

Job Description

Position:	Blackdown Hills Natural Futures Trainee Ecologist
Location:	BH AONB office in Hemyock, although the majority of time will be spent in the field.
Salary:	Voluntary position (reasonable travel and subsistence expenses will be provided).
Duration:	26 week placements during 2017 (three trainee positions) from April – September (inclusive).
Hours of work:	3 days per week, normally Wed – Fri with occasional evening and early morning survey visits.
Reports to:	BHNF Officer

Job purpose:

The Blackdown Hills Natural Futures (BHNF) project, led by the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and other funders. The project aims to build a better future for the wildlife and natural heritage of the Blackdown Hills AONB by increasing understanding, raising awareness and equipping people with the skills they need to look after it.

A central part of the project is to provide a structured training programme designed to teach a range of skills related to professional ecology work, with the goal of giving BHNF Trainee Ecologists the skills required to secure employment in the ecological consultancy or nature conservation sectors. In doing this, the BHNF Trainee Ecologists will survey a wide range of sites within the Blackdown Hills AONB for a variety of species on behalf of private landowners, local nature conservation bodies and records centres, parish councils and community groups. Topics covered by the programme will include:

- Ongoing training in **botanical identification skills** (60 – 65% of time) and habitat classification using the National Vegetation Classification (NVC), covering a wide range of Local/County Wildlife Sites on behalf of Local Environmental Records Centres.
- Training in **Phase 1 Habitat Survey** methods used when assessing sites for development.
- Thorough training in **UK and EU wildlife legislation**, including on-going examples of legislation issues in the field throughout the year;
- Training in UK and EU **Protected Species ecology and field survey** (15 – 20% of time) including **great crested newt surveys** and trapping, **dormouse handling, bat surveys** and sound analysis, **white-clawed crayfish surveys** and **reptile surveys**.
- **Specialist training sessions** (10% of time) – a range will be offered, and trainees can decide which are booked according to their interests and goals. Past courses have included white-clawed crayfish ecology, bryophyte identification, badger ecology, vegetative plant identification, bat sound analysis, and many more – all led by regional or national experts.
- **Short placements with Local Environmental Records Centres** (5% of time); learning how to digitize site information in GIS programmes, process survey data, and use professional ecological recording software.

In addition to the training provided by the programme, several local ecological consultancies are kindly supporting the project, and **all are willing to offer paid work for BHNF Trainee Ecologists** where opportunities arise.

The training scheme is **expressly designed to increase the employability of people wishing to work in the ecology and conservation sector** as much as possible over the course of six months, and the programme represents an exceptional opportunity for those looking to gain a leg-up in a sector increasingly difficult to access.

There are three part-time (3 days per week) BHNF Trainee Ecologist posts, which run from April – September for 26 weeks. All equipment needed for the role will be provided. A travel allowance

is available to cover the costs of travelling to and from the AONB Offices, and subsistence expenses will also be paid. Post holders will need to travel to the AONB offices in Hemyock, with onward travel to site visits provided.

BHNF Trainee Ecologists will be expected to:

1. Attend the 26-week ecological skills training programme, undertaking fieldwork and complementary training for three days per week from April until September (inclusive). The timetable will allow flexibility for one to two weeks leave.
2. Collect and record accurate and high quality data whilst in the field. This will include comprehensive botanical species lists for higher plants, and habitat data recorded using Phase 1 and National Vegetation Classification (NVC) methodologies. Where appropriate, further surveys focusing on other species groups including European Protected Species will also be carried out.
3. Following relevant training, produce site survey reports to a professional standard for submission to landowners, and produce simple survey summary reports for the BHNF website.
4. Collate and process ecological survey data and prepare for submission to Local Record Centres and private landowners.
5. Write a short monthly blog article for publication on the BHNF website of the previous month's activities and learning experience.
6. Communicate other interesting findings through regular updates via twitter, YouTube and/or Flickr including photographs and short film clips of interesting species, habitats, views or identification techniques to help engage the public with the wildlife and natural heritage of the Blackdown Hills.
7. Help to deliver a family bioblitz event to engage new audiences with the wildlife of the Blackdown Hills.
8. Attend occasional BHNF project team meetings.
9. Work as a member of the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership staff team, comply with all relevant health and safety policies and carry out appropriate tasks to promote the aims and objectives of the project and the AONB Partnership.

Person Specification

It's crucial to note we are looking more for **potential** rather than current ability, those with ambition to progress and drive to learn will be assessed favourably regardless of any existing expertise.

Attribute	Essential	Desirable
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A keen interest in plant and animal identification and survey. - An interest in habitat management and restoration. - Evidence of committing time to voluntary work. - Some prior knowledge of UK habitats, particularly those found in the Blackdown Hills - Experience of working individually and as part of a small team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge and understanding of protected landscapes (NPs and AONBs) and the issues they face. - Experience of using keys to identify plants or animals. - Experience identifying and assessing habitats using Phase 1 /NVC.
Practical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrable aptitude for learning identification of species and habitats. - Developing flora and fauna identification skills. - Willingness to work in the field in all weather conditions. - Ability to travel to the Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership's offices in Hemyock (reasonable travel expenses will be reimbursed). - Willingness to commit to the 26-week programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Map-reading skills.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good communications skills both verbally and in writing. - Experience of using a range of communication methods, particularly social media. - Willingness to engage with members of the public at project events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience of use of social media in a professional context.
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Energetic, enthusiastic and highly motivated. - Desire and commitment to working in the ecological/nature conservation sector. - Quick to learn and happy to work independently and as part of a team. - Ability to meet deadlines and work flexibly. - Tact, diplomacy and confident approach. 	
Technology / IT skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good use of IT including Microsoft Office. - Ability to acquire new skills quickly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience of using GIS to map habitats.
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keen personal interest in ecology and conservation, and the motivation to develop skills independently of supervised training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree or equivalent experience in ecological/nature conservation field.
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to carry out the duties of the post with reasonable adjustments where necessary. 	

How to Apply

Applications can be made using the role application form found on the Blackdown Hills Natural Futures website: www.blackdownhillsnaturalfutures.org/training-programme.

Applications should be sent to the Blackdown Hills Natural Futures Officer at conrad.barrowclough@devon.gov.uk, or posted to Blackdown Hills AONB, St Ivel House, Station Road, Hemyock, Devon, EX15 3SJ.

If you have any questions about the role which you would like to discuss informally then please email conrad.barrowclough@devon.gov.uk or call 01823 681935.

Application deadline: 5pm Friday 10th February 2017

Interviews: Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd March 2017

Role commencement: Wednesday 5th April 2017.