

Volunteering at Parsonage Down National Nature Reserve - Shrewton

Here at Parsonage Down NNR we are currently looking for new volunteers to help with a number of exciting and varied projects on site. We have a small group of regular volunteers that come most Tuesday's to do important work onsite (outlined below in more detail) and it is envisaged that any new volunteers or people looking for a taster session/s would ideally attend on these days.



Background –

Parsonage Down National Nature Reserve is a beautiful 680 acre Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lying on the edge of Salisbury Plain and accessed off the B3083 between the villages of Shrewton and Winterbourne Stoke. The site is world famous for both its wildlife and its farm animals. Highlights include many species of Orchids (including the largest population of Burnt-tip Orchids in north Europe), rare butterflies such as Marsh Fritillary and Adonis Blue and a whole array of wild birds such as Corn Bunting and Stone Curlew. The sites herd of English Longhorn cattle are the oldest registered herd in the world. Their beautiful archaic colours dot the downland as they help graze the site to keep it in good condition.

Work Projects –

- Some of the projects volunteers may be working on would include;
 - Hedge and woodland creation - planting with whips, (young trees), hedge laying, stock fencing, scrub management (on block rotations) with fire, restoration of x2 dewponds, strimming, mowing visitor access trail with quad (if trained), putting in gates, helping collect wildflower seed, making fence posts. We supply all tools and protective clothing/equipment.
 - Species monitoring for those who are keen may include Breeding Bird Surveys, monthly wintering bird count between December - February, larval web counts of certain butterfly species, moth trapping and weekly butterfly and bee surveys in the summer months (training provided).
 - Some minor, hands off livestock work may be included should people be interested such as carrying out stock checks on the weekend to check the animals are healthy and all accounted for (training provided).

Normal Day routine –

- Volunteer days are most Tuesdays, usually every other Tuesday in the summer months.
- We meet at 9.30am at the Cherry Lodge Farm Office (SP3 4ET) for a 10am start. For this first half an hour we have tea/coffee/biscuits and a chit chat. Tea break is normally taken around 11.30am and lunch break around 1pm. We finish between 3-4pm.
- We are very flexible on commitment and people can turn up on a 'as they feel like it' basis. We would only ask that people confirm they will be attending a day or two before the work day so that staff members can plan the day accordingly. There is no need for any long term commitment!

Development –

- Training opportunities are available for quad bike, first aid and possibly brushcutter certification should volunteers like to do this.
- Ad hoc training opportunities may also be available from time to time for I.D training e.g. grass identification, hedge laying.
- There are always opportunity to mix it up and volunteer at different NNR's as well (e.g. at Pewsey and Langley Wood) for a different experience of jobs/site/people.

Contact –

- If you are interested in any of the above opportunities or would like to discuss further then please contact Reserve Manager Sebastian Allen-Mepham on 07770827834 or alternatively at Sebastian.allen-mepham@naturalengland.org.uk