.

Support, supervision and training:

Full training and survey technique methods will be given for each task by experienced staff. Staff on tasks are fully qualified first aiders. You will not be expected to take the role of a member of staff, operate machinery or carry out any task which you feel uncomfortable doing. Volunteer feedback and input is always welcome and is treated with respect and enthusiasm by the Volunteer Officer. Volunteers can also request a reference from our Volunteer Officer.



Commitment:

This role is flexible to suit everyone and volunteers can decide how much or little time they commit. Surveys do tend to run over spring and summer only, though there may be the odd one in the autumn or winter months. Some of the surveys are more specific and may require the same volunteers to attend each one; however, you will be notified of this.

Skills, qualities and abilities needed:

Some background knowledge of the flora/fauna to be surveyed wouldn't go a miss; we are not looking for experts though if you are, we certainly welcome you! Some surveys will be on specific plants or wildlife and may need a bit more experience or training. You will be notified of this in the emails for each survey. For more generic surveys you don't necessarily need experience or prior knowledge as we go over the methodology on the day and do on-task identification training. When there is a mix of knowledgeable and less knowledgeable volunteers, the survey leader will always try to join the less experienced with the more experienced so you can all learn continuously. Having an

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interest in the natural environment and a willingness to learn new skills is important. Flexibility and enthusiasm is essential as well as the ability to work closely with others. Tasks vary on their physical fitness and ability levels. If you are unsure whether you will be able to do the tasks, please don't hesitate to call our Volunteer Officer to find out more about the physical demands of the activity. Volunteers can always refuse tasks and demands they find unrealistic or that they feel uncomfortable with.

What to bring:

We ask all volunteers to dress appropriately for the weather – wearing layers is the best way to prepare for the ever changing Northern Irish weather! Waterproofs and sturdy boots or wellies are essential. It is also a good idea to bring a cold drink and snack if you wish.

We provide:

The task leader will give you training in survey techniques and a safety brief before each task. BHP also provides all materials, necessary safety equipment, and, most importantly, tea, coffee and biscuits! Although we would like to, we currently cannot afford to cover expenses for volunteers. Volunteers will be notified of any future changes to this policy.

Insurance:

As a volunteer you will be covered under Belfast Hills Partnership Employer's Liability insurance whilst actively engaged with a Belfast Hills Partnership task or activity.



If you want to become a Habitat & Biodiversity Survey Volunteer:

Email our Volunteer Officer at:
lisa.critchley@belfasthills.org

Or call:
02890 603 466



Get involved!