



a million voices for nature

INVOLVE

A celebration of the work carried out by you – our volunteers.

Saving Nature

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And...

- our big new campaign
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Winter 2011

OUR BIG NEW CAMPAIGN



David Levenson (rspb-images.com)



Stepping Up For Nature

After the huge success of Letter to the Future – which collected an impressive 360,000 signatures – the RSPB is back on the campaign trail.

Stepping Up For Nature is the biggest and will be the longest campaign we've embarked on.

The aim is ambitious and far-reaching: to get UK Governments to meet their 2020 target of halting biodiversity loss and beginning to restore it.

To do this, we'll be challenging decision-makers to step up, act now and make the right decisions for nature. We'll be setting out a 'roadmap' calling for progress on key issues affecting our farmed countryside, the marine environment, tropical forests and land use planning.

But it's not just about those in power – we'll be encouraging our

supporters, the public and businesses to take small steps for nature. We'll show them how millions of small steps can add up to make a big difference, creating a world richer in wildlife tomorrow than it is today.

Stepping Up For Nature was launched in England back in March this year and then in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in June. At the launches, we handed over the signatures from Letter to the Future to MPs, and the events were a huge success.

However, we know we still have to do more. Last year was the International Year of Biodiversity, but sadly also the year we failed to meet the target to halt biodiversity

loss. What's more, despite our hard work and successes, funding for nature has still been cut dramatically. This is why everyone needs to step up for nature.

How you can help

By volunteering for the RSPB, you're already taking a big step for nature so thank you very much. But we need more people to step up and help save nature if the UK Government is going to hit its target by 2020. We are asking everyone to take steps for nature, and we've divided these into four categories: doing (for example creating a wildlife friendly-garden at home), campaigning (see more about helping out with campaigns in our feature on pages eight and nine), volunteering and giving.

We want as many people as possible to take these steps and we need you to help us encourage more people to do so. We want to hear your story about what made you decide to volunteer and why it is so important. We also want to hear about what you feel you have achieved by volunteering and how you feel you have made a difference.



OUR BIG NEW CAMPAIGN

Engaging people emotionally, so that they care, gives us the best chance to get them to act – taking the small or big steps which collectively can make a big difference. Your story could play a vital part in this process.

While we appreciate each person has their own style of writing, it would be helpful if you could follow the format in the box:

How to tell your story:

- tell us why you stepped up
- tell us what you did
- tell us how you think others can step up too.

Please take another step for nature and send your stories to steppingup@rspb.org.uk

Full details on the campaign, as well as further steps you can take, can be found here: www.rspb.org.uk/steppingup



Planting Up for Nature

Rather than just tell you how powerful your volunteering story can be, we thought we'd show you. This is the story of the inspiring work of Dave and Mary Braddock, the joint leaders of the North West Surrey RSPB Local Group.

Each February Dave prepares the greenhouse to receive 1,700 plug plants. Heaters are dusted off, thermometer gauges are checked and fresh batteries installed. Then comes the tedious job of filling 1,700 3.5 inch pots. All of this is done outside, in the cold with damp soil, so it's not a job for the faint-hearted. On top of this there are the 350 perennial plants stored in other parts of our garden that need to be checked and tended, to ensure that they are healthy and beginning to grow, in preparation for the busiest selling time – May. Once the plants are in and “getting their feet down” (to a non-gardener that means putting their roots down into the pots), there is the daily task of watering, keeping warm and shifting them around so they all get an equal amount of light. You wouldn't believe that Dave manages to find time to do all this and go to work full-time as well.

Why does all this take place? To make money for a fantastic cause – the RSPB. Mary goes out selling and getting orders from the different places she works. Many regulars have been buying from

Dave since he began in 2003, which bears witness to the quality of the plants. When the plants are ready, they get delivered by Mary before her full-time day job begins.

Through this work, Mary and Dave have raised £5,230. What's more, their plant selling benefits nature twice over – once through the money that goes to the RSPB, and also by providing a fantastic natural environment in the garden of their semi-detached home.

Their garden is a mix of plants for selling and flowers to help pollinate the vegetables and fruit, and is alive with wildlife. This year there were 100 house sparrows and 40 starlings visiting the feeders, plus

blackbirds, blue tits, great tits, dunnocks, chaffinches, goldfinches, greenfinches, robins, and the occasional song thrush, goldcrest and great spotted woodpecker.

Their garden has also attracted a grass snake, which has been resident for several years and is now at least three foot long. The pond is home to many newts. Five solitary bee boxes adorn the fence and there are several insect boxes around the garden.

The work that Dave and Mary do is inspiring, and so is the volunteering that you do – so please tell us about it and help encourage others.



VOLUNTEERING WITH THE RSPB – tell us what you think!

Results of the volunteering survey

Sallie Crawley, Volunteering Development Officer



Eleanor Bentall (rspb-images.com)



Eleanor Bentall (rspb-images.com)

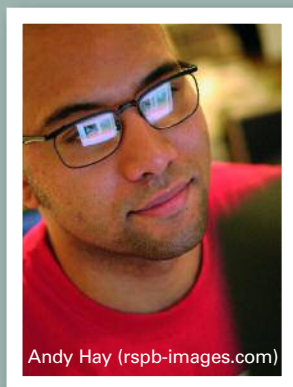
A huge thank you to all our volunteers who stepped up once again and completed the online survey. We e-mailed 7,641 volunteers who had been active in the previous six months and received a fantastic response of 1,066 completed survey forms, enabling us to get some really good statistics.

We are always keen to hear how we can improve our questionnaires and we did get some feedback. It was felt that some of the questions were inappropriate and it was too long. Please be assured we will take your comments into account when designing any future surveys.

It may help if I explain why we asked some of the questions we did. The survey is being undertaken free of charge for the RSPB by researchers from

Kingston University. As well as asking specific questions about volunteering, we and the team from Kingston University were very keen to get information on how volunteering makes people feel and how it affects their lives. This is a key area of research for the Kingston team and also very useful for us in demonstrating to funders and the Government the greater benefits to individuals of getting involved in volunteering.

These insights are important as they enable us to improve your volunteering experience with us. As this issue of *Involve* went to print, the data was still being analysed. We will, of course, let you know the results.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Your e-mail addresses

As I am sure you are all aware, we hold your contact details on our database, VMS. As technology is developing we are trying more and more to contact you by e-mail. This is much more environmentally friendly, and as a charity and a conservation organisation, this saves us money that can be spent on conservation work.

Lots of us change our e-mail address frequently. If you do change yours, please let your regional/country Volunteering Development Officer know so we can keep our records current. If you haven't already let us have your e-mail address, please give it to us so we can keep you abreast of all things new in the volunteering world.

We had more than 16,775 regular volunteers in 2009/2010 – that's almost enough people to fill 300 London buses.

RESIDENTIAL VOLUNTEERING

A break with a difference

Kate Tycer, Residential Volunteering Development Officer

If you love helping us and want to get involved from the grass roots up, why not give residential volunteering a go?

Under our residential scheme, you could spend a week or two living and working on a reserve – what better way to remind yourself what all the hard work you do is for?

There are over 40 reserves within the RSPB Residential Scheme and there's something for everyone, including habitat management, estate maintenance and repair, being face-to-face with visitors to enhance their experience, surveying birds,

insects and mammals, and farm and livestock work.

The accommodation is free, so it won't cost you a fortune – just your travel costs and food.

Still not convinced? Read some of the stories from previous residential volunteers by downloading the brochure from www.rspb.org.uk/residentialvolunteering, e-mail us at volunteers@rspb.org.uk or call 01767 680551 and ask for Residential Volunteering.

Down on The Oa

In June I started working at Loch Gruinart as a residential volunteer. Having volunteered at RSPB Haweswater and RSPB Vane Farm for April and May, I thought I knew what to expect. Never would I have dreamt that volunteering on Islay could be a life-changing experience.

Helping out with reserve maintenance and bird surveys are all things that I enjoy doing – anything 'outdoorsy' is just up my street. At the end of June, two of us Gruinart volunteers were asked to help at The Oa, on the southern tip of Islay. And this is where my life changed: I discovered that I seem to have a touch for working with animals. The fact that the RSPB runs farms for wildlife and that I could be amongst it all, made my job even more satisfactory. On top of that, I was offered a two-month contract

(which I, of course, accepted) that allowed me to work at The Oa regularly and so learn about some aspects of farming on a daily basis.

For the first time, I was able to see how big an impact farming practices can have on wildlife. Vast areas of land are used for food production all over the world and I hoped that by learning more about agriculture, I could form a more educated opinion on nature conservation as a whole. By working with the animals on a daily basis, I enjoyed the beautiful hills and cliffs at The Oa. Listening to coughs and watching their aerial displays from the corner of my eye, whilst gathering sheep, made my heart soar, and to me, summed up what it means to farm responsibly.

While things were idyllic and seemed almost

perfect, I was on the reserve long enough to understand that the challenge is still on. I learned that nature conservation is as dynamic as the ever-changing winds at The Oa.

Although my time on Islay was limited, I am grateful to have met many interesting people and that I found a direction in my life worth taking. Thank you!

Dorothee Kühn
Stockperson/Assistant Warden



The RSPB's oldest volunteer is 101, and our youngest volunteer is just eight.

NEW VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES



Futurescapes

Aidan Lonergan, Futurescapes Manager

There are set to be even more exciting volunteering opportunities as an important RSPB project develops.

The Futurescapes programme is the RSPB's contribution to developing nature conservation on a landscape scale. We've started this project because it was becoming clear that we couldn't do as much for nature as we wanted to by working only on a network of protected sites.

With wildlife continuing to disappear across the UK countryside, and the challenges as a result of climate change becoming evermore apparent, it was time to think big to deal with these problems.

Futurescapes is all about working with landowners and other partners, and encouraging them to manage their land in a way that creates more space for nature. It is a simple premise that recognises the potential and importance of

non-nature conservation land to deliver for nature.

As part of Futurescapes, we will be building on the success of our network of protected areas. Our first phase of activity is based at 35 landscapes around the UK, which total over one million hectares. There are over 60 of our reserves within these landscapes, so we know them well and have lots of experience of working there.

Together, our reserves and the Futurescapes areas will create a robust system of protected and unprotected green areas to strengthen ecosystems' resilience and provide that all-important space for nature to thrive.

Our ambitious plans have been recently recognised by the

European Commission, which has decided to fund some of the work with a two million Euro grant over three years. In England, the new Natural Environment White paper (NEWP) has recognised the need for this landscape-scale approach and will run a competition for 12 such areas to receive additional government funding.

The project and our work is developing all the time – please keep in touch with local staff to find out more about volunteering opportunities.

More information on the Futurescapes work can be found at www.rspb.org.uk/futurescapes or by e-mailing aidan.lonergan@rspb.org.uk

More than half of you feel happier and more relaxed after volunteering with us.

Volunteer in your pyjamas – yes, really!

Rhoda Ludford, Volunteering Development Co-ordinator

There is an exciting new way to volunteer that is growing in popularity, and believe it or not you can potentially volunteer in your pyjamas – should you wish to.

It goes by various names, micro-volunteering, episodic volunteering or speed volunteering (just like speed dating). Essentially it's volunteering in bite size chunks. You can do it at home, when you want to, and dip in and out with absolutely no commitment.

Basically it's a great way for busy people to get involved in volunteering. That old excuse of "I don't have enough time" just doesn't apply with this type of volunteering. It can take anything from a few minutes to perhaps an hour or more. The activities are ones you can do in your own home, perhaps on a computer or mobile phone, or in and around your local community.

The RSPB has some great opportunities for 'micro volunteering', the most obvious being our Big Garden Birdwatch (BGBW). People who take part in the BGBW spend one hour counting birds in their garden. Hundreds of thousands of results are then added together to give a UK-wide picture. It's about each small action that a person takes making a momentous difference when combined with a massive amount of people all doing the same thing.

Why not get involved in our next Big Garden Birdwatch on the weekend of the 28/29 of January?

If you can't wait until then, why not step up for nature by getting involved in some of these 'micro volunteering' opportunities?

- If you have a garden, or even just a window box, then get involved in Homes for Wildlife and find out how you can take simple, practical steps that will benefit many of our most important birds, mammals and insects.
- Recycle your stamps with us

– it's one of the charity sector's biggest schemes and raised over £15,000 for our Save the Albatross campaign last year.

- Recycle your mobile phone and inkjet cartridges through us, and help us maintain our world record for recycling the most mobile phones in a week – over 6,000.
- Send your old binoculars on holiday - recycle your binoculars or telescope so they can be used on conservation projects across the world.
- Shop online using www.thegivingmachine.co.uk or www.everyclick.co.uk and raise money for the RSPB.
- Spend money, raise money – why not take out an RSPB visa card? It's raised over £8 million in 21 years.
- Get involved by signing one of our petitions or an online pledge.

For more information on ways to volunteer from the comfort of your own home, read Sallie Crawley's blog post on the issue, at www.rspb.org.uk/microvolunteering



Christopher Futcher (iStockphoto.com)

More than three quarters of you have learnt new skills as a result of your volunteering.

EXCITING NEW VOLUNTEER ROLES



David Levenson (rspb-images.com)

Could you be one of our champion campaigners?

Martin Abrams, Parliamentary Campaigns Officer

We've just launched two exciting, brand new volunteer roles. We are asking you to step up and become RSPB Campaign Champions to help support our local and national campaigns and give nature a much louder voice.

Campaigning is at the heart of the RSPB. It's something we've been doing since 1889, when a lovely lady called Emily Williamson from Didsbury, Manchester started campaigning to ban the barbaric trade in birds' feathers.

Since then, we have had some outstanding campaign successes such as banning DDT, the horrendous pesticide that got into the food chain and decimated species such as the peregrine falcon and the red kite. We also supported local people in their campaign against the building of a huge four-runway airport at Cliffe in North Kent. Our Letter to the Future campaign was a huge success, and we could not achieve any of this without the help of people like you.

With our biggest campaign to date, Stepping Up For Nature, now underway, we are very excited to be offering the chance for you to step up with two new volunteer roles.

The first role is that of a Campaign Champion. If you volunteer for this role, you'll find yourself doing things like writing letters and sending e-mails to MPs, taking online actions, using social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and helping to spread the word about our campaigns in your local area.

The second role is the Campaign Champion Activist. You will do similar tasks to the Campaign Champion, but also visit MPs and local decision makers to talk to them about our campaigns and the wonderful work the RSPB does.

For more information, go to www.rspb.org.uk/campaignchampions, call the Parliamentary Campaigns Team on 01767 680551 or e-mail campaigns@rspb.org.uk

Volunteering is worth £38.9 billion to the UK economy each year.

Campaigning does it for me!

Kim Matthews, Campaigns Intern

When my pair of very dodgy knees put paid to my previous job as a Membership Development Officer, I thought my career at the RSPB was over. To me this was a horribly depressing prospect as, without knowing it before I started, the RSPB turned out to be the organisation I had been waiting my whole life to work for.

During my membership days I spent a lot of time talking to people about the campaigning work of the RSPB. It's hard not to be impressed with the successes the organisation has had and its amazing ability to aim big and not be daunted by tasks that to some may seem impossible to achieve.

Now I get to make campaigning my life for three days a week here in the Eastern England Regional Office, as a campaigns intern. Not only am I assisting the Stepping Up For Nature lead with her work on the campaign (www.rspb.org.uk/steppingup), but I also get to play a big part in the RSPB's pilot programme to recruit volunteer Campaign Champions and Campaign Champion Activists to support our campaign advocacy work.

This programme is so exciting, especially being in it from the start and watching it grow and develop. It gives people the opportunity to make a real difference to big national and international campaigns, and also to help make significant changes to benefit wildlife and the environment in their own local areas too. These campaigners will help to show local communities and decision makers exactly why environmental issues are relevant to them.

My colleagues have gone above

and beyond to make me feel welcome and supported. The training I have had so far has been brilliant, from social media to political advocacy. I've even bought *British Politics for Dummies*, a much more fascinating (and relevant) read than I would have ever expected!

While having to leave my job was tough, this internship has turned out to be one of the best things I have ever done. I would recommend a volunteer

internship at the RSPB to anyone, and if any of you are passionate about wildlife and the environment, please do consider becoming a campaigner. You'll be adding your

voice to the biggest conservation organisation in Europe. Just head to www.rspb.org.uk/campaignwithus



38% of the UK population volunteer at least once a year. 24% volunteer once a month, spending on average 12.6 hours doing so.

MONITORING BIRD NUMBERS

BirdTrack

Mark Eaton, Principal Conservation Scientist

Much of the work of the RSPB and other conservation organisations is underpinned by monitoring. Without reliable, trustworthy information on the current fortunes of the UK's many bird species, we would not be able to identify which birds most need our help.

Although the monitoring of birds and other wildlife does require rigorous science, with fancy statistical analyses and the like, it may surprise some readers that

much of the data this science relies on is collected by volunteers. And while some of these may be expert ornithologists, with many years of dedicated study behind them, there is a role for anyone who wishes to contribute to monitoring, and the opportunity to increase skills and knowledge along the way.

One scheme open to anyone with any level of birdwatching expertise, who wants to contribute to our knowledge of the UK's birds is

BirdTrack, a collaborative project between the RSPB, the British Trust for Ornithology, BirdWatch Ireland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. This is an innovative online recording scheme, intended to collect everyday observations of birds to fill gaps in our knowledge. BirdTrack helps us to track the movements of migrant birds (recording the timing of the arrival of our spring migrants, for example, and allowing us to see whether it is affected by climate change), and provides valuable information on scarce species not monitored well by other schemes.

Anyone can register to use BirdTrack at www.birdtrack.net and submit sightings as often as they wish. These can be from an exciting day's birdwatching at a famous nature reserve, or simply from your own back garden. The most valuable submissions will be lists of all species seen from a place in a single visit, but single observations, such as an unusual garden visitor, are also of value.

The website is simple to use, and has the added attraction of allowing participants to see all their own records in a variety of ways, such as producing lists of what they've seen, graphs of numbers through the year, or maps of sighting locations. In addition, BirdTrack compiles records from all users into maps and charts, allowing observers to see what's happening elsewhere, as well as share photos of their sightings. In short, BirdTrack is an easy way to log your own sightings, keep abreast of what's happening in the bird world, and make a positive contribution to conservation at the same time.

www.birdtrack.net



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

21% of you are not members but still donate your time and talents to us.

OUR INTERNATIONAL WORK

Celebration for Gola Rainforest

Tim Stowe, Director of International Operations

The destruction of rainforests accounts for about one fifth of global carbon emissions – more than the entire world’s transport put together – and loss of forests threatens the habitat of over 60% of the world’s bird species.

The Gola Rainforest is on the eastern boundary of Sierra Leone, West Africa. It is one of the few remaining remnants of the Upper Guinea forest – the rest has been cleared for agriculture or mining. In 1990, the RSPB teamed up with the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and the Forestry Division of the Government of Sierra Leone to form the Gola Rainforest Programme, with the aim of protecting and restoring up to 71,000 hectares of this splendid, wildlife-rich rainforest.

Through the engagement and employment of over 100 Sierra Leonean staff, the project has delivered economic, environmental and social benefits to the local communities. Local staff and conservationists play a vital role in the protection of over 300 species of birds, including 18 rare and threatened species. The butterfly list is even more impressive, and many of the species we have seen there have travelled beyond what we thought was their normal range.

The programme has made some exciting discoveries about the threatened animals, using a network of digital camera traps. These cameras have snapped pygmy hippos, leopards, bongos, rare forest antelopes and white-breasted guineafowl to name a few. The forest is home to over 300 chimpanzees – one of their last refuges in the country.



Guy Shorrock (rspb-images.com)

This year has marked a very special year for the Gola Rainforest Programme, given that it finally obtained National Park status in late February. Gola is now the second National Park in Sierra Leone. We hope this will bring it the protection it richly deserves.

The future

Together with our BirdLife International, Sierra Leonean and Liberian partners, the RSPB is also involved in a project to create a 200,000-hectare peace park between Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The RSPB is continuing with the Gola Rainforest Programme and hopes that the National Park announcement can help change the perception of Sierra Leone, and make people realise that it is again becoming a great place to visit and invest in.

We have used the continued support of the Gola Rainforest Programme to sign up to the Size of Wales challenge. ‘An area the size of Wales’ is a comparison frequently used to measure the rate of forest destruction. In a bid to turn the negative use of the country’s size on its head, Size of Wales was formed

and is a unique national scheme to sustain an area of tropical forest the size of Wales as part of Wales’ response to climate change. The Gola Rainforest Programme has enabled RSPB Cymru to promote our contribution to the sustainable management of forest resources in this innovative way.

Despite the great progress to date, we are acutely aware of the challenges that lay ahead: the pressure to extract minerals and hunting are examples of the real and present threats faced. National Park tourism is a long way off, yet the forest received over 100 visitors last year, up from zero in the previous year. In addition to this, two international bird tours visit each year and it is hoped that this can continue to grow. We hope the wonders of this unique forest will soon be shared with others and that its wildlife will be protected for future generations.

To find out more about our work in Gola, visit www.rspb.org.uk/gola For more information on Size of Wales, visit www.sizeofwales.org.uk

According to the UN, if volunteers were a nation they would be the ninth most populated country in the world.

Saving

NATURE

The RSPB's strategy to 2020



Chris O'Reilly (rspb-images.com)

The RSPB's current five-year strategy, Future Directions IV, comes to an end next year, and so a new plan to move us forward is being put in place. This is called Saving Nature, and it is an ambitious strategy that will take us up to 2020. Here, Chief Executive Mike Clarke explains more.

Nature is being lost at all levels: global, regional and local. In just 40 years, there has been a massive decline (40%) in the average abundance of species. The problem **is affecting nature worldwide**, from birds in European farmland to African mammals, from coral reefs to Arctic seas once teeming with fish.

The pressures on nature are great: climate change is set to compound existing threats such as habitat loss, unsustainable exploitation, pollution and the introduction of non-native invasive species. These pressures stem from unsustainable ways of living – a growing population consuming more of the planet's finite resources, particularly in the world's richer nations.

The RSPB's 122-year history demonstrates that we refuse to be

daunted by the scale of changes needed to tackle the biggest challenges facing birds and nature: from saving special places and recovering threatened species through to growing popular support and campaigning for new laws to protect wildlife. We pioneer new solutions and inspire others to act. Since our foundation, we have made a major contribution to UK nature conservation and we have reached out to work with others across the globe to tackle the threats to migratory species and the wildlife of the high seas.

Governments are pulling back from saving nature and failing to work together. This means our role as a charity is more important than ever. From our earliest days we have shown that when caring, committed people work together, we really can change the world.

Our new strategy comes at a time of marked change in the external world. We have set out in the strategy the long-term goals for the organisation and the main things we will need to do to achieve them. It is more about building a platform for growth that enables the RSPB to expand its

Over half a million people volunteer an hour or more of their time with the RSPB each year through regular volunteering, or through initiatives such as the Big Garden Birdwatch and Make Your Nature Count.

D. Kjaer, T. Marshall, M. Sisson, C. Gomersall and N. Upton (all rspb-images.com), tiger: Vladimir Wrangel (fotolia.com)

THE RSPB'S NEW CORPORATE STRATEGY



current activities rather than changing them. In an unpredictable world, it is more a case of setting a clear long-term direction for the RSPB and then being adaptable as to how we get there.

One thing will not change: birds will remain the most visible and tangible focus of much of what we do. The strategy recognises that we need to deliver for nature as a whole, because this is how nature works – solutions for the threats to birds and for threats to other wildlife are interdependent.

In order to widen our scope to embrace nature as a whole, we need to develop some new capabilities. Some will be needed in-house, others will come as a result of working

alongside key partners. The extent and pace of change will be partly governed by resource growth, partly by building effective alliances and partly by re-examining how we set priorities.

Our charity and our cause are at a crossroads. The threat to the natural world – the challenge for our charity – is too big for any one organisation. We are faced with a choice: to limit our ambition or to step up to the challenge and work with others to realise our vision.

Our new campaign, *Stepping Up For Nature*, encapsulates many of the themes in the direction of travel signalled by Saving Nature. This campaign is not just a call to action but also a clear statement of intent – we

want people to see us as relevant in their lives by being the means through which they can help create a world richer in nature. *Stepping Up For Nature*, and the messages it contains, is very much the public face of *Saving Nature* – The RSPB Corporate Strategy.

With best wishes,



Mike, Chief Executive

If you would like to know more about our new corporate strategy, please contact your local office who will be happy to send you some information.



Community pages, blogs and social networking

Our volunteering Facebook page goes from strength to strength. It's a great place to share your volunteering stories and ideas with other groups and volunteers. All our Volunteer Development Officers are administrators and will respond to any enquiries you may have. To find us, type RSPB Volunteering into the search box, 'like' the page and get stuck in!

The volunteering group on the RSPB Community pages also continues to grow and the blog is a great way of staying on top of the latest news. Among the most popular writers on our blog is Mark Groves, a Conservation Intern Volunteer, who gives a fascinating insight into all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes on our reserves.

Don't forget you can also share your own experiences or ask questions on the volunteering forum and share photos in the gallery.

The RSPB Community pages recently had a re-design and the group has moved. You can find it here: www.rspb.org.uk/volunteeringcommunity

Join us at Members' Weekend

Members' Weekend is a wonderful opportunity for our members to get together with other members for an enjoyable and informative weekend in a relaxed environment.

Throughout the weekend there is a packed programme of talks, giving members the chance to hear from inspirational bird experts and seasoned field staff with the latest news from our fabulous nature reserves.

On Saturday afternoon, we run a range of excursions and activities. There are also a variety of trade and information stands to browse, as well as a fantastic art exhibition. Throughout the weekend, members will have the opportunity to meet RSPB staff from across the UK, all eager to answer your questions.

Jill Shayler, a regular volunteer at The Lodge nature reserve, said: "I find it a very inspiring and fun programme, with the chance to meet other members and those who also volunteer, from all around the country."

Next year's event takes place on April 13-15 at the University of York. If you are a member and would like to join us, please download the booking form from www.rspb.org.uk/thingstodo/members_weekend. Alternatively, contact Claire Hoskins-Blount in the Events Office on 01767 680551 or e-mail claire.hoskins-blount@rspb.org.uk

Black Grouse Whisky

Black Grouse Whisky can now be purchased online via the RSPB website. The whisky's maker, The Famous Grouse (TFG), has pledged a phenomenal £150,000 for the next three years to help boost our conservation of the declining black grouse. You can help with this by using the link below and then clicking through to the TFG site.



There is no need to actually buy the whisky (unless you want to), but TFG is able to monitor traffic to its website from our website, so we really need it to be a busy link.

You can also help during your volunteering, when you're at work or out and about socially. If you come across people who say they know about this award-winning whisky but have never been able to buy it as their local shop doesn't stock it, do tell them it's available online via the RSPB web shop. The link is: www.rspb.org.uk/famousblackgrouse

Extranet

Coming next year will be an exciting new way for you to get information on the RSPB and our work – the Extranet.

This will feature some of the same information that our staff have access to through the RSPB Intranet, and is being designed to ensure you have all the information and resources you need.

This is another good reason to ensure we have your correct e-mail address, as we will be letting you know via e-mail when the Extranet is up and running.

Two-thirds of you feel volunteering helps you meet people and make new friends.

Internship success

Rhoda Ludford, Volunteering Development Co-ordinator

The RSPB's new volunteer internship programme has proved a huge success in its pilot year.

In the last 12 months, 13 interns have been placed within various departments at RSPB HQ, and a similar number out and about on our reserves and in our regional or country offices. Interns at RSPB HQ are working in a wide variety of areas, from undertaking research into gull colonies through to working on climate change policy.

On a number of occasions the quality of the applicants for the internships has been so high that we have not only filled the role we were advertising, but also taken on some of the other applicants to get involved in other roles.

We've found it's a scheme that works well for both us and the interns. Claire Feniuk, who is an Agriculture Policy Communication Intern, said:



Laura Nicholls

"I've really enjoyed the amount of independence I have been given. At the same time, I've been offered a great deal of support in developing a work programme that encompasses both Agriculture Policy and Conservation Science. The experience I will gain here will be valuable in my development towards my future career."

Claire's line manager, Louise Cavender, is also a fan of the scheme. "Taking

Claire on as a volunteer intern was a fantastic experience. She is very capable and a great resource for the Agricultural Policy team. Having an intern has given us the capacity to put a resource on those projects that get sidelined and as a result we're getting more done."

All our volunteer internship roles are advertised externally and on our own website, where we have a specific area dedicated to volunteering internships, visit www.rspb.org.uk/volunteering



A winner in our midst!

In an internal poetry competition recently, it was Jane Shah from the Residential Volunteering Team who took the first prize.

In order to inspire us to continue to think about green travel, the RSPB's Green Management Team set up an online competition for people to get creative. And our very own Jane Shah, Residential Volunteering Co-ordinator, was voted the winner. This is her poem.

A Pseudo Green

I am a pseudo-greenie
Because I drive a car
But I have husband and two kids
Drum kit and guitar.

But I don't try to hide the fact
Nor hang my head in shame
Cos we have gone from two to one
It is my claim to fame.

My hubbie used to drive to work
And each and every day
Come rain or wind or hail or shine
He'd wend his merry way.

But husband, he has changed his job
And now he can refrain
From driving, and instead he lets
The train take all the strain.

At home as well we do our bit
With paper, glass and cans
Recycle and re-use, reduce
We try to have a plan.

Keep the rain for plants to drink
Turn lights off - it's a must
(The low watt bulb's a lovely glow
And you can't see the dust!)

We use two cars from time to time
We have to, don't you see?
For in two places both at once
I simply cannot be!

So all in all we try our best
I hope you will agree
No more a pseudo-green am I
A real one now, that's me!!

Keep your eyes open for our volunteering poetry competition, soon be announced on Facebook and the RSPB Community pages.

Two-thirds of you feel your volunteering helps you stay physically active.

The Giving Machine

If you love shopping online then this one's for you!

Did you know that many UK online retailers offer commissions to commercial portal sites for click-through custom? Within these portal sites are organisations that will donate high percentages of these earnings to charity. We've teamed up with www.thegivingmachine.co.uk for just that reason.

How does it work?

It's simplicity itself. Every online purchase you make from a retailer

which has gone through the site will trigger a donation. Each month, these donations are aggregated and distributed on behalf of the shopper by The Giving Machine.

And what's more, it doesn't cost you, the shopper, a penny!

The Giving Machine is a not-for-profit organisation and registered member of the Institute of Fundraising. It adheres to the Institute's standards and best practices. It currently only retains 25% of donations received – the UK charity average for fundraising – to

cover its administrative costs, but it plans to drive this down as the level of donations grows.

With over 100 of the UK's leading brand name stores to buy from, like B&Q, Sainsbury's, and Marks & Spencer, why not check it out: www.thegivingmachine.co.uk

And don't forget that that we also work with everyclick.com who also now offer a similar service called Give As You Live. More info can be found at: www.everyclick.com/rspb

Step up for nature and recycle *Involve*

We hope you enjoy reading *Involve*, but all good things must come to an end, and one of our valued volunteers has come up with a suggestion of what to do with your

newsletter instead of putting it in the recycling bin.

Jan Murphy suggested giving copies of *Involve* to your local

doctor or dentist's surgery, where it might give inspiration to others to become an RSPB volunteer.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Love nature? Then fundraise for it.

Would you like to try your hand at fundraising for the RSPB? You could arrange a coffee morning, take part in a challenge event, or even persuade friends and family to help you do some sponsored car washing. Our new fundraising guide is full of great suggestions. If you would like a copy, please email: CommunityMarketing@rspb.org.uk

A little time goes a long way

If you don't have a copy of this guide, please ask your line manager for one. It is full of useful information you'll need as one of our volunteers.



CONTACT US:

For more information on volunteering with the RSPB, or if you have any views on this newsletter, please contact:

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The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing – help us keep it that way.



We belong to BirdLife International, the global partnership of bird conservation organisations.