

Biodiversity Volunteer: Longhorn Beetle

Who are we?

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) is a wildlife conservation charity that leads two zoos, Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park, and also has a dedicated Conservation Department. Our recently launched strategy has three main aims:

1. reverse the decline of at least 50 species by 2030.
2. create deeper connections with nature for more than a million people by 2030.
3. enable more than 100 communities to better protect nature by 2030.

We are currently involved in 23 conservation projects, both in Scotland and internationally, and have strong focusses on conservation reintroductions, genetics, veterinary considerations, and project planning. We are particularly proud that our conservation work spans a wide range of species, from fluffy, traditionally charismatic mammals like wildcats and beavers, through to our highly successful work with pine hoverflies and dark bordered beauty moths.

There will be developing opportunities for the new role of Biodiversity Volunteer to support RZSS, both onsite at Highland Wildlife Park and offsite. Currently, RZSS is looking for 10-20 Biodiversity Volunteers to assist with a citizen science project to find blood-red longhorn beetles (*Anastrangalia sanguinolenta*) in the Highlands. The information gathered will help inform a new conservation breeding programme at RZSS based at Highland Wildlife Park with the aim of conserving this rare species.

What's involved?

The role will involve surveying for blood-red longhorn beetles in the Speyside area as part of a citizen science project. Biodiversity volunteers will:

- Attend a training day with RZSS staff at Highland Wildlife Park on Saturday 4 May
- Identify appropriate habitat types for blood-red longhorn beetles
- Identify blood-red longhorn beetles in woodlands
- Be confident lone working in the outdoors
- Maintain good relationships with people who share the land and letting RZSS staff know of any issues that you come across
- Have basic map reading skills
- Fill out recording forms for RZSS and submit reliable records to iRecord

Where?

Biodiversity volunteers will be assigned a 1km² grid reference square in the Speyside area to survey for blood-red longhorn beetles. Squares will be assigned on Saturday 4 May during the training day.

When?

Surveys for blood-red longhorn beetle will commence in the summer and requires one recce survey to evaluate whether the habitat is suitable, followed by two further surveys, between 10am and 2pm (four hours), searching assigned areas for blood-red long horn beetles:

- Habitat recce must take place between 6th to 19th May.
- Survey 1 must take place between 27th May to 9th June.
- Survey 2 must take place between 24th June to 7th July.

Who with?

All blood-red longhorn beetle surveys must be planned and organised by each individual Biodiversity Volunteer after they have attended a training day with RZSS staff. RZSS contacts will be available for support throughout the survey period.

What will the experience provide?

Volunteering with RZSS will give you the opportunity to contribute directly towards conservation efforts for the critically endangered blood-red longhorn beetle. We will provide you with full training and ongoing support from the in-situ conservation team. The data collected will be shared with the wider community and inform a new conservation breeding programme at Highland Wildlife Park. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to continue beyond this survey period; additional training and a charity induction will be provided to further support efforts onsite and offsite to identify, protect and enhance habitats in keeping with the RZSS biodiversity action plan.

What we're looking for:

- A strong interest in invertebrate recovery and conservation and a desire to learn about the challenges involved in species restoration.
- A strong interest in longhorn beetle identification would be a bonus but isn't a prerequisite as we're confident you'll have developed a real passion for this species at the end!
- Confidence in filling out survey forms and collecting data.
- You will need a smart phone to take photographs and use the iRecord app.
- Some fieldwork experience would be advantageous, preferably in the Scottish Highlands or similar remote and challenging conditions.
- You will need a reasonable level of fitness with a willingness to be outdoors.
- You will have a responsible attitude to health and safety, be well organised and motivated with the ability to demonstrate initiative and work unsupervised.
- You will need to be at least 18 years of age.

RZSS is committed to being fair, open and inclusive. We believe that RZSS benefits from the involvement of volunteers from diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences. We accept people of all genders, races, disabilities, ages, religious beliefs, and sexualities to be part of RZSS. We try to make our spaces and working conditions as accessible as possible and welcome requests to accommodate the individual. We expect our volunteers to adhere to the Guidelines on Equality and Diversity upon induction and throughout their time volunteering to us.

How to apply:

Please contact Jess Wise at jwise@rzss.org.uk by Monday 29 April if you have any questions or are interested in attending our blood-red beetle training day on Saturday 4 May.