

Volunteer Role Description: Re-housing a British Fly (Diptera) Collection



Drawer containing multiple, pinned fly specimens (left); close-up of a single specimen (right)

About the opportunity

The Museum of Natural History holds an estimated five million, mostly dry-pinned [insect specimens in its main collection](#). Waiting to officially join them is a collection of British flies (Diptera), which Louis Lofthouse (Life Collections Assistant) would appreciate volunteer help to catalogue, label, and transfer. This will involve volunteers working their way through existing drawers of insects and:

- counting and recording the number of specimens and species in each drawer
- inputting information from labels into an Excel spreadsheet
- creating new, updated labels and attaching them to specimens via pins
- transferring specimens to new storage trays in pest-proof, airtight drawers

Volunteers will be based in the Life department's shared work area: a light, accessible (step-free via a lift), quietish space, upstairs in the Museum. Louis will induct volunteers, and will be on hand to answer questions and review progress.

We would ideally like volunteers to come in for a **weekly(ish) half-day shift, e.g. 10 am - 1 pm / 1.30 - 4.30 pm on Thursdays starting in January 2025**. There is no specific finish date, although the project may take a few months, during which Louis will regularly check in with volunteers about their progress and satisfaction. Longer sessions, which would include a lunch break, can also be considered.

Who are we looking for?

Because this role is about recording information as accurately as possible, we feel it would particularly suit volunteers who:

- enjoy doing methodical, repetitive tasks, with attention to detail
- are comfortable reading small text (handwritten and typed)
- are accurate typists and already familiar with using basic Excel spreadsheets (or willing to learn)



Volunteers will also need to manipulate delicate, pinned insect specimens in order to better see the information on labels and to add new labels to specimens, so a sense of care and manual dexterity when using entomological pins and forceps are important. They should similarly show due care when handling the drawers. They will be able to collect the drawers themselves from a nearby storage area, or Louis can have them ready and waiting for them when they arrive.

Finally, prior knowledge of insects might make the task more interesting but isn't necessary; Louis can explain what the information on the labels means, and we are happy to meet potential volunteers who would like to develop more knowledge in this area.

Why volunteers might enjoy this opportunity

We hope that volunteers will find the role interesting and fulfilling! It's a chance to:

- spend a regular half-day doing something a bit different: people have previously described similar tasks as “tranquil”, “satisfying”, and “therapeutic”
- connect with the Museum and meet staff and other volunteers
- gain an insight into how the Museum's entomology collections are managed and documented
- potentially pursue or develop an interest in this taxonomic group of insects
- help the Museum add to its collections in a very practical way, while also making the collections more accessible to people who want to use them
- potentially contribute to the Museum's social media – if you would like to share something about your volunteering

Other practicalities

- We will encourage volunteers to work at the computer in a comfortable way, including taking breaks as necessary – volunteers are welcome to get a drink and bring something to eat in the staff room if they would like to.
- This role is open to volunteers aged 18+.
- Volunteers can claim travel expenses up to £5 per volunteering session.
- Volunteers new to onsite GLAM volunteering will need to be registered on the Volunteer Service mailing list (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 require any additional checks.

How to let us know you're interested

If you think you would suit and enjoy this role, then please email Caroline at volunteering@glam.ox.ac.uk by the end of the day on **Sunday 1st December**.



When you get in touch, please:

- confirm your preferred availability on Wednesdays and/or Thursdays
- include a few lines about why you're interested (no more than 150ish words)
- give an example of a task you've done that required you to work with attention to detail and/or manual dexterity; this could be something you've done at work, at home, while studying, as a hobby, etc. (no more than 150ish words)

In addition, because we are advertising more than one volunteer role in the Life Collection at the same time, and because we anticipate these roles attracting more people than we can currently take on, we would like to invite a shortlist of potential volunteers to come into the Department on the following dates:

- Thursday 5th December: 9.30 am - 3 pm
- Friday 6th December: 1 - 4 pm
- Thursday 12th December: 9.30 am - 4 pm

This will be a chance to meet us and see where volunteering happens. We will also set everyone a practical task (involving insects) to help you and us decide if this kind of volunteering is a good fit. **Please let us know which of these sessions you could potentially attend.** If you aren't available at these times, then please still get in touch, and we will arrange another time if possible.

Caroline will forward applications on to the Volunteer Supervisor, Louis, after the deadline, and someone will be in touch as soon as possible after that.