



Somerset Wildlife Trust



Volunteer Handbook

This handbook will be reviewed annually by Tony Sneydaker - March 2020

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Welcome...

...you are now part of a network of volunteers who help Somerset Wildlife Trust to protect and improve habitats to benefit wildlife and people.

Volunteers share their time, skill, experience and expertise and help us shape and improve the way we work together as an organisation. Now you've chosen to volunteer, you will be helping to protect our wild places for future generations. Whether you are volunteering with us to gain further experience to help you in employment, would like to meet new people, maintain your existing skills or learn new ones in retirement, we hope you will find it enjoyable and rewarding.

The Volunteers Agreement on page 4 outlines what we will do for you and what we expect from our volunteers. This handbook includes all the general information you'll need to know about volunteering with Somerset Wildlife Trust. Thank you for taking the time to read it, we hope it will be a useful reference for you.

Thank for your commitment to wildlife and for joining with us to play your part in helping nature recover in Somerset.

Warmest wishes,



Bryony Slaymaker
Volunteer Coordinator
Somerset Wildlife Trust



Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

Each role will entail different tasks and carry different responsibilities. Your main staff contact will go through these with you when you start.

The Volunteer Agreement sets out what all volunteers can expect from the Trust and what we expect from our volunteers.

Somerset Wildlife Trust will:

- Provide you with a role profile, induction and designated contact, who may be a member of staff or another volunteer.
- Ensure that voluntary opportunities are open and inclusive, as far as is practically possible.
- Ensure you are in a safe working environment. Carry out, share and explain risk assessments as necessary.
- Provide clear instruction, relevant training, Personal Protective Equipment and tools for the tasks that we ask you to carry out, so that you can complete all aspects of your roles competently and safely.
- Provide Employers Liability insurance when you are carrying out agreed volunteering activities.
- Provide out-of-pocket expenses as agreed with your staff contact in-line with the expenses policy.
- Reply to queries within 10 working days of receipt: written or verbal. Provide a transparent complaints procedure.
- Provide regular communications via our e-newsletter (opt-in required) and annual events. Provide a meeting with your staff contact or volunteer coordinator if/when further support is requested or required.
- Hold your personal data securely, confidentially and in-line with all current legislation. Regularly review personal data held.
- Properly plan and budget for including volunteers in the work of SWT, endeavour to show our appreciation and to recognise the contribution of volunteers.

Volunteers are expected to:

- Carry out their role to the best of their ability and adhere to their role description, unless an activity that goes beyond the remit of the role description is agreed in advance. Consult their contact if they are ever unsure.
- Always follow instructions, take note of risk assessments and adhere to safety working practices. Inform their contact if they have concerns or require clarification. Report all incidents, accidents or near misses.
- Undertake relevant training.
- Always represent the Trust professionally, speak well of the Trust publicly and interact courteously with the public when carrying out SWT business/activities. This includes online representation.
- Take good care of SWT resources and equipment.
- Inform their contact if there are changes in their circumstance, including medical conditions or other situations that may affect their ability to undertake their volunteer tasks.
- Respect confidentiality of information.
- Provide the Trust with required personal details and notify the Trust of changes e.g. change of address.
- Undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service check at the appropriate level, if they will be working with children or adults at risk, accessing personal data or be responsible for Trust money.
- Give as much or as little time as they consider appropriate to them



About Somerset Wildlife Trust

Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) is an independent charitable organisation. We are affiliated to and actively support The Wildlife Trusts (The Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts) which is the national partnership of 47 local Wildlife Trusts throughout the UK. Together we are the biggest movement in the UK aiming to protect and restore a living landscape for people and wildlife.

Our Vision

Our vision for Somerset is a county teeming with wildlife valued by everyone. We see landscapes full of flowers, accompanied by a chorus of birdsong and buzzing with insects. We envisage habitats, green spaces and natural places of all shapes and sizes that are enjoyed, shared and cared for by people and their communities, woven together into a rich, living tapestry - an environmental life support network for the entire county. We picture a healthy and resilient environment where the needs of wildlife, people and local economies are balanced in a way that will support our lives now, and those of our children in the future. The natural world is at the heart of our wellbeing and prosperity; we depend on it and it depends on us.



Our History

We were originally founded in 1964 by volunteers as The Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation. In the early 1960s, similar charitable trusts came into existence across Britain as local naturalists, encouraged by people like Christopher Cadbury, Francis Rose and Ted Smith, decided it was no longer enough just to identify and record wildlife, there was also an increasingly pressing need to take direct action to secure its future. In common with most trusts, the bedrock of the SWT was the support it received from members of local natural history societies. It was no coincidence that the first meeting to discuss forming a conservation charity was held at the headquarters of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society at Taunton Museum, with 15 people in attendance, who raised the initial capital by each of them contributing a £1 note.

Somerset Wildlife Trust today is concentrating on creating ecological networks that rebuild the county's natural environment. We specialise in nature reserves, conservation policy, education and community involvement. We also give advice on conservation to developers, communities, businesses, local authorities and individuals.

- SWT manages 68 nature reserves across Somerset covering 1720 hectares
- SWT has over 20,000 paying members
- SWT employs 50 staff and engages over 300 volunteers
- SWT spends on average £2,500,000 annually on nature conservation in the county

Our Purpose

The core focus points of our strategy for 2020 and beyond are:

- Help nature recover across Somerset's landscapes
- Inspire and connect people with nature
- Stand up for nature
- Provide positive solutions to climate change in the county

Whatever your role within the Trust, you will be contributing towards one or more of these areas.

For more information please get in touch at: volunteering@somersetwildlife.org





Organisational Structure

Somerset Wildlife Trust is registered as a Charity (no.238372). The following is a summary of the organisational structure and people involved in the Trust.

Our Partners

Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC)

SERC is a partnership between SWT and Somerset County Council, who also rely on volunteer support and are based at the SWT Taunton Office. SERC are the main reference centre for biological and geological information for the county. The data that the record centre gathers on sites, habitats and species across Somerset is used to inform conservation strategy, development planning, and for research. Individuals and organisations can access this information through the data enquiries service.

Find out more about SERC on their website: <http://www.somerc.com>

The Council of Trustees

The Council of Somerset Wildlife Trust has overall responsibility for governance of the organisation. The Council meet at set times over the year to set organisational policy and oversee our work. They report each year in the Trustees Annual Report and accounts and in person at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Our Council is made up of 10 trustees who bring a range of skills, knowledge and experience to the organisation. All trustees are volunteers, give freely of their time and have no beneficial interest in the group or charity. Trustees are elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting and serve for a term of 5 years. Each trustee can serve for 2 consecutive terms of office and then must stand down for a year until they become eligible to stand again. The Chair, Vice-Chair and Treasurer are elected by Council following the AGM and serve one-year terms. Trustees cannot hold the position of Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer for more than 5 consecutive years.

Our Council is assisted by 3 Committees:

- Finance and Resources Committee
- Health and Safety Committee
- Risk Management Committee

In addition, the chairs of all committees meet with the Chair of Trustees and the Chief Executive twice a year to review governance performance.

Staff and Volunteer Team

There are about 50 staff and a growing team of volunteers who have responsibility for bringing the Trust vision to life.

Important Information

Registration and Induction

This can vary considerably depending on your role. As a volunteer, you should expect to receive:

- A registration form for completion (your details will be kept securely on our system and only used for purposes related to your volunteering). You may be asked to complete additional forms, e.g. driver declaration
- Your role profile
- Information on who your designated contact is and how and when to contact them
- Introduction to your area of work and any equipment/tools you may be using
- Any relevant health and safety information
- Information on how you fit into the wider volunteering network of SWT

Recording Hours

Your contribution to the work of the Trust is greatly appreciated. To assist us when applying for new funding and allocating resources to the work that is carried out, it is helpful to know the amount of time you spend volunteering.

If you take part in a group task, the task party leader records the hours undertaken so you won't need to record this yourself. For those volunteers not part of a practical group, we will instead ask you to complete a record of your hours on a timesheet supplied to you.

Expenses

(For more info, please refer to: Volunteer Expenses Policy)

The Trust want to ensure cost is not a barrier to volunteering so we will provide reasonable out of pocket expenses, including travel beyond your normal volunteer meeting point, in line with the Volunteer Expense Policy. This must be agreed in advance with your staff contact, you will be given an expenses form as part of your induction.

We encourage the use of public transport and car-sharing. It is your responsibility to ensure your car is appropriately insured.



Equal Opportunities

(For more info, please refer to: Staff handbook Appendix 1 Equal Opportunities Policy)

Somerset Wildlife Trust does not discriminate unfairly on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics); or any other factor unrelated to a person's ability to carry out their volunteering role.

This applies to the selection of volunteers, carrying out your role and to training and development opportunities. We do not accept such discrimination by staff or volunteers.

If you believe that you have suffered discrimination, please speak to your main contact or the volunteer coordinator.



Running Public Events

Area Groups, Wildlife Watch clubs and other community based groups are entirely volunteer run. If you run events on behalf of the Trust you have an additional responsibility to ensure you comply with the laws regarding Data Protection, Safeguarding and Health and Safety.

The volunteer support team and your staff contact are available to offer you advice and support when you need it.

As a general guide, events should be cancelled, postponed or halted if:

- You have been advised to do so by the Trust (exceptional circumstances)
- The event takes place in a wooded area and a Yellow warning for wind has been issued
- The Met office has issued "only essential travel" advice
- The weather or circumstances mean the event has become unsafe or extremely unenjoyable e.g. heavy rain on a butterfly walk
- The location is no longer suitable or contravenes the risk assessment for example recent rock falls or changes to livestock management

When cancelling events, we recommend the following:

- 48 hours or more until the event: amend all online advertisements; email participants
- 48 hours or less: amend all online advertisements; email participants and ask for a confirmation of receipt; follow up if confirmation not received
- 24 hours or less: call all participants; amend all online advertisements

Representing Somerset Wildlife Trust

As a volunteer you are often seen as 'the face' of the Trust and offer the first point of contact for many members of the public who are potentially new Trust members and supporters. It is therefore important when representing the Trust that anything you do say to the public reflects the aims, objectives and visions of the Trust and positively represents the Trust; this includes both on site e.g. chatting to a dog walker and online e.g. commenting on a Facebook post. If you are ever asked a question you are not sure about, please refer it onto a member of staff or direct people to our website.

All formal media enquires must go through the SWT communications team at Head Office. This includes but is not limited to, interviews with TV, radio, newspapers and magazines. If you have any concerns or queries you can always speak to your staff contact or the volunteer support team.

Health and Safety

(For more information please refer to: Volunteer Safety HSP-14)

The Trust has both a legal and moral obligation to provide and maintain working conditions, equipment and procedures which are safe for our staff and volunteers. The Trust must also provide the information, training, supervision and personal protective equipment (PPE) required to achieve this. We carry out risk assessments for all our work, these should be explained before you begin volunteering, please ask your staff contact to see a copy.

Your Health and Safety Responsibilities

You must provide us with details of any medical conditions relevant to your role and provide emergency contact details on the volunteer registration form. You should let us know if these details change.

As a volunteer, you have a duty of care for your own safety and that of others around you. You must follow any health and safety guidance you are given and ask for clarification if anything is unclear. Those who do not abide by SWT codes of practice and put themselves or others at risk may be suspended or excluded from volunteering. Conduct which causes immediate danger will be handled swiftly and volunteers may be asked to leave immediately. You will have an opportunity to discuss before final decisions are made.

Finally, if you observe anything that you think might be unsafe or you are involved in or see an accident, incident or near miss, you must report it to the nearest member of staff to action.



Accident Recording

All accidents and incidents, however minor they might appear to be, should be recorded and reported to your designated contact. This also applies to any near misses where the potential for harm was recognisable, so that lessons can be learned. All offices and our staff or volunteers will have access to an accident reporting book - it is often located with the first aid kit.

First Aid

First aid kits are available at all Trust locations and vehicles and should always be available at any work party or offsite event. You will be informed who the designated first aider is. The Trust will provide first aid training and refreshers for volunteers who require it for their role.

Working Alone

(For additional info, please refer to: LONE WORKING PROCEDURES HSP-15)

We try not to ask people to do volunteer tasks alone, but for some roles it is unavoidable, i.e. wardening or stock checking. Lone working should take place only if you are confident that you are safe and able to work alone. Always make sure your staff contact knows where you are, if you intend to work alone. If it is a regular part of your role, it will have been risk assessed in detail, and the implications and relevant procedures discussed with you in advance.





Insurance

All registered volunteers are insured by the Trust for their volunteering, so long as they are undertaking work agreed by the Trust, have followed our policies and procedures and any instructions or guidance that have been given.

This includes cover:

- if you are injured by another person
- if you accidentally injure or damage someone or something else
- if you injure yourself by accident

Personal equipment and belongings are not insured.

If you are using your own car to carry out volunteer work on behalf of the Trust your insurer may consider this to be 'business use'. It is your responsibility to check with your insurer that you have adequate cover for any use of your car related to your volunteering. If you drive as part of your role (not just commuting), you will need to complete a driver declaration form.





Working with Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults

(For more info, please refer to: SWT Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY HSP-20)

Somerset Wildlife Trust works with children, young people and vulnerable adults (C, YP & VA) on a regular basis, this work is important to the Trust's aims to inspire and connect people to nature.

Our Safeguarding policy applies to all Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer, Directors, Managers, staff, trainees and authorised volunteers, working for and on behalf of the Trust with C, YP & VA. Most safeguarding practices are an extension of everyday common sense based on having respect for others.

Volunteers whose roles bring them into regular contact with C, YP & VA may require additional checks, references, induction, training and ongoing support (e.g. Wildlife Watch Leaders). You may be subject to an enhanced DBS. You will also be expected to attend regular Safeguarding training and asked to become familiar with our policies and procedures for volunteering with C, YP & VA.

Risk assessment-based procedures apply to volunteering with C, YP & VA. The risk assessments will consider the likelihood of these groups having a lesser understanding or ability to undertake tasks, the need for specialist equipment, tailored instruction and extra supervision.

Restrictions are in place for young volunteers as follows:

- Aged under 16: must be accompanied by Parent/Guardian
- Aged 16/17: parental consent form to be completed

If you have concerns or queries regarding the safety or wellbeing of a C, YP or VA please contact the support team volunteering@Somersetwildlife.org



Information Management

Confidentiality

As a Trust volunteer you may become aware of or volunteer directly with information which is of a confidential nature. This might be about protected species, new projects, financial or personal information. You are expected to respect this confidentiality and to check with us if you are unsure about the status of any information you are party to. For some roles, volunteers will be asked to sign a Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement.

Data Protection (GDPR)

(For more info, please refer to our website - Data Retention Policy and Privacy Policy)

Data Protection law applies to personal data, whether it is stored electronically or in paper format. In general, you should always treat personal data as confidential, to be used for specific purposes only and to be stored securely when not in use. You will be given further training if your role involves accessing or processing personal data.

Additional Data Protection Guidance for Area Groups and Watch Clubs

As part of SWT, the personal data collected, held and used by Area Groups and Watch clubs remains the responsibility of SWT and should meet the same standards. The following is a basic guide, but get in touch if you have queries or concerns:

- 1. Collection of data** – If you wish to collect details of those attending your meetings or events, you must include a simple Data Protection Statement on the form which they fill in. You must only collect the basic information you need, for example, contact details to keep people informed about future events and meetings. This data is to be used only by the local Area Group/Watch Club and must not be passed to third parties.
- 2. Storage of data** – It must be held securely (e.g. in a locked drawer or password protected document)
- 3. Accuracy of data** – Ensure data is kept up to date (e.g. if someone tells you of a change of name and would like their details amended)
- 4. Removal of data** – Personal data should only be used and stored for as long as it is required for the purposes it was collected for and deleted when no longer required (e.g. if the Area Group disbands then mailing lists should be destroyed)

Copyright and Intellectual Property

Through your volunteering you may produce new materials, data or ideas of use to the Trust; perhaps including educational materials, interpretation, photographs or other media, survey results, project ideas or new procedures. You retain copyright and intellectual property rights over this material. However, we ask you to give us the right to use this material free of charge, in perpetuity and for the furtherance of our charitable cause. This voluntary agreement is incorporated into the volunteer registration form.



Supervision, Recognition and Support

Following your induction into the organisation, all volunteers should have the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns and discuss the work they are involved in. For practical conservation volunteers this may require an open discussion over the tea break; for voluntary wardens a phone call; others will find regular one-to-one meetings with their designated contact is useful. This is up to you and your designated contact to discuss and agree.

Training and Development

For most roles, you will receive relevant on-the-job training from your designated contact, or an experienced fellow volunteer. Often someone will continue to be on hand to give you further support, advice and help or a refresher. If you are ever unsure about what you are doing, please ask.





Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers are essential to the work of the Trust and we hope you will feel valued and recognised in your role. We aim to recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers however we can.

We hold annual volunteer awards as part of our AGM in the autumn to recognise all our volunteers and to give special recognition to those who have gone above and beyond in their volunteering with us.

Problems and Complaints

(For more info, please see: Volunteer Complaints Procedure)

If you have a concern or complaint, please speak to your main contact. If you are not happy with this or their response, contact the volunteering team.

Volunteering@somersetwildlife.org. Taunton Office: 01823 652400

We aim to respond to concerns within 10 days.



Staying in touch

Website and Social Networking

The volunteering pages on our website contain useful information for new and existing volunteers www.somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/volunteering

You can also find and follow us on:

SWT Volunteers group: www.facebook.com/groups/680363536144148

Facebook: www.facebook.com/somersetwildlifetrust

Twitter: @SomersetWT

V-News – the Volunteering Newsletter

Our volunteering newsletter is produced 4 times per year and will be sent direct to you by e-mail or post (upon request if you do not have email access), using the details you provided on the volunteer registration form.

To help us to paint a picture of volunteering for our newsletter, website, press releases and members magazine we are always looking for stories about our volunteers. It may be a 'day in the life of', a description of your role, a volunteer profile or a special achievement. Please get in touch if you'd like to see your story in print! **E-mail:** Volunteering@somersetwildlife.org.uk

Feedback and Moving on

Your feedback is valuable to us. At any time, you can contact the Volunteer Coordinator with your thoughts so we can make improvements.

Each year we send out volunteer surveys asking about your volunteering experience. Your help in completing these and your honesty is appreciated.

Please help us to keep your information up to date by notifying us of any change of address, telephone number email address.

If you decide to stop volunteering please tell your main contact or the Volunteer Coordinator. It would be helpful if you also say why you are leaving.



Contact

We sincerely hope you will enjoy your time as a volunteer with Somerset Wildlife Trust. If you have any further questions about any aspect of volunteering, please contact us at:

Volunteering, Somerset Wildlife Trust
34 Wellington Road
Taunton
TA1 5AW

Phone: 01823 652400

E-mail: volunteering@somersetwildlife.org



Volunteer Role

Your main contact is:

Name

Email

Phone

