

Volunteer Role Description: Saving Wildcats Data Volunteer (In-situ)

Who are we?

Saving Wildcats (#SWAforLife) is a European partnership project dedicated to Scottish wildcat conservation and recovery. We aim to prevent the extinction of wildcats in Scotland by breeding and releasing them into the wild. The project is funded by EU LIFE and led by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) alongside partner organisations NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Norden's Ark and Junta de Andalucía. Please visit the project website for more information: www.savingwildcats.org.uk.

What's involved?

The role will primarily involve assisting the In-situ Conservation (field) team with handling and analysing camera trap survey data (images and excel spreadsheets). Camera trap data analysis will primarily include the classification of a large number of survey images using the programme DigiKam.

The data volunteer will also have the opportunity to be trained in tracking the released wildcats, supporting the Field Team with this activity when the need arises. As well as, potentially, assisting with other field-based activities.

Where?

The successful candidate will work alongside the project team in the Saving Wildcats office at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's Highland Wildlife Park in Kincaig, with occasional field work in the wider Badenoch and Strathspey area.

When?

This is a full-time position in office hours (Monday-Friday between 09:00-17:30). The position will be available for five to six months (depending on the successful candidate's availability). We would like the candidate to start as soon as possible. Please advise your availability in the application.

Who with?

Data management will be undertaken independently with training and support provided by the In-situ Project Officers.

All fieldwork will be undertaken alongside and coordinated by one of the In-situ Project Officers.

What will the experience provide?

Volunteering will give you the opportunity to contribute directly towards conservation efforts for the critically endangered wildcat in Scotland, as part of the RZSS Saving Wildcats project team. You will learn about the conservation issues affecting wildcats and the actions being taken to prevent their extinction, including the first dedicated Conservation Breeding for Release Centre (CBRC) for wildcats in the UK, and the field programme to assess the release sites, mitigate the threats, and monitor the releases. You will gain direct practical experience of handling and analysing large datasets, as well as specific knowledge and experience of camera trapping methodology.

We'll provide you with full training and ongoing support from the In-Situ Conservation team during your time with us.

You will be provided with accommodation (a private room in a shared hostel located in a town near Highland Wildlife Park), expenses to £50 per week, and a discount to be used on-site at Highland Wildlife Park for lunch. Transport to and from the hostel to Highland Wildlife Park can be provided on working days, but you will be responsible for your own transportation outside of working hours so having your own vehicle may be advantageous.

What we're looking for:

A strong interest in Scottish Wildcat recovery and conservation and a desire to learn about the challenges involved in species reintroductions.

Confidence in handling large datasets, and meticulous attention to detail.

We require you to have a clean full UK driving licence, that you have held for more than one year.

Field work will be undertaken in the Scottish Highlands, often over challenging terrain, which will require a reasonable level of fitness with a willingness to be outdoors in all weathers.

You will have a responsible attitude to health and safety, be well organised and motivated with the ability to demonstrate initiative and work unsupervised.

You will need to be at least 18 years of age and will be required to provide two referees who will be contacted with your consent.

RSZZ is committed to being fair, open and inclusive. We believe that RZSS benefits from the involvement of volunteers from diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences. We will not discriminate on the grounds on gender, race, disability, age, religious beliefs, and so on. In some cases, extra support may be given to volunteers (e.g. those with disabilities). We expect our volunteers to adhere to the Guidelines on Equality and Diversity.

How to apply:

Please send your CV and a cover letter via email to cbell@rzss.org.uk by the end of Thursday 6 March. In your cover letter (no more than one A4 side), please explain why you would like to be considered for this role and detail your availability. If you have any questions about this experience, please contact cbell@rzss.org.uk. We are looking to recruit one volunteer for this role, and we hope to schedule interviews for the week commencing 10 March.