



## **Volunteer Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

Ulster Wildlife is committed to involving volunteers in its work in appropriate activities. We recognise that volunteering is a valuable and integral part of society and as such volunteers deserve support and recognition. We believe that volunteering can play an important role in helping Ulster Wildlife achieve its strategic objectives but that involving volunteers complements and supports the role of paid staff.

Ulster Wildlife was founded by volunteers in 1978 and has benefited enormously from volunteer contributions throughout its history. As Ulster Wildlife has grown, so has the number of staff and volunteers involved. This growth has created the need for a framework around which we can work together and develop our valuable and successful partnership. This volunteering policy has been developed to provide direction and guidance for both staff and volunteers.

## **2. Scope**

This policy is designed to clarify the broad principles regarding volunteer involvement with Ulster Wildlife. It has been developed for our volunteers and anyone else concerned with the recruitment, support, development and management of potential or existing volunteers.

## **3. Definition: Volunteering**

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment, or individuals outside (or in addition to) one's immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice.

## **4. What Ulster Wildlife gains from volunteers**

- Volunteers provide much needed local representation which helps to raise our profile throughout NI, with the opportunity to make more people aware of Ulster Wildlife's work.
- We can involve volunteers with specialist knowledge for the benefit of Ulster Wildlife.
- Volunteers provide knowledge, skills, experience, ideas and enthusiasm.
- Volunteers can focus on specific tasks to which Ulster Wildlife staff are unable to devote uninterrupted time.
- Volunteers help to extend the budget (eg. volunteer hours can be used as match-funding for grant applications).
- Volunteers extend the sphere of influence of Ulster Wildlife.

## **5. What volunteers gain from volunteering with Ulster Wildlife**

- Enjoyment.
- The opportunity to meet people with similar interests.
- The knowledge that they are contributing to nature conservation in NI.
- The chance to improve their local environment.
- A better understanding of the work of Ulster Wildlife.
- A wider range of knowledge, skills and experiences.
- Specific environmental skills.
- Employability, especially in the field of wildlife conservation, by gaining valuable experience.

## **6. Recruitment of Volunteers**

### **6.1 Recruitment and Volunteer Roles**

- Ulster Wildlife produces volunteer role descriptions that outline the main aims and responsibilities involved in the roles.
- On enquiring to volunteer with Ulster Wildlife, a potential volunteer may be invited to attend a taster session dependent on the role they are interested in. The Volunteer Officer will review the taster session with the volunteer and the team and if all parties are content, the volunteer will be asked to fill in a volunteer registration form that will be held confidentially.
- Volunteers seeking to volunteer in areas that would include safeguarding of children and adults will be taken only after an Access NI check is carried out.
- Recruitment will be carried out by varied means to attract volunteers from as wide a section of society as possible using a variety of media, and words and images that do not create barriers to access.
- Where volunteers are not suitable for a particular position, Ulster Wildlife will consider other opportunities and provide constructive feedback in explaining why offers of help may be declined.
- The minimum age for volunteers is usually 16. There is no maximum age.

## **6.2 Equal Opportunities**

- Ulster Wildlife will promote volunteering and facilitate volunteers from all sections of society irrespective of class, creed, gender or economic status.
- All volunteers will be made aware of, and must comply with Ulster Wildlife's policy and statutory requirements for Equal Opportunities.

## **7. Management and Support Systems**

### **7.1 Administration**

- The volunteer database will only be accessed by personnel given the authority to do so by the Chief Executive and is password protected. Ulster Wildlife databases are managed in compliance with Data Protection regulations.
- A central volunteer information contact will be held by the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Relevant volunteer records will be maintained and reviewed on a periodic basis.
- Ulster Wildlife will commit sufficient resources to the volunteer/staff partnership.

### **7.2 Management and Supervision**

- Ulster Wildlife will acknowledge the time and effort that volunteers give to it.
- All volunteers will be given a specific name of the person who will provide support and guidance to them in their volunteering. This person may be a member of staff or another volunteer.
- Ulster Wildlife will provide good working conditions subject to the task and/or activity.
- Ulster Wildlife will provide opportunities for volunteers to express their views. Feedback from volunteers will be communicated within the organisation to ensure improvements in practices and policies.
- Ulster Wildlife will provide appropriate support for supervisors of volunteers.
- Volunteers will be given the opportunity to review their volunteering and suggest appropriate changes to their role to ensure they are happy.
- Ulster Wildlife will ensure that staff are clear as to their responsibilities regarding volunteers.
- Ulster Wildlife will ensure that volunteers are aware of their responsibilities.
- Ulster Wildlife will maintain regular communication between staff and volunteers.

- Ulster Wildlife will ensure volunteers are aware of any statutory requirements.
- Ulster Wildlife will recognize the need for physical and emotional support in the workplace (duty of care).

### **7.3 Induction**

- All volunteers will receive an induction appropriate to the volunteer's activity. This will equip them to carry out the duties for which they have volunteered and to understand their contribution to meeting Ulster Wildlife's objectives. While induction has a vital role in imparting information, its most important function must be to welcome new volunteers to the organisation.
- All long-term volunteers will have regular support meetings with their supervisor.

### **7.4 Training**

- Ulster Wildlife encourages volunteers to develop new skills in the course of their voluntary activities.
- Ulster Wildlife will provide training appropriate and relevant to the tasks and duties that the volunteer undertakes.
- Ulster Wildlife may be able to provide the opportunity to complete specific accredited training courses or qualifications while volunteering at Ulster Wildlife.
- In return, Ulster Wildlife asks trained volunteers to put the training into practice to benefit Ulster Wildlife's objectives.

### **7.5 Health & Safety**

- All volunteers must be made aware of and must abide by the Ulster Wildlife's Health & Safety Policy and Procedures.
- All volunteers must be made aware of the health and safety procedures and of their responsibility to each other when undertaking any task.

### **7.6 Insurance**

- All volunteers are covered by Ulster Wildlife's Employee & Public Liability insurance whilst actively engaged in Ulster Wildlife business.
- Guidance notes on the Insurance Policy can be obtained from the Finance Manager.
- If volunteers are driving on behalf of Ulster Wildlife in accordance with best practice, volunteers must inform their insurance company and have that noted on their policy.

### **7.7 Expenses**

- Ulster Wildlife will reimburse all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. Ulster Wildlife can under no circumstances reimburse above actual, reasonable expenses related to volunteering activity. Any expenses to be claimed must be supported by receipts and **must be agreed in advance** between the volunteer and their supervisor.
- See Volunteer Handbook for a more detailed expenses policy and procedure.

### **7.8 Problem Solving and Difficult Situations**

- Any problems raised by volunteers against Ulster Wildlife staff or other volunteers will be approached in accordance with the Dealing with Problems procedure outlined in the Volunteer Handbook. This also applies if volunteers do not uphold the responsibilities of their role, or if they compromise health and safety or any of the adopted policies of Ulster Wildlife.

## **8. Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities**

### **Volunteers for Ulster Wildlife have the right to:**

- Know what is expected of them.
- Receive a volunteer handbook and a copy of the volunteer policy.
- Have specified lines of support and supervision.
- Be shown appreciation.
- Be insured.
- Work in a healthy and safe environment.
- Be reimbursed out-of-pocket expenses.
- Receive an induction and training appropriate to the task.
- Be free from discrimination.
- Have the opportunity for personal development.
- Be kept informed of relevant matters within Ulster Wildlife.

### **Volunteers for Ulster Wildlife have a responsibility to:**

- Fulfil their role to the best of their abilities.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Follow Ulster Wildlife policies and procedures that directly relate to volunteers.
- Represent Ulster Wildlife accurately and positively to other organisations/individuals.

- Respect the staff and volunteer partnership.
- Provide input on ways their tasks could be better organised/performed.
- Ask for support if needed.
- Be accountable and accept constructive comments.
- Ensure that no illegal or criminal misuse of Ulster Wildlife assets takes place.
- Honour any time commitments or provide notice so alternative arrangements can be made.