

Volunteer Pack

Your guide to volunteering with the Wessex Rivers Trust



Healthy rivers for wildlife and people



Wessex
Rivers Trust

Welcome to the Wessex Rivers Trust

Thank you for volunteering your time to help us. Volunteers bring a wide range of skills and interest to the Rivers Trust, which we highly value and are eager to draw in and support. Volunteers are key to us as an organisation to ensure the survival of our rivers and enable us to work towards protecting the environment for future generations.

In this pack, you will find everything you need to get started as one of our volunteers. This document aims to answer any of the questions you have about volunteering with us, however if you have additional questions after reading this do not hesitate to get in touch with us.



@wessexriverstrust



@WessexRT



@WessexRivers



Wessex Rivers
Trust

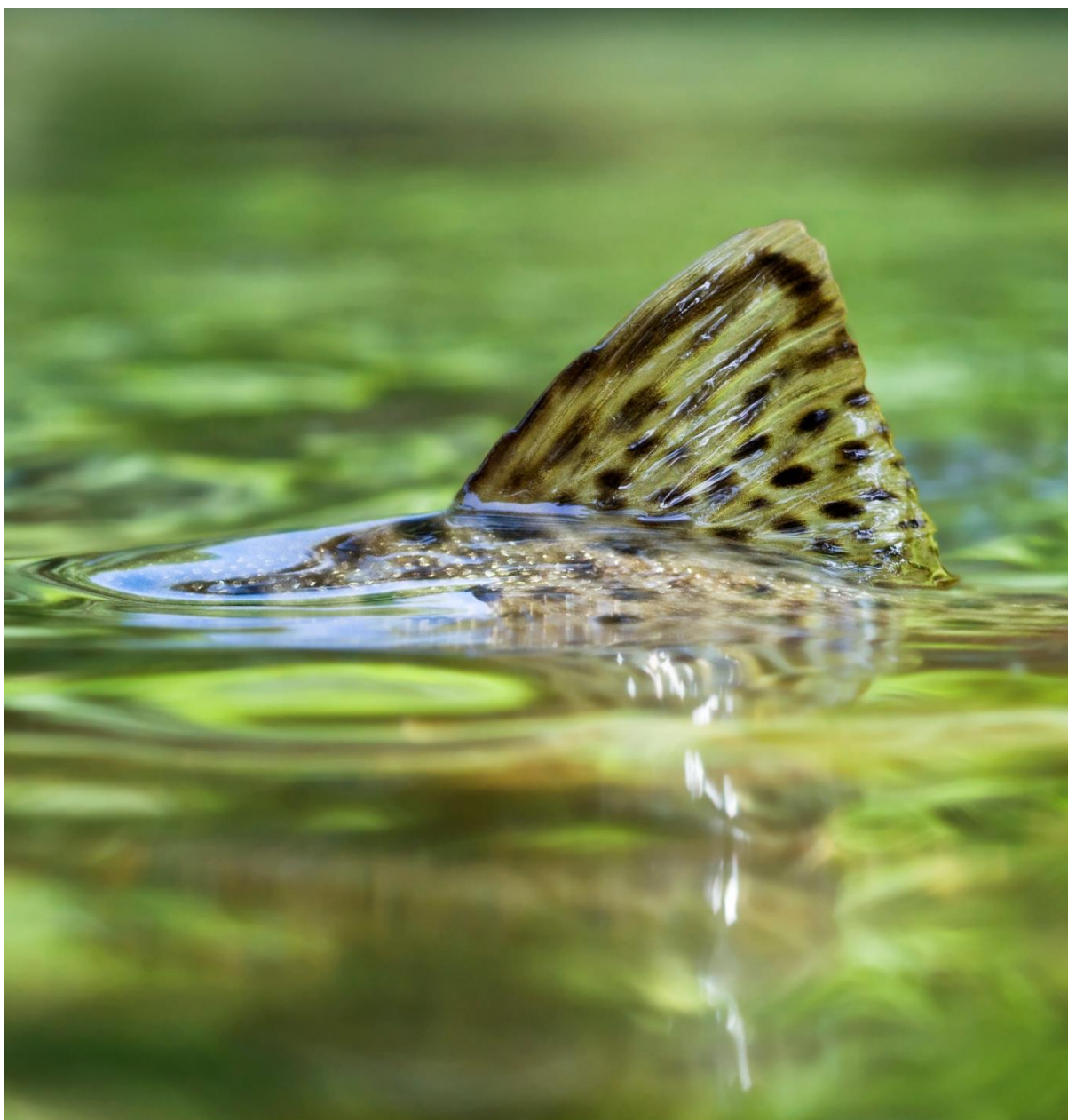


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Who are we and what do we do?

The Wessex Rivers Trust is an environmental charity dedicated to the conservation and restoration of Wessex rivers, working towards **healthy rivers for wildlife and people**. Our rivers include the Hampshire Avon, Dorset Stour, Meon, Test, and Itchen. We have four main branches of our organisation dedicated to obtaining our charitable aims.

RIVER RESTORATION

Every year we have a number of restoration projects aimed to rehabilitate and protect our rivers. River restoration often aims to improve biodiversity and contribute to flood management. Example projects can be found in our newsletters: <https://www.wcsrt.org.uk/publications>

CATCHMENT PARTNERSHIPS

We work with our partners collaboratively to improve the health of our rivers, acting as key members of both the Hampshire Avon Catchment Partnership (<http://www.hampshireavoncatchmentpartnership.org.uk/>) and the Stour Catchment Partnership (www.wessexwater.co.uk/stour). In addition, we co-host the Test & Itchen Catchment Partnership (<http://www.ticp.org.uk/>).

EDUCATION

We engage with schools and communities to raise public awareness of our rivers and their importance. One of our aims is educate others on the history, national importance and wildlife of chalk streams as they make up the majority of our river catchments.

RESEARCH & MONITORING

We use surveying and monitoring techniques to make sound environmental decisions to track the health of our rivers and identify key areas for improvements. Surveying and monitoring techniques include; kick sampling, electrofishing, temperature logger monitoring, nutrient monitoring and much, much more.



Being a Wessex Rivers Trust Volunteer

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A VOLUNTEER?

We have a wide range of opportunities available to you as a volunteer, however opportunities are dependent on our prospective and current projects and not limited to the example list below:

- River clean-ups
- Invasive non-native species removal
- Habitat work/ river restoration
- Assisting with surveying and monitoring
- Education and raising awareness
- Working on publications and publicity
- Contributing to the website
- Marketing and fundraising
- Filming and photography work

Volunteers are not obliged to attend, do the tasks provided, or give a minimum amount of time. Our arrangements with volunteers are not legally binding but we work off trust and mutual understanding of the agreed volunteer activities and arrangements.

BENEFITS OF BEING A VOLUNTEER

As a volunteer you have the opportunity to develop or gain new skills as well as having an enjoyable experience with us. Benefits of volunteering with the Wessex Rivers Trust can include:

- Learning about conservation and the environment
- Keeping fit
- Building confidence and self-esteem
- Developing communication skills
- Meeting new people from all sorts of backgrounds
- Exploring new places right on your doorstep
- Developing within a team
- Potential on the job training
- Giving back to your community



STARTING AS A VOLUNTEER

Once you have filled in our volunteer application form, we can then hand it to the most relevant member of staff. They will then contact you to discuss the opportunities the organisation can offer you in more detail as well as matching you up with the appropriate opportunity. This is also an opportunity to ask us questions about volunteering.

Unfortunately, we do not always have opportunities all year round or ones that match up with your skills, experience or aspirations. If this is the case, we will let you know of any future opportunities that may be suitable for you or advise you to volunteer with other organisation within a similar field to us.

If you volunteer with us and work with children, young people, or vulnerable adults you must undertake an 'enhanced disclosure check' through the Disclosure & barring Service (DBS). Volunteers will not be given any responsibility or left without supervision until conformation of their DBS status has been received. This will be arranged and paid for by the Wessex Rivers Trust. If this disclosure is returned with details of a criminal record, then we may not be able to offer you any voluntary work, particularly that involves children, young people, and vulnerable adults.





What can you expect from the Wessex Rivers Trust?

The Wessex Rivers Trust believes wholeheartedly in developing our volunteers. Support, advice and training offered are tailored to your tasks, needs and commitment to Wessex River Trust work.

OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

We aim to support you as best we can when you volunteer with us, trying to ensure that you:

- Receive an introduction to the Wessex Rivers Trust
- Have your tasks and role within the team thoroughly explained and demonstrated
- Have safe working conditions, access to health and safety equipment, and the appropriate PPE for your role/task
- Will receive the opportunity to attend training where appropriate
- Will have your records kept in confidence
- Will have the opportunity to put your ideas forward for the role/ task you are carrying out and be thanked and valued for your contributions

WE ASK OF YOU

As a volunteer you are an ambassador for the Wessex Chalk Streams and Rivers Trust and are an invaluable way of promoting the work we do and recruiting more volunteers. As such you are representing us, and we ask that you remember that your behaviour will reflect on our organisation. Therefore, we ask that you:

- Take the time to read the organisation's health and safety policy
- Report any accidents and near misses to the organisation so they can be recorded
- Respect others, whatever their background and experience
- Be reliable and trustworthy and inform your supervisor if you are unable to attend or fulfil your role/task
- Work with our policy guidelines
- Ask for support if you need it

Important and useful information

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A member of the Wessex Rivers Trust will provide a risk assessment, tool talks, provision of PPE and procedures in the case of an accident where appropriate for any practical tasks. As a volunteer we expect you take all reasonable steps to make sure safe working practices are carried out. General hazards and procedures when volunteering and walking by rivers are outlined below.

POTENTIAL HAZARD/ HARM	CONTROL MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK
MANUAL HANDLING OF MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT: MANUAL HANDLING, MUSCULAR-SKELETAL INJURY, CUTS TO HANDS, CRUSH INJURIES.	Use of appropriate containers to transport equipment (boxes, wheelbarrow/cart etc.); manual handling training; appropriate PPE and footwear. Stop immediately if any suffering, pain or discomfort. Seek medical advice if ill health persists.
ZOONOSES & WATERBORNE DISEASES E.G. WEIL'S DISEASE: CAUGHT BY CONTAMINATED WATER BEING INGESTED VIA MOUTH, EYES, NOSE ETC.	Pre-session assessment of cuts & abrasions, cleaned and covered if so; use of appropriate PPE (e.g. gloves) to reduce risk of cuts and grazes during work; use wipes to clean & hand gels to sanitise when appropriate.
LYME'S DISEASE: CARRIED BY TICKS	Inform all of risk of ticks and what to do if they discover one on their body. Long sleeves, trousers and wellies advised.
STINGS AND BITES: E.G. BEES, WASPS, HORSEFLIES ETC.	Cool sting or bite with clean water. Advise to apply antihistamine when at home. If signs of anaphylaxis show take to hospital immediately.
IRRITANTS: I.E. DANGEROUS PLANTS	If necessary, wear the gloves provided. Be aware of possible adverse effects from plants. Wash hands thoroughly after contact
LIVESTOCK & DOGS: SCRATCHES, BITES, DISEASE.	Wear appropriate clothing. Avoid contact with livestock and dogs. Avoid contact with animal faeces. Beware of loose dogs. If approached gather together as a group and move away from the animals.
STRANGERS: PHYSICAL OR VERBAL ABUSE, ABDUCTION	Be aware of aggressive and difficult people. Withdraw rather than face conflict. Do not work out of sight of others in the group. Keep together and stay off property where access has not been given.
WEATHER: WIND, COLD, WET, ELECTRICAL STORMS - HYPOTHERMIA, HYPERTHERMIA, ELECTROCUTION, BRANCHES/DEBRIS BLOWN AROUND	In the event of extreme weather conditions, the activity should be postponed until the conditions are safe to resume. Cease activity in inappropriate conditions. Dress for conditions can carry additional clothing

UNEVEN GROUND: SLIPS, TRIPS AND FALLS - TWISTS, SPRAINS, CUTS, ABRASIONS	Avoid dangerous areas and choose the safest possible route over difficult ground. Instruct participants to wear suitable footwear. Seek medical attention for any serious cuts, bruises or strains.
LOW HANGING BRANCHES: CUTS, HEAD INJURY, EYE INJURY	Raise awareness of low branches and areas to avoid. Wear safety glasses if necessary.
BARBED WIRE & ELECTRIC FENCES: CUTS, ELECTROCUTION	Always assume electric fences are live. Warn participants not to touch electric fences.
BECOMING SUBMERGED IN WATER: INCIDENTAL CUTS, ABRASIONS, BRUISES; HYPOTHERMIA; DROWNING	No lone working; assess water depth/velocity before work commences; any pre-existing medical conditions likely to cause collapse or loss of consciousness to be confidentially reported to staff before work commences; treatment of cuts and abrasions; replace dry or wet clothing.
POLLUTION: CHEMICAL, SEWAGE, NITRATES, PESTICIDES ETC - MANY LINKED DISEASES AND CANCERS	Do not approach or remove any potentially hazardous waste. Report to council for disposal. Seek medical attention if exposed to anything suspicious.
LITTER: SHARP OBJECTS, RUSTY EDGES - CUTS, ABRASIONS, TETANUS	Strong gloves to be worn at all times. All participants should have up to date tetanus immunisation. Thoroughly wash hands, any cuts and abrasions no matter how minor. All participants should have an up to date tetanus immunisation.
CLIFFS/ STEEP BANKS: FALLS, SLIPS, TRIPS, SUBMERSION IN WATER - TWISTS, SPRAINS, BREAKS, DROWNING, HYPOTHERMIA	Avoid working on or close to the edges of cliffs, steep slopes etc and below unstable cliffs and slopes. Take weather conditions and possible weather changes into account. Take account of tides if necessary. Wear life jacket if working near deep water.
TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT: NETS, LITTER PICKERS, SAMPLE TRAYS, SPOONS, SCISSORS, GLUE - CUTS, GRAZES	Allow sufficient working area for the correct and safe use of the tool. Use appropriate PPE. Participants must use the equipment provided as instructed.
HEDGES, FENCES, WALLS, DITCHES: FALLS LEADING TO SPRAINS, MUSCLE DAMAGE AND BROKEN BONES	Take care when climbing stiles particularly in wet weather. Avoid climbing walls, fences and ditches. Stay within the nominated location.

LONE WORKING

Lone working should be avoided wherever possible. In the exceptional circumstances where you need to carry out duties alone make sure that a staff contact knows where you are and confirm to them when you have returned safely.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

We expect all staff and volunteers not to behave in a discriminatory way towards fellow staff and volunteers. We will always respect the right of a volunteer to decline a task. We offer a variety of varied roles to suit individuals' abilities and needs.

INSURANCE

Volunteers are covered under our employer's liability insurance and public liability insurance.

VOLUNTEER RECORDS

Volunteer details are held on our computer records based upon the information supplied from our volunteer application form when you first signed up. For example, we ask for information about any relevant medical information and your emergency contact in case of any accident. We also retain your records to make sure you are kept up to date with the organisation and any volunteering opportunities. These records are kept confidentially. Please keep us up to date if there are any changes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Whilst volunteering with the Wessex Rivers Trust, you may sometimes be party to confidential and sensitive information about the Trust that is not public knowledge. Your full cooperation is expected to ensure the material remains confidential.



Commonly asked questions

WHY DOES THE WESSEX RIVERS TRUST HAVE VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteers bring a wide range of skills and interest to the Rivers Trust which we value as a great asset. Volunteers also do a great job at representing our organisation at a local level and spreading awareness.

DO I NEED PRIOR EXPERIENCE?

Volunteers need no prior experience, as we aim to encourage as many people from all walks of life and skills set to become volunteers and get involved with rivers. Most allow you to learn on the job, whilst a few do require specialist skills as a prerequisite.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE TO COMMIT?

There is no set amount of time volunteers are required to volunteer for us. You can volunteer as little or as often as you want with us. Some roles may require more commitment than others, but this will be discussed with you before you start volunteering.

CAN I USE MY PRIVATE VEHICLE?

If you are using your own vehicle for Trust business, you must check with your insurance company if you have adequate cover. This is not normally a problem as most insurance companies recognise that voluntary work is not a 'business use' of a vehicle and should not incur any additional costs.

HOW CAN I GET IN CONTACT WITH THE TRUST?

We are easily contactable via email (info@wcsrt.org.uk) and we will do our best to get back to you as quickly as possible. Alternatively ring us on 01722 237171 or get in contact with us through our social media accounts.