



**SAVING
SCOTLAND'S
RED
SQUIRRELS**

**VOLUNTEER
HANDBOOK**

Welcome

Thank you for helping to save Scotland's red squirrels.

Red squirrels are one of Scotland's most loved animals. For many people, an encounter with a red squirrel is a joyful, yet increasingly rare experience. While most of the UK's red squirrels are found here, their numbers have fallen significantly.

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels has been working since 2009 to ensure red squirrels continue to have a home in Scotland. We are supporting communities and individuals to take action to help their local red squirrel populations thrive again. Our work to date has shown that well-managed grey squirrel control in targeted areas can make a difference — in many of these areas red squirrels are already making a comeback.

However, there is still a lot of work to do. With the help of our volunteers, we are monitoring red and grey squirrel numbers across the country. We're also managing the impact of squirrelpox, a virus carried by grey squirrels which is deadly to reds. And, by inspiring and supporting community action, we're working to establish a long-term, effective means of controlling the spread of grey squirrels, ensuring the long-term survival of our native species.

Working in partnership

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is a partnership project led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and includes Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Land and Estates, Red Squirrel Survival Trust and RSPB Scotland.

As lead partner, the Scottish Wildlife Trust is the employer of all Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels staff, and manages the project's volunteers.

Overall there are about 1,000 volunteers helping the Scottish Wildlife Trust achieve its objectives. Volunteers are part of all aspects of the Trust's work, from practical reserve management to fundraising, helping at public events to helping in offices and visitor centres. The hours contributed by Scottish Wildlife Trust volunteers are equivalent to at least another 35 full time staff.

Developing community action

In 2017, Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to begin a new phase called 'Developing Community Action'. Alongside vital conservation work, the project is focussing on engaging with local communities and individuals, inspiring them to take action to protect red squirrels where they live.

Volunteering with Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is a fantastic way to connect with nature and support your local area's special native wildlife. Our volunteers are provided with the training and resources they need to participate.

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1. Our volunteer policy

Both Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels and you should gain from your volunteering, and we want to provide you with an enjoyable and fulfilling volunteer experience. In order for this to happen there is an element of responsibility on both sides. By reading our volunteer policy we will assume that you agree to honour your responsibilities as a Scottish Wildlife Trust volunteer.



Our responsibilities

- Make you feel welcome and appreciated
- Provide you with a good understanding of the project and your role within it including giving you a clear role description, instruction and relevant training
- Give you proper supervision and support and seek your feedback and views about your volunteering experience
- Make good use of your skills, knowledge and abilities
- Properly plan and budget for the involvement of volunteers
- Handle your data properly and in accordance with the law
- Look after your health & safety in relation to your role and insure you for all authorised work
- Ensure everyone has equal opportunity to be involved
- Help you deal with any problems that arise

Your responsibilities

- Look after your own safety and that of your colleagues
- Ask questions if you are unsure about anything
- Maintain good relations with other volunteers, staff and being aware of your role as an ambassador for the project
- Respecting the confidentiality of any information you may come across in your role
- Adhering to the Scottish Wildlife Trust's policies, procedures, decisions and all health & safety matters
- Being reliable and responsible and maintaining good communication with your line manager
- Letting us know about any conflict of interest

Although volunteers should receive many of the entitlements of paid employees (careful management and good standards of health and safety and care), you are not employees and are therefore not entitled to employee rights such as minimum wage, sick pay and claims for unfair dismissal.

2. Becoming a volunteer

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels needs to know about all its volunteers so that we can honour our duty of care. When you sign up to volunteer for us, you'll be asked to complete a short registration form that asks for some information:

Information	Why we need this
Contact details	So we can keep in touch with you
Emergency contact	In case you are involved in an accident while volunteering
Medical details	There might be something we need to know that will affect you in your volunteering role. All information is kept confidential, and access is restricted to those who need to know
Criminal records	We only need to know about unspent offences, in case there is something relevant to the role you are undertaking

If relevant to your volunteering role, you will also be required to show that you have an air weapon certificate as required by law.

With registration, you will officially become a Scottish Wildlife Trust volunteer. This means that you'll be covered by the Trust's Public Liability Insurance for all your volunteering activities, and you will be eligible to claim volunteer expenses.



Join the online community hub

The simplest way to sign up as a volunteer is through the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels online community hub.

Once you have registered online, you can use the hub throughout your volunteering time to access all sorts of information and resources, including:

- Useful volunteer resources
- Upcoming events and training opportunities
- Online submission of data
- Regular updates on the impact you and other volunteers are having across the country

To access the hub visit scottishsquirrels.org.uk

3. The essentials: policies and procedures

Equal Opportunities

Anyone who works or volunteers for Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels is required to uphold its commitment to Equal Opportunities. We will not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, religion, physical, mental or emotional health, financial, family or other personal disadvantage; or any other factor unrelated to a person's ability to carry out their role.

This applies to the selection of volunteers, carrying out your role and to training & development opportunities. We will not accept such discrimination by staff or volunteers.

Expenses

Volunteering should be open to all and therefore it is our aim that volunteers should not be out of pocket whilst volunteering; this definition is quite varied and can cover many related costs including travel, training and equipment. However, limited funds mean we can only part/fully reimburse your expenses at our discretion. In order to claim expenses you should first seek authorisation from your line manager, then complete an Expenses Claim Form; be sure to include details of your journey and any tickets/receipts. Mileage rates are currently 35p/mile.

If you are claiming welfare benefits, you are entitled to receive out of pocket expenses as a volunteer. You should let your local Jobcentre know that you are volunteering.

Lone working

We try to avoid asking people to lone work, wherever possible. However, certain tasks can be difficult to do in any other way. You should always plan ahead for when you have to volunteer alone. If it is a regular part of the role, a risk assessment must be completed.

If you are in a situation where you need to carry out duties alone, extra caution is necessary. Please make sure that either friends, family or your staff contact knows where you have gone and then confirm with them that you have returned safely. It is essential that you consult the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Lone Working Procedure for full guidelines on safe working in these cases. There are a number of activities which cannot be undertaken as a lone worker. If there is any doubt, please check with us before you begin work.

Working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

Any volunteer who will be in a position of responsibility when working with children, young people (under the age of 18) or with vulnerable adults must join the PVG scheme (Protection of Vulnerable Adults). Volunteers in this area will not be given any responsibility or left without supervision while working with young and vulnerable people until their disclosure check has been undertaken and assessed.

A specific Young Person's Risk Assessment (for staff and volunteers aged under 18) will take into account the implications of young people undertaking activities, on the basis that they may have a lesser understanding or ability to undertake tasks, a need for specialist equipment and extra supervision.

The Trust has no lower or upper age limits for volunteers. For children under 16 we would either expect a responsible adult to fully accompany the young volunteer throughout the activity or for the volunteers' activity to be arranged through a formal school (work experience) placement.



Insurance

All volunteers and volunteer activities are normally covered by the Scottish Wildlife Trust's public and employers' liability insurance policy.

Personal equipment and belongings are not covered by insurance.

Driving / Use of personal vehicles

If you use your own car for commuting to and from your place of volunteering, or for official project business, you must ensure that you are covered on your own insurance.

Volunteering is considered a leisure activity and most insurers will not ask for business insurance. Many insurers have made a commitment to ensure volunteering does not incur additional charges. However, you should check with your insurer to make sure you are fully covered. You can see a handy list of insurers that do not charge extra for volunteering at www.abi.org.uk.

If you drive your own car as part of your volunteering (outwith your commute) you must:

- Complete a Drivers Declaration Form
- Ensure your vehicle insurance covers your volunteering activity
- Submit copies of your insurance documents, driving licence and valid MOT certificate to the Facilities Administrator
- Read our drivers policy

Before you can drive a vehicle owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust you must:

- Give a copy of your driving licence to the Facilities Administrator
- Complete a Drivers Declaration Form
- Read our drivers policy

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Your data will be managed by the Scottish Wildlife Trust in their role as lead delivery partner of Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels. Your personal information will be stored on the Trust's secure supporter database and will only be used for purposes relevant to your volunteering unless you say otherwise.

The Trust will only retain volunteer information for as long as it needs and will never sell your personal data to third parties. To find out more about, please refer to the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Privacy Notice: scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/privacy-notice

IT security

If you are expected to use Trust owned IT equipment as part of your role then you should adhere to Trust policies and guidelines regarding IT security and acceptable use of IT equipment.

Confidentiality Procedure

As part of your volunteering you may come into contact with sensitive or confidential information. These details should not be discussed or mentioned outside the project. We may require you to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Photography

We sometimes take photographs of volunteers at work, so that we can promote the project and encourage others to get involved. If you don't want your photo taken, you should let your staff contact know.

If you take photos on behalf of the project and then give us those images, we will always ask your permission before using them.

Management of volunteer performance

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels wishes to maintain high standards through its volunteers. By adhering to standards under the 'Our Relationship' section of the handbook, there should be no problem. However, there may be instances where further action is required.

Minor issues can be dealt with informally by the line manager. The Trust disciplinary procedure will be used to deal with cases of serious misconduct and an incapability procedure to manage poor performance. In cases of serious misconduct, the Trust reserves the right to immediately suspend the volunteer from volunteering.

Grievances

We aim to make all volunteering experiences positive and enjoyable and to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. We encourage frequent two-way communication as a means of preventing problems before they arise.

However, we realise that difficult situations sometimes do happen: a volunteer may have a complaint regarding their volunteering experience, or a complaint may be made about a volunteer. In such instances the following course of action is recommended:

- The volunteer's line manager will speak with the person in question, to try and resolve the situation swiftly and amicably.
- If this fails then the Trust's grievance procedure will come into operation.

Ending your volunteering

You are free to leave your role at any time. Please give us as much notice as possible in case we need to find a replacement for you. If you have any project equipment, please return it before you leave. We welcome feedback and there is an exit questionnaire available.

4. Volunteer Health and Safety

The Scottish Wildlife Trust health & safety policy is summarised below:

Policy statement

- Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, the Scottish Wildlife Trust has a legal duty to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of all its volunteers, staff and trainees.
- Volunteers will be provided with sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure safe working practices are followed.
- The Trust must ensure that potential risks resulting from its work and its sites are properly identified and controlled.
- All volunteers have a legal duty to care for their own health & safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do.

Responsibilities

- Every individual volunteer has health & safety responsibilities while working with the Trust.
- Every volunteer leader, Local Group committee post holder or Reserve Convenor is responsible for implementing the policy within their area of control and must be aware of their responsibilities and be sufficiently trained and informed to carry out their duties.

Scope of the policy

The Trust's legal and moral health & safety obligations apply to every area of our operations, including:

- Volunteer groups led by Trust staff
- Volunteer groups led by volunteers
- Volunteer groups affiliated to The Trust

Volunteer activities

- All events/activities organised by volunteers must be risk assessed prior to starting.
- A health & safety briefing must precede events or activities.
- Special attention must be paid to activities at which children will be present and any volunteer deemed to carry out regulated work involving children or vulnerable adults will be required to join the PVG scheme.

Your health & safety responsibilities

By law, all volunteers are responsible for looking after their own safety and that of their colleagues at all times. Therefore, when volunteering for the Trust you agree to:

- Co-operate with Trust staff and your volunteer leader on all health & safety matters.
- Take care of your own health & safety and that of your fellow volunteers and members of the public
- Comply with all health & safety measures put in place including safe working procedures, safe systems of work (including use of personal protective equipment), health & safety instructions including any training provided
- Inform Trust staff or your volunteer leader immediately of any physical condition which might affect your ability to work safely
- Not misuse or interfere with anything provided for your health & safety
- Immediately report any defects or problems which may affect health & safety
- Not undertake any task which you feel ill-equipped, lack the physical capability or the competency to perform safely
- Report any accidents, incidents, or near misses to Trust staff or your volunteer leader
- You must read or listen to and follow any health & safety guidance you are given and you must ask for clarification of anything that you are unsure about.

General health & safety arrangements

Accidents

In the unlikely event that you have an accident, it must be reported so that the details can be recorded and steps taken to ensure there is no repeat. Similarly, reporting any significant “near misses” to us can help prevent an accident happening later.

Fire safety

Where appropriate, you will be informed about fire alarms, appliances, evacuation procedures etc.

Smokers please note, in line with current legislation, the Trust operates a no smoking policy in all of its buildings and vehicles. When working outside please do not smoke near flammable materials or substances and ensure any smoking materials are properly extinguished and disposed of sensibly.

First aid

First aid kits are available in offices and where work parties are operating. You will be told who the first aiders are, wherever you are working, and how to contact them in an emergency.

On H&S Executive advice, our first aid kits do not contain tablets, lotions or ointments. If you feel you may require any such item please bring your own personal supply with you.

Risk assessment

Risk assessment is an important tool for us in identifying and controlling any risks in the work we do. It is also a legal requirement.

The nature of our work means that we do undertake potentially hazardous work, so the risk assessment process helps decide which potential hazards are acceptable and which are not and will provide advice on how to undertake a task safely. A risk assessment (through control measures) must reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

For volunteer groups working without Scottish Wildlife Trust staff supervision, the volunteer leader is responsible for the completion of risk assessments where there is an identifiable risk in the work activity. A number of generic work activity risk assessments are available on the Trust website.

Lone workers and those involved in organising activities and events are required to carry out risk assessments.

Tools and equipment

The law requires all work equipment to be suitable for the task, to be properly maintained and for users to have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to use it safely. Prolonged use of power tools can expose the user to the risks of hand and arm vibration. Keep power tool use to a minimum and follow the manufacturer's instructions closely.

Privately owned tools and equipment must only be used where no alternative is available, they must be properly maintained and used only as the manufacturer intended.

Lifting and handling

Lifting and handling incorrectly can cause long term, or even permanent, damage to your back. Dragging heavy items or shovelling can have similar effects. So please use sensible lifting techniques and take breaks and alternate tasks where possible to avoid unnecessarily excessive or repetitive strain. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it!

Hazardous materials

Depending on the role you undertake, you may be working with chemicals or substances that are potentially hazardous. In such instances, you will be fully informed of the risks, shown how to work safely and issued with protective clothing or equipment.

Clothing

Always dress appropriately for the type of work, weather conditions and the site you are working on. Take advice from others who may be familiar with our sites and the work we do – particularly where there are exposed areas of water. Sturdy footwear and gloves are particularly important. Please note that occasionally it may be necessary for your line manager to restrict certain activities only to those individuals wearing protective footwear.

Health risks: ticks

Ticks are common on heathland and in areas of rough vegetation and bracken. Some may be carriers of Lyme's Disease, which can be transferred to humans. To avoid being bitten, keep your skin covered when working in vegetation and check for ticks on your clothing and skin at regular intervals. If bitten, remove the tick gently, taking care to remove the mouth parts and body together. Tell tale signs of the disease are a ring-like rash around the bite, together with flu like symptoms and/or swollen glands. If you have any of these symptoms – see a doctor straight away.

Health risks: Weil's disease

Weil's disease (leptospirosis) is an infection usually caused by rats but dogs, grey squirrels and other animals can also transfer the disease to humans. To prevent infection reduce direct contact with infected animals and indirect contact with animal urine. If you are working in or around water, wear work gloves, keep cuts and abrasions covered at all times, avoid swallowing water, avoid or restrict skin contact with water and wash your face and hands thoroughly before eating, drinking or smoking. Treatment for Weil's disease is usually a course of antibiotics.

Medical conditions

Please let us know in advance if you are on medication or have a medical condition which may affect your ability to work safely (e.g. vertigo, asthma, epilepsy, allergies to plasters or wasp stings etc.). If an accident occurs as a result of a medical condition we do not have prior knowledge of it may put you or others at risk and limit our ability to provide adequate care or treatment.

If we are only informed of a medical condition on the day, we reserve the right to prevent you from taking part in an activity if we believe doing so may put you or others at risk.

Training and equipment

The Scottish Wildlife Trust will provide the health & safety training you need in order to carry out your role more safely; this could include manual handling, risk assessments, first aid and specific skills training. We will provide Personal Protective Equipment and first aid kits where required.

Finally...

While we have put measures in place to control risks and prevent accidents, the most effective way to stay safe is through your own vigilance and common sense.



scottishsquirrels.org.uk

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PROJECT PARTNERSHIP



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