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Volunteer Biodiversity Surveyor - Role Description

People won't protect things if they don't know about them and it's very important that they should not only know about them, but understand the way they work. - Sir David Attenborough

Introduction

One of KCWG's key roles is to increase knowledge and skills: our volunteers receive both informal and formal training, often achieving industry-recognised qualifications. Our approach is "learn, practice, do".

We have received funding from Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru / Natural Resources Wales (CNC/NRW) to train existing and new volunteers in biodiversity surveying, identifying and recording the different plants, birds, animals and insects in the woods we help to manage – skills we have lacked until now. This training will allow us to become more self-reliant and better understand the woods in which we work, as well as providing an accessible record of natural heritage for the future. Importantly, volunteers will develop and hone their skills through regular surveys, rather than simply receiving one-off training. Survey results will be reported to the National Biodiversity Network via the Biodiversity Information Service for Powys & Brecon Beacons National Park.

The management of the woods will be informed by the biodiversity surveys and enacted through our woodland task days - a virtuous circle that provides excellent opportunities to enhance the woodlands, improve local knowledge and understanding of woodlands and build a stronger community. We claim to manage woodlands for the benefit of wildlife so we need to be able to demonstrate this.

Training

Volunteers will be provided with training to allow them to fulfil the role of Volunteer Biodiversity Surveyor. We will provide training in 3 areas – botanical surveys, ornithological surveys and moth surveys. This will allow us to gather some baseline data. Volunteers can join more than one training area if they wish to do so.

The botanical survey training will consist of 4 x 1-day training sessions during April to August 2022 with a mix of classroom learning and practical survey techniques. The moth survey training will consist of an introductory classroom-based session and up to 4 expert-led trapping sessions, again over April to August 2022. The live moth traps will be set in the evening and the moths identified the next morning so please expect some anti-social hours.

The botanical and moth training would be carried out in the woodlands that we currently manage, primarily at Castle Ring Wood in Beggar's Bush, Powys (SO267639) and Weir Cottage Wood, in Shropshire (SO 277735). If further training sites are needed, we will also train at other woods where we have either worked in the past or where we have a good relationship with the owner. These are Cnwclas / Knucklas Castle Wood, Cnwclas, Powys (SO251743) and Greenstreete Wood, Llangunllo, Powys (SO205715).

The bird survey training we hope to attend is a 4-day residential course provided by the Field Studies Council at Preston Montford, near Shrewsbury. We have funding for a maximum of 4 volunteers to attend this training, however it is not currently running due to Covid restrictions. Assuming it will resume in 2022, there will be the opportunity to practice both woodland and farmland surveys, including habitat assessment. In addition, wetland surveys, coastal surveys, winter and other supplementary techniques will be covered in lectures. There will be at least one early start. If the FSC does not offer the course we will identify an alternative training provider.

In addition to the knowledge gained on the training courses, volunteer surveyors can use available smart phone apps to help with identification and will draw on the support of County Recorders to help with data accuracy. We have

been in contact with Radnorshire Wildlife Trust and they have said that our volunteer surveyors could practice their skills at Gilfach Nature Reserve with the Gilfach Rangers Group.

Project Continuity

It is very important that the skills and knowledge gained through the formal training is retained within the Group. Therefore, it is our intention that all those who receive the formal training will pass their knowledge on to other existing and new volunteers through informal on-the-job training and practice, so broadening our skills base and ensuring continuity of skills as individual volunteers join and leave our Group. In this way we maintain a pool of volunteers who are either formally or informally trained to carry out surveys, from which we can draw Volunteer Leaders.

Volunteer Leaders

From within the group of volunteers who receive the formal training we will reach a consensus agreement on a Volunteer Leader, or 2 Joint Volunteer Leaders, for each area (botany, ornithology, moths).

The Volunteer Leader(s) will:

- Attend the formal training sessions which will be paid for by KCWG, using CNC/NRW funding.
- Organise and fulfil regular, timely surveys of the woods that KCWG helps to manage, assisted by other volunteers who have received formal or informal training.
- Over time, train and mentor other volunteers who have not been formally trained to ensure succession of knowledge within KCWG, assisted by other volunteers who have received formal or informal training.
- Record the results of the surveys on KCWG's central 'cloud' filing system, following internal training from KCWG on how to do this.
- Report the results of the surveys to the National Biodiversity Network via the Biodiversity Information Service for Powys & Brecon Beacons National Park – how to do this will form part of the formal training.
- Store the survey equipment and field guides, which will remain the property of KCWG, and return them to KCWG in the event that they cease being a Volunteer Leader.
- Liaise with other organisations on the sharing of biodiversity data, once relationships have been established by the KCWG Project Officer as part of the NRW funded work.

Partnership Working

We believe that partnership working and collaboration are important. Therefore, as part of this proposal, we believe it is worth exploring connectivity with other sites, rather than just looking after our little patches, as this project presents a good opportunity to use the data collected in a broader way. We intend to engage with others so we can map the biodiversity connectivity opportunities of these woodlands with other sites in the area.

There is plenty of potential to share knowledge - with CNC/NRW, Woodland Trust and Radnorshire Wildlife Trust sites near to Castle Ring Wood. The KCWG Project Officer will initially lead on this aspect of the CNC/NRW funded work and the RWT Community Wildlife Officer has offered assistance.

Skills required

We would like those who attend the formal training sessions to have some identification skills and be self-motivated. They will be supported by an experienced and knowledgeable group who have been running for the past 10 years.

Benefits and Perks of the role

Using your skills and experience to help support local wildlife, the local community and making a positive contribution to the ecological and climate crisis. Volunteering alongside a wonderful established group therefore allowing you to socialise and enhance your knowledge. The opportunity to apply for expenses is available if you desire.

For more information please email: woodland@tveg.org.uk or telephone 01547 520374. To learn more about KCWG, please go to <http://tveg.org.uk/wordpress/what-we-do/woodland-project>