

Oxford Urban Wildlife Group

Volunteer policy

This policy describes OUWG's commitment to volunteering and outlines general conditions for this area of work.

Definition of a volunteer

In this policy, volunteers are defined as people who are unpaid and contribute their time, energy and skills to benefit the aims and objectives of OUWG. Activities are carried out without the expectation of financial reward or obligation on either side. Volunteers undertake a wide range of activities and some volunteer roles exist as defined in this policy.

OUWG owes its very existence to volunteers and volunteering has remained at the heart of the organisation throughout its history. OUWG is governed by a Board of Trustees who give their time voluntarily. We recognise that volunteers are vital to our success in effectively achieving our aims. Volunteers are able to provide specialist expertise, resources to enable us to carry out work, detailed local knowledge and embed wildlife concern in local communities.

OUWG diversity statement

OUWG has a keen group of volunteers covering a wide variety of activities. We welcome volunteers from diverse cultures and perspectives bringing a range of experiences to our conservation work. OUWG seek to continue to maintain their ethos as a community led organisation in which differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued/ We seek to ensure people diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute with no discrimination on the grounds of race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or any other factor unrelated to a person's ability to carry out their volunteer task.

OUWG commitment to volunteers

OUWG values volunteer involvement and seeks to demonstrate commitment to volunteer programmes and individual volunteers. We aim to be fair and consistent in our relationships with volunteers and offer a safe, supported and inspiring experience of volunteering.

We treat all volunteers with respect and value them as individuals contributing to the conservation volunteering movement.

We recognise that volunteers are not unpaid staff but people making a valuable and complementary contribution to our work and everyone's environment.

We will provide a safe working environment for all volunteers, health and safety induction, first aid support, and will seek to train and educate volunteers to levels suitable for their role whilst on activities.

We welcome and support volunteers and encourage and value their contribution at their own level of ability and for them to follow their needs and limitations.

We seek to develop the conditions for collaborative team work enabling camaraderie between volunteers can lead to the establishment of lasting friendships and life enhancing community groups.

The support and management provided by OUWG for each role is in proportion to the commitment demonstrated by the volunteer and suitable for the role undertaken.

OUWG volunteer roles

- Trustees undertaking policy governance.
- Key volunteers working under OUWG guidance to achieve a local strategic objective or output for the charity.
- Key volunteers working on defined aspects of the conservation work programme.
- Key volunteers working on other practical programmes such as species surveying.
- Key volunteers working on community engagement programmes and activities such as creativity in nature sessions.
- Key volunteers leading volunteer work parties
- Volunteers participating in the conservation work programme general activities.
- Volunteer Trustee roles.
- In addition a number of other conservation teams are already working at the site or are keen to: Oxford City Conservation Team, a Uni conservation group and another volunteer network. OCC have offered to lead corporate work parties if this is desired at any point.

OUWG offer volunteers:

- invaluable learning opportunities for local communities to gain awareness of aspects of habitat management, conservation work and species surveying of a wildlife site.
- a chance to learn new skills through becoming involved in a range of aspects of site restoration, management and species surveying.
- to attend training to acquire skills such as tree felling, hedge planting and laying and scything.
- to engage with others in meaningful activities with nature in mind and engage in wider wildlife trust activities.
- a chance to learn leadership skills and support volunteers.
- a chance to contribute to and learn about the running and vision of OUWG.

Conservation volunteers

OUWG Conservation Volunteers Tasks

- Join work parties which do everything from planting woodland bulbs, planting native mixed species hedge, tree felling courses and tree felling, gardening, pond surveying, species surveying, habitat protection, hedge laying course and hedgelaying, rubbish clearance, brash clearance, path restoration, repairing furniture and structures, painting and creating notices.
- Carry out conservation work on site on arrangement.
- Help with project maintenance eg Saving Rare Wetlands Plants Project monitoring.
- Lead work parties for volunteer conservation work on site.
- Lead focused OUWG activities such as species surveying.
- Offer other sessions for the membership and local community engagement such as creativity in nature.

OUWG is reviewing the scope of work and volunteer opportunities each year. The restoration and development of habitats and ecological surveying offer exciting new opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills and gain experience.

Future considerations

- Develop partners with OCC, Thames Conservation Volunteers TCV, Good Gym, BBOWT.
- Host BBOWT to run volunteer training courses in conservation and leadership skills
- Become integrated into a wider network of conservation volunteers across the city.
- Develop volunteer training and involvement in species identification and survey schedules.
- Develop a volunteer handbook.
- Consider creating a volunteer coordinator role within OUWG.

Recruitment of volunteers

OUWG has a wide range of opportunities for volunteering, with different levels of commitment from regular to occasional involvement. Recruitment will be carried out by appropriate means to attract volunteers from as wide a spectrum of society as possible. Recruitment will be designed to be accessible, using a variety of media, and words and images that do not create barriers to access. Additional efforts may be taken to reach communities and groups which have been hard to reach.

Code of practice, misconduct

OUWG sets good practice and standards of behaviour for all volunteers and does not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour. In the case of a serious act of misconduct (for example violence, theft, harassment, non-compliance with a Health and Safety Code of Practice or a Risk Assessment) a volunteer can be asked to leave immediately. Such events will be recorded and discussed by the Trustees.

Public Liability Insurance

Whilst undertaking agreed activities on behalf of the Trust, all volunteers under the age of 80 are covered by Public Liability, Employers' Liability and Personal Accident insurances. As of

1 August 2015 volunteers over the age of 80 continue to be covered by Public Liability and insurance but are no longer covered for personal accident/death insurance.

The minimum age for volunteering allowed by our insurance cover is 11; however, children between the age of 11 and 15 must be accompanied by a parent/ authorised responsible adult. Children aged 16 and 17 are required to have written permission from a legal guardian.

Ouwg safeguarding policy is in place to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable groups and can be found on the Ouwg website.

Health and safety

Ouwg will follow a duty of care to ensure that a safe and healthy environment is provided for all volunteers. All volunteers have a duty of care to themselves and others.

Ouwg Health & Safety Policy is available to volunteers and can be found in the 5 year management plan. Volunteers will receive a health and safety induction appropriate to their role and be given access to appropriate information and guidance, and, where necessary, training.

Confidentiality

Where appropriate Ouwg will manage information about volunteers with confidentiality. Volunteers are expected to respect the requirements for confidentiality as appropriate in their activities with the Ouwg.