



Somerset
Wildlife Trust



Volunteer handbook

This handbook will be reviewed annually by: Bryony Snyman - March 2020

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Welcome ...

... you are now part of a network of volunteers who help Somerset Wildlife Trust to protect and restore the landscape of Somerset for wildlife and people.

Volunteers share their time, skill, and experience, 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,

The Somerset Wildlife Trust staff team



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.

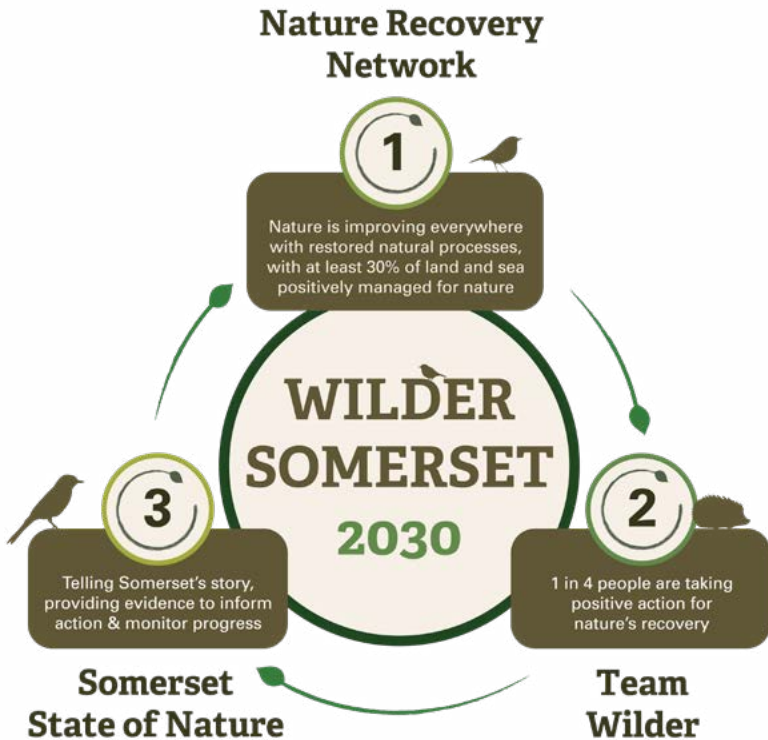


About Somerset Wildlife Trust

Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) is an independent charitable organisation. We are affiliated to 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 Nature Recovery Network for people and wildlife.

Our Vision

Our vision for Somerset is a county teeming with wildlife valued by everyone. 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. **To realise this vision we all need to do more, and faster.**





Our Values

- We are passionate about nature
- We believe everyone can make a contribution to nature's recovery
- We love Somerset and prioritise its amazing wildlife and communities
- We are confident, evidence-based and brave in standing up for nature
- We encourage innovative thinking, a solutions focus and action for nature's recovery

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.

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.

Our Mission

Today we are working on a plan that sees us working together to bring back wildlife across the county and to protect Somerset's natural environment for generations to come. Wilder Somerset 2030 is our bold and urgent ambition to create more space for nature, where wildlife thrives, with more people on nature side.

Our Goals

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

- 1. More space for nature.** Nature is improving everywhere with restored natural processes, connected and protected through a Nature Recovery Network, with at least 30% of land and seas managed positively for nature.
- 2. A movement for nature.** Everyone has the opportunity to experience nature with at least 1 in 4 people taking action for nature's recovery across Somerset as part of Team Wilder.
- 3. Telling Somerset's story.** The story of nature's recovery in Somerset is told through our online State of Nature platform that informs action and monitors progress.



Organisational structure

Somerset Wildlife Trust is registered as a Charity (no.238372).

Our Trustees are a group of volunteers who have overall responsibility for governance of the organisation, holding the financial and legal responsibility for everything the Trust does. Trustees are appointed from our membership at the Annual General Meeting of the Trust each November. Our Trustees bring a wide range of knowledge, expertise and experience to the charity and we actively encourage application from existing volunteers, who have passion and experience of our work.

The Trust employs a mix of full and part time staff who are all strongly committed to the work of the charity and its work for Somerset's natural world. Our paid staff are supported by volunteers in almost every area of our work, who allow us to achieve far more than we could without them

Our partners and subsidiaries

Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC)

SERC is a partnership between SWT and Somerset County Council and 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, development planning, and research. SERC are central to delivering Goal 3: the story of nature's recovery told through the state of nature platform, that monitors progress and informs action.

The SERC team includes several long-term and short-term project volunteers, who are registered and supported as part of the Somerset Wildlife Trust volunteer team. SERC also directly supports the work of several of the counties independent, specialist recording groups, who are dedicated to recording Somerset's rich wildlife and varied geology.

Find out more about SERC and the specialist groups on their website: somerc.com

First Ecology

First Ecology is the consulting subsidiary of the Somerset Wildlife Trust. First Ecology are experts in the delivery of high-quality cost-efficient habitat and species services, and all profits are invested back into Somerset Wildlife Trust work, protecting wildlife for the future. First Ecology provides ecological consultancy, protected species surveys, planning support and land management services to a wide range of clients.

Find out more about First Ecology on their website: firstecology.co.uk

Important information



Registration and induction

We advise you to watch the induction video sent to you upon registering, as this will cover the basics in more detail.

As a volunteer, you should expect to receive::

- A registration form and volunteer agreement for completion (your details will be kept securely on our system and only used for purposes related to your volunteering)
- 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

You may be asked to complete additional forms, e.g. driver declaration or a confidentiality agreement if they are relevant to your role.

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. There are certain roles where we will ask you to record hours yourself. If this is the case, your staff contact will explain further during your induction.

Expenses

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

Somerset Wildlife Trust will reimburse travel expenses that were incurred wholly and exclusively for the purpose of volunteering for SWT and agreed in advance with your main staff contact. We encourage local volunteering where possible, for environmental reasons as well as financial ones. Expenses will only be covered where volunteers have participated for the full duration of the task as described in their role profile, or as agreed by their staff contact.

The majority of volunteers are able to claim up to 25 miles per day, in line with the Volunteer Expense Policy. We encourage the use of public transport and car-sharing. It is your responsibility to ensure your car is appropriately insured.

You can claim expenses via our online form:

somersetwildlife.org/volunteer-expenses

If you are unable to submit expenses using the online form, please speak to your staff contact to arrange an alternative method of submission.

Please note that some roles are not eligible to claim expenses, this includes roles where we specifically recruit for local people and volunteer days that are run as public events.

Equal Opportunities

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 support staff.



Running public events

Wildlife Watch Clubs, events organised by our Wilder Events Champions 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, wind or extreme heat on events taking place outside
- 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 and adults at risk

(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 adults at risk (C, YP & AR) 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 & AR. 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 & RA 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 & AR. Risk assessment-based procedures apply to volunteering with C, YP & AR. 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 and appropriate supervision must be available in order for them to join the task

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 event leaders including Watch Clubs

As part of SWT, the personal data collected, held and used by event leaders, volunteer leaders and Watch Clubs remains the responsibility of SWT and should meet the same standards. We always aim to hold data securely with our central systems so as a general rule, you will not as a volunteer be expected to hold data for any length of time. In circumstances where you are collecting or holding data, 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 Somerset Wildlife Trust for the purposes it was collected, and may 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 Watch 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. We also have a pin badge scheme, which recognises the long term commitment of individual volunteers working for wildlife across Somerset, and host an annual celebration event.

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 at 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: somersetwildlife.org/get-involved/volunteering

You can also find and follow us on:

Facebook: 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 support team 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 support team. 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

