**Volunteer Role:** Northamptonshire Wider Countryside Voluntary Officer

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| **Support Person** | Katharine Banham  Conservation Officer (Northamptonshire) |
| **Role Purpose** | This role provides an opportunity to gain skills and experience through working alongside the Wider Countryside Team in Northamptonshire. We’re a busy team whose work includes providing nature conservation advice to landowners, public bodies and individual members of the public; undertaking surveys; working with local communities on conservation projects and supporting the high-quality management of our nature reserves. |
| **Specific Tasks** | The role will include working outside and at a desk. Our work programme is likely to include:   * Assisting with surveys of different habitats (probably including woodlands, grasslands and wetlands) to support work on the Local Wildlife Site programme. This includes undertaking surveys, writing reports and preparing species lists. Local Wildlife Sites are places that have been recognised for their importance to wildlife at a county level. * Help with the discovery and assessment of sites which are important to nature that are on previously developed land, mostly within urban areas in the county. * Assisting with visits to a variety of different landowners and groups to give advice on how to encourage wildlife into different spaces. * Working with members of our team to promote the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area, particularly helping people to appreciate its importance for overwintering birds. * Assisting with species surveys as opportunities arise. * Helping with the assessment of planning applications, including screening applications for wildlife impacts, critically evaluating planning documents and preparing comments for submission to the planning authorities. * Participating in practical habitat management tasks on our nature reserves. * Using QGIS (a Geographic Information System) to explore the development of networks for nature across the county.   The tasks suggested above illustrate what may be available to the Wider Countryside Voluntary Officer. The exact work programme will be based upon the specific interests of the successful candidate and work available at the time. |
| **Skills and Qualities Needed** | Volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and have many different qualities and skills. Essential skills and qualities for this role are:   * Enthusiasm about wildlife and environmental issues. * A developing knowledge of British natural history. * Basic understanding of the principles of ecology and the practices of nature conservation. * Comfortable interacting with people. * Willingness to work outside in all weathers. * Competent user of Windows/Microsoft Office based computer software, including Word, Excel, Outlook. Some experience of using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping software e.g. MapInfo, ArcView or QGIS would be desirable but training is available. * A driving licence and access to your own vehicle is very useful.   We’re wild about inclusion and want our staff and volunteers to be as diverse as wildlife. As an inclusive employer we recognise that our workforce needs to better reflect the communities in which we live and work. We actively encourage applications from people of all backgrounds, identities and cultures.  We believe that a diverse workforce will help us create our vision of ‘people close to nature, with land and seas rich in wildlife’. |
| **Commitment** | 2 or 3 days a week (Monday-Friday) for about 6 months. Some training and events will be at weekends. |
| **Support and Training** | It is expected that the Voluntary Conservation Officer will gain a wide range of skills in the field of nature conservation.  Much of this will be from “on the job” experience as well as structured reading and the development of skills in free time, such as natural history skills. The Wildlife Trust organises an extensive programme of Wildlife Training Workshops run by specialists, of which Voluntary Conservation Officers may attend five free of charge.  Training will be offered in the following areas, depending on experience:   * Species identification * Species and habitat surveying techniques * Habitat management techniques * Applied use of GIS software * First Aid at Work (certificated) * Health & Safety and Risk Assessments   Other opportunities for gaining experience in this Wildlife Trust may be available, depending on the interests of the individual. |
| **Expectations of WTBCN Volunteers** | 1. Willingness to abide by the Wildlife Trust BCN’s Policies and Procedures, including Health and Safety and Fire. 2. Go about duties in a resource-efficient way and minimise impacts to the environment. 3. Open to change, flexibility and a desire to learn. 4. Commitment to attend on-going training. 5. Be self-motivated and organised. |
| **Location of volunteering** | * Our office base is at Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE. * The role will also include frequent travel to sites across Northamptonshire. * As a team we work from home for about half the week, so a willingness to work from home at times would be useful. |

Task Description Updated: 10/03/2025