



Volunteer Role Description: Saving Wildcats in-situ conservation volunteer

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 the EU LIFE programme 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 Consejería de Sostenibilidad, Medio Ambiente y Economía Azul de la Junta de Andalucía, with wildcat releases supported by Cairngorms Connect. Please visit the project website for more information: savingwildcats.org.uk.

What's involved?

The role will involve assisting the in-situ conservation (field) team with GPS radio-tracking of released collared wildcats and handling and analysing camera trap survey data. Volunteers may also have the opportunity to assist with camera trap checks and may also be able to participate in community events as well as Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (TNVR) of feral domestic cats. Camera trap data analysis will primarily include the classification of survey images using the programme DigiKam.

This role will require a commitment of 37.5 hours a week, the equivalent of a full-time position. Volunteers will work 7.5 hours a day, five days a week, with working hours usually occurring between 9.00am to 5.00pm. Volunteers may be required to work weekends but will only be required to work five days out of a seven-day week. The role will be physically demanding and require a high level of fitness, and a willingness to walk long distances over challenging terrain and in all weathers. You will always be in the field with a member of Saving Wildcats staff when conducting fieldwork.

Where?

The successful candidates 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 regular field work in the wider Badenoch and Strathspey area.

When?

This is a full-time position that may include some out-of-hours and weekend working on a rota basis up to a maximum of 37.5 hours week. This position will be available for six months (depending on the successful candidate's availability). We would like the candidate to start on Tuesday 2 April and commit until Friday 27 September 2024. Please indicate your availability over this period in your application.

Who with?

All fieldwork will be undertaken alongside and coordinated by one of the in-situ project officers. Data management will be undertaken independently following training and ongoing support from 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.

This includes developing an understanding of the field programme that assesses potential release sites and mitigates the threats facing wildcats in Scotland today. You will gain direct practical experience of tracking mammals, using GPS-radio collars, data collection and handling, as well as an insight into the complexities involved with in-situ field work.



We'll provide you with full training and ongoing support from the in-situ conservation team.

You will also be provided with accommodation (a private room in a shared hostel located in a town near Highland Wildlife Park), expenses up to £50 per week, and a discount to be used on-site at Highland Wildlife Park for lunch. Although project vehicles will be used for work in the field, a clean full driving license and your own vehicle is a requirement for this role as you will need your own vehicle for transport to and from Highland Wildlife Park, as there is no public transport out of hours. Fuel costs will be compensated for this. You will need to have experience and be confident driving a 4x4 vehicle in variable weather conditions.

Should your application be successful, the Saving Wildcats team will discuss kit requirements necessary for this role. We would expect volunteers to provide most of their own kit and equipment (e.g. walking boots, backpacks, winter standard kit). However, we will consider reasonable requests to provide field kit and equipment for the duration of this position should this be a barrier to you volunteering with us.

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 restoration.

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

Some fieldwork experience would be advantageous, preferably in the Scottish Highlands or similar remote and challenging conditions.

Full drivers' license for more than a year.

Confidence driving 4x4 vehicles in potentially difficult and challenging weather conditions would be beneficial.

Some experience with animal tracking would be advantageous but is not essential as full training will be provided.

You will need 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. You will also be required to undergo a basic disclosure check prior to volunteering, which you will be reimbursed for once you have begun volunteering.

RZSS 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 accept people of all genders, races, disabilities, ages, religious beliefs, and sexualities to be part of RZSS. We try to make our spaces and working conditions as accessible as possible and welcome requests to accommodate the individual. We expect our volunteers to adhere to the Guidelines on Equality and Diversity upon induction and throughout their time volunteering to us.

How to apply:

Please send your CV and a cover letter via email to hparsons@rzss.org.uk by the end of Sunday 10th March. In your cover letter, please explain why you would like to be considered for this experience and detail your availability. Please make sure your cover letter is no more than one A4 page. If you have any questions about this experience, please contact hparsons@rzss.org.uk.