Volunteer Role Description: ‘HOPE for the Future: Move a Million’ Volunteers

**Background**
The Museum of Natural History’s British Insect Collection contains over one million specimens, from butterflies and bees to flies and fleas. The Collection spans almost the entire history of British entomology, representing extensive information on the country’s biodiversity and documenting how it has changed over time.

The Museum recently received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for ‘HOPE for the Future – Heritage, Outreach, and Preservation of Entomology’ (https://oumnh.ox.ac.uk/hope-future) – one of the main aims of which is to document and rehouse this Collection. In 2018-19, volunteers helped with an initial counting, assessment, and re-housing project (‘Count a Million’). The Entomology Department would now like to recruit multiple cohorts of volunteers to help continue the work over the next year.

**About the opportunity**
Volunteers will help with tasks including:
- neatly cutting up pre-printed sheets of small name labels to correct size
- removing specimens from current storage drawers and checking them
- undertaking any repair/remedial conservation work, e.g. changing a pin or cleaning off Verdigris with a paintbrush
- attaching the new label to the specimen
- placing the specimen in a new storage tray and drawer

There will be up to five people volunteering alongside each other per session, although volunteers will work at their own pace.

**Who are we looking for?**
Manual dexterity, a sense of care, and a methodical approach are all important for this role. Our ideal volunteer will:
- have attention to detail, a gentle touch, and a steady hand when handling pinned insects, in order not to damage them
- be neat and accurate cutting out labels
- be patient in following a process and doing repetitive tasks
- ask questions if unsure of something
- have a prior interest in insects and/or museum conservation and collections management – although no prior knowledge is required, and enthusiasm is more important than expertise

**Why volunteers might enjoy this opportunity**
It’s a chance to:
- see behind-the-scenes in the Museum’s Entomology Department
• get up-close and hands-on with some really interesting specimens
• learn about British insects
• learn about collections care and gain experience using some basic techniques
• contribute to a project helping to protect and preserve specimens for the future

Timing
We would like to engage our first three cohorts of volunteers during April and May. Volunteers in each cohort will have the opportunity to help at a weekly session over four consecutive weeks, as follows:

• **Wednesdays 8th April - 29th April, 1 - 4 pm, or**
• **Thursdays 23rd April - 14th May, 10 am - 1 pm, or**
• **Fridays 17th April - 8th May, 9.30 am - 12 noon**

Induction and training
Volunteers will be trained and supervised by Entomology Department staff, who will be on hand to offer guidance and answer any questions they may have. Training at the first session will focus on safe specimen handling. Staff will also plan a short talk for the end of each session, with potential topics including specimen conservation, collections management 101, a brief overview of British Insect Orders, how to identify insects, and common enquiries from the home and garden.

Other practicalities
• This is a seated role, and the room has direct access and flat entry from the lift. However, please note that the proximity of cabinets and work benches means that it is a little tight for manoeuvring in some places, and care should be taken.
• Volunteers can claim reimbursement of travel expenses up to £4.30 per volunteering session upon presentation of original tickets or receipts.
• This opportunity is open to volunteers aged 18+.
• This role does not require a Right to Work.

Next steps...
All prospective volunteers will need to attend a ‘trial’ session, either:

• **Wednesday 18th March, 2 - 3 pm, or**
• **Friday 27th March, 10.30 - 11.30 am**

The purpose of the session is to explain more about the project and to give prospective volunteers a taster of the work via a practical task. **NB** staff will observe the task, as they will only be able to take on people who can demonstrate that they are able to handle the very fragile specimens with care. If you’re interested in getting involved, then please email Caroline at volunteering@museums.ox.ac.uk, confirming which trial session(s) you could potentially attend, and which volunteering sessions you could potentially help with (Wed, Thu, Fri). **The deadline to apply is Wednesday 11th March.**