



## Volunteer Role Description: Biodiversity Recording Volunteer

### About the Role

*Are you interested in local wildlife? Have you used biodiversity recording apps before, or are you keen to have a go? Can you help on regular Thursday mornings during the next few months, and potentially beyond?*

The Botanic Garden's Horticulture team is looking for a small group of enthusiastic volunteers to help pilot weekly biodiversity recording at its site. By collecting accurate data on species and seasonal changes, volunteers will help staff to better understand and monitor the Garden's wildlife. The data will also contribute to national recording schemes.

Specific monitoring activities and the exact balance of tasks will vary by season, but we anticipate volunteers:

- assisting with regular moth trapping sessions: setting up and checking traps, identifying species where possible, and recording results; these sessions will be early morning (starting at 7.30 am) and potentially low-light
- conducting regular bird surveys and walked transects
- recording phenological observations (seasonal changes in plants), e.g., plant flowering and fruiting times
- conducting other invertebrate surveys, e.g., bumblebee and butterfly transects and Flower-Insect Timed (FIT) counts – this will depend on previous experience and/or interest in additional training
- entering survey data into spreadsheets or relevant national recording platforms
- helping maintain equipment used for monitoring activities
- possibly supporting biodiversity-themed events such as BioBlitzes: encouraging public participation and assisting visitors to identify and record species

Tasks will be coordinated by Tom McCarter, Curator and Head of Horticulture. He will also supervise and train the team, although other Horticulture staff may be the volunteers' point of contact on the day.

### Timing and commitment

Moth trapping sessions will happen 7.30 - 10 am, and bird surveys will happen 10 - 11 am. Ideally, volunteers will be able to help for the full slot of **7.30 - 11 am on weekly or fortnightly Thursdays, most weeks between May and October 2026**. The role will then be reviewed, with the potential to continue year-round.

There may be occasional, additional opportunities to help with monitoring at other times and/or to support relevant public events such as BioBlitzes. Details will be shared in advance so volunteers can sign up if available and interested.



## Training

Training will happen **7.30 - 11 am on Thursdays 21st and 28th May** and will include:

- site induction and relevant health & safety
- introduction to survey methodologies, recording standards and protocols, and the use of iRecord and iNaturalist apps
- guidance on basic species identification (particularly birds, moths, and pollinators)
- shadowing staff or potentially being paired with more experienced volunteers to build confidence, as needed

Additional training may be offered later on depending on interest in and capacity for other surveys. Guidance on supporting public engagement events will also be provided as needed.

Once trained, the team will work relatively independently to do their recording, although they will always be greeted by a member of the Horticulture team, and staff will always be nearby to provide guidance and support.

## About Biodiversity Recording volunteers

We're looking for volunteers who:

- have an interest in wildlife and in developing and/or practising identification skills
- enjoy careful observation
- are confident using phone apps for accurate data recording (or feel they will be once trained)
- are comfortable being outdoors in variable weather conditions (although monitoring sessions may be cancelled if the weather is bad)
- can comfortably move around the Garden, which includes uneven paths and natural terrain
- would enjoy volunteering as part of a small, regular team
- are confident engaging with visitors, if helping at public events

Enthusiasm, reliability, and curiosity are more important than prior expertise.

## Why volunteers might enjoy this role

It's an opportunity to:

- help pilot a new role, together with other enthusiastic volunteers
- develop and practise practical skills in ecological survey techniques
- improve species identification knowledge
- contribute meaningful data to support habitat management and national recording schemes
- spend time outside and experience the Garden in a unique way: observing seasonal and wildlife changes up close
- gain experience supporting public events – if interested and available
- support the Garden's mission to promote environmental awareness and biodiversity



## Other Information

- The role is open to volunteers aged 18+.
- Staff will be keen to hear volunteers' feedback as they pilot different aspects of the role and when they review it in the autumn.
- This is an onsite opportunity and we anticipate that volunteers will live within easy commuting distance of the Oxford Botanic Garden (OX1 4AZ). Volunteers can claim reimbursement of travel expenses up to £5 per volunteering session. Please note that there is no onsite parking.
- Volunteers new to onsite GLAM volunteering will need to be registered on the Volunteer Service mailing list (through MyImpactPage.com), and the Volunteer Service will need to have received two references and done an ID check before volunteers can start in this role. The role does not currently require any additional checks.

## Next steps...

We are looking to involve a small group of people in piloting this role. Depending on the level of interest, Tom McCarter hopes to invite as many people as possible to **an informal chat between 9 am and 12 noon on Thursday 14th May**. This will be a chance to meet each other, explain more about the role, answer any questions, and help decide if it seems like a good fit.

If you are interested in getting involved, then please **complete a form by following [this link](#)**. It will ask you to:

- confirm your availability to attend an informal chat on 14th May
- indicate your general availability to volunteer on Thursday mornings
- confirm your availability to attend the training on 21st and 28th May
- briefly explain (max 200ish words) why you would like to be involved and what you feel you would bring to the role; this includes any previous relevant experience

**If sending a video or voice recording would make it easier for you to apply**, then you are welcome to email one to Caroline at [volunteering@glam.ox.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@glam.ox.ac.uk) – just make sure you include all of these points!

**The deadline to apply is Wednesday 6th May**. Caroline will share expressions of interest with Tom McCarter after the deadline, and someone will then be in touch as soon as possible.

Information will be kept in accordance with the Volunteer Service's [Data Retention Schedule](#).