

Volunteer Role Description: Saving Wildcats GPS radio-tracking 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 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 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 GPS radio-tracking of released wildcats. The volunteer will mainly be based in the field with a member of the SW field team, radio-tracking collared wildcats and downloading the GPS data. There may also be opportunities to participate in additional field-based activities, such as camera-trap checks and Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (TNVR) of feral domestic cats. 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 occurring between 8.00am to 6.00pm. Volunteers will be required to work on weekends but will have Mondays and Tuesdays off. 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 accompanied by a member of Saving Wildcats staff when conducting fieldwork.

Where?

The successful candidate will work alongside the Saving Wildcats field team in the Badenoch and Strathspey area, based at the Saving Wildcats offices at the RZSS Highland Wildlife Park in Kincaig.

When?

This is a full-time position that will 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 2-3 months (depending on the successful candidate's availability). We would like the candidate to start on Wednesday 5th July and to be available for a minimum of 6 weeks. Ideally, the volunteer would commit till the 6th of September.

Who with?

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. 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, handling, and recording, 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 to £50 per week, and a discount to be used on-site at Highland Wildlife Park for lunch. Transport will be provided by the field officers from the base at the Highland Wildlife Park to/from the field site for the tracking. However, you will be responsible for your own transport to and from Highland Wildlife Park, and therefore **a driving license and own vehicle are required for this position** as there are no public transport options out of hours. You will be compensated for your fuel costs when driving to and from Highland Wildlife Park.

Should you be successful and offered the position, the Saving Wildcats team will discuss kit requirements necessary for this opportunity. We would expect volunteers to provide most of their own kit and equipment (e.g. walking shoes, backpacks, sun hats). 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 restorations.

Fieldwork experience, preferably in the Scottish Highlands or similar remote and challenging conditions.

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

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.

How to apply:

Please send your CV and a cover letter via email to hparsons@rzss.org.uk by Sunday 21 May. 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. We are looking to recruit two GPS radio-tracking volunteers.

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 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.