

Wildlife Skills – Training for a Career in Nature Conservation

Case Study I – Luke Workman

Devon Engagement Trainee 2014/15



“The traineeship was a way in to an industry that I always wanted to be a part of but didn’t think I could given my limited experience and lack of university education.”

“Thanks to the excellent opportunities given and support from my mentor I was to push myself, learn new skills and do things that I didn’t think I was capable of achieving before the traineeship.”

“The year brought me a chance to improve my leadership skills and gave me a much greater insight into why nature conservation is so important, particularly in regards to help inspire the next generation of naturalists.”

Luke attended one of the programme’s selection days held at a school in Exeter, where he demonstrated his natural aptitude for working with children, and secured a place on the scheme. Previously, he had been working part time at a cinema as a maintenance technician, part time for a church as a youth worker and health and personal circumstances meant that he had nearly given up hope of working in the sector. Luke thrived in the education and engagement traineeship role after being pushed in at the deep end, delivering outreach sessions to school children, and specialised in Forest School, setting up a new after school club and particularly enjoying working with teens.

FORMAL ACHIEVEMENTS

NOCN:	Level 3 Forest School
LANTRA:	Level 3 Volunteer Management; Brushcutter
CIEH:	First Aid Level 2; Health and Safety Level 2
AQA Unit Awards:	Leading a guided walk; Leading a group; Planning and delivering a lesson on wildlife & environment; Wildlife gardening; Working with children & young people in conservation; Communicating through the Media

Where are they now? After his placement, Luke secured a role as an Instructor at Sayer’s Croft Field Centre, Surrey, an outdoor activities centre for London children to come and experience the outdoors. There he built on skills gained during his placement, and continued running Forest School groups, work with conservation volunteers and lead school groups. After a year, Luke took up a residential volunteer ranger role for the National Trust in Cornwall in order to reinforce further his practical conservation skills, and has recently begun studying wildlife and media at University.

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Case Study 2 – Ed Sanger

Dorset Practical Conservation Trainee 2014/15



“The traineeship helped me do things I couldn’t have done as a volunteer – learning how to use machinery, maintain equipment, supervising volunteers and even knowing how to load the landrover properly!”

“Initially I found chainsawing really difficult, as I would get nervous and overthink the situation, but as my confidence grew, it eventually got to be my favourite thing to do.”

“It sounds like a cliché but the ‘on the job’ experience enabled me to get to know the industry and the culture of working for a Wildlife Trust”

“My traineeship experience was fun, mind-expanding, individual and full of wildlife”

Ed held a degree in geography and had had some experience of ecological consultancy work. However, before the traineeship he had found himself back in his hometown working in a cardboard box factory, and volunteering 1 day a week at Lydiard Park. He had recently applied to 20 jobs, only 1 of which had even responded and that was only to say that he hadn’t got an interview. This was all getting him down.

Ed quickly found his feet within one of the Dorset Wildlife Trust wardening teams, and really valued how they helped him build on his existing skills. He cites encouragement from his mentors when he was getting to grips with chainsaw work as a turning point in his personal development, as it helped him to have more confidence in himself.

FORMAL ACHIEVEMENTS

LANTRA:	Brushcutter
NPTC:	CS30/31 Chainsaw maintenance, cross-cutting & felling; PA1/PA6W pesticide application
CIEH:	First Aid Level 2; Health and Safety Level 2
AQA Unit Awards:	Coppicing woodland shrubs & trees; Hedgelaying; Planning & Wildlife Law in Dorset; Communicating through the Media ATV driving course

Where are they now? After completing his traineeship, Ed went on to full time work as Estate Worker for Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, working alongside another former trainee Matt Callaway. This gave him the opportunity to take on even more responsibility, supervising contractors, volunteers and the next cohort of Wildlife Skills trainees. In 2017, he returned to Dorset WT as Assistant Warden and is working towards his own great crested newt licence.

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Case Study 3 – Beth Aucott

Somerset Practical Conservation Trainee 2014/15



“As well as specialised training, the whole scheme is one ongoing learning curve. Being immersed in our roles and working alongside staff every day means that we were constantly gaining new skills, knowledge and experience. To me it was the perfect opportunity to bridge the gap between volunteering and finding a paid position, and I gained a huge amount of knowledge and skills over the course of the year.”

“The living bursary was invaluable: making it possible to devote all my time to conservation – it removed a lot of stress and pressure.”

“The traineeship gave me such a sound foundation that I can tackle any challenges that come my way without too much difficulty. I would not have my current role without the fantastic stepping stone that the traineeship gave me.”

Before the traineeship, Beth was volunteering with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust on a reserves placement, but unfortunately there was no training budget, so she couldn't gain the expensive industry 'tickets' that were needed to secure a paid job. By working as part of the reserves team from day 1, Beth gained an insight into all aspects of reserves life and her mentor encouraged her to try new things and pushed her out of her comfort zone. Beth described it as an 'absolute privilege' to encounter fantastic wildlife as part of her day to day 'job' and valued the opportunity to share the journey with 15 other trainees, from different backgrounds but with the same ambition; to have a career in wildlife conservation.

FORMAL ACHIEVEMENTS

LANTRA:	Brushcutter
NPTC:	CS30/31 Chainsaw maintenance, cross-cutting & felling; PA1/PA6W pesticide application
CIEH:	First Aid Level 2; Health and Safety Level 2
AQA Unit Awards:	Constructing a stock proof fence; Coppicing woodland shrubs & trees; Hedgelaying; Planning & Wildlife Law; Communicating through the Media
	Tractor & 4x4 driving courses

Where are they now? After the traineeship, Beth worked as an assistant ranger for the National Trust, as reserves officer for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire WT where she had sole responsibility for one reserve but works across a further 27, helping with everything from volunteer work parties to slow worm surveys. She is now a warden with the RSPB in Bedfordshire. Beth returned to Somerset to share her job application and interview experience with the 2015/6 trainees. She can be followed @BethAucott & <https://bethaucott.wordpress.com/>

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Case Study 4 – Keeley Hampton Wiltshire Engagement & Practical Trainee 2015/16



"Before Wildlife Skills, I hadn't any experience volunteering or working in this sector – this was my way in."

"Forest school has become my new found love – I never knew anything about it before. I loved going into a primary school, and getting the feeling that you are making a small imprint on the children's lives for the better."

"I found out that I was more creative than I thought I was and my self-confidence has improved – I found that I CAN do it!"

"I was able to get out and gain my practical qualifications, which I wouldn't have been able to access otherwise due to finances."

Keeley left school at 18 and worked in the financial world for 20 years, but after divorce, redundancy and a period of depression, she found the courage to change track completely to try to pursue a career working in her beloved Wiltshire countryside. Keeley was just finishing a foundation degree in animal science and management at Wiltshire College, when she was selected for the Wildlife Skills programme.

FORMAL ACHIEVEMENTS

NOCN:	Level 2 & Level 3 Forest School
NPTC:	CS30/31 Chainsaw maintenance, cross-cutting & felling
LANTRA:	Brushcutter
CIEH:	First Aid Level 2; Health and Safety Level 2
AQA Unit Awards:	Volunteer Management (4 units); Leading a group; Planning & Wildlife Law; Communicating through the Media

Keeley really valued the opportunity to work with highly skilled and experienced conservation and well-being practitioners within her placement, but also brought many skills with her, such as experience communicating with a wide range of people and excellent organisational skills. These enabled her quickly to take on responsibility for managing and delivering her own events and activities and by the end of her placement, Keeley's mentor Bill Blumsom from the HLF funded Wild Connections programme said "I have absolute faith in Keeley in organising, leading and running events making sure they are fun, innovative and safe".

Where are they now? Keeley is now working as Wellbeing Programme Officer for Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.