

Identification Trainers for the Future

Inspiring the next generation of UK wildlife experts

Further information for potential applicants

Identification Trainers for the Future is an innovative work-based training programme for people that are passionate about developing a career in the UK biodiversity sector.

Led by the Natural History Museum, in partnership with the Field Studies Council and the National Biodiversity Network Trust, the project aims to address the critical and growing shortage of wildlife identification and recording skills in the UK. It will take 15 enthusiastic and committed early career naturalists through a 12-month work-based training programme to gain the knowledge, confidence and skills needed to understand and communicate the value of biological recording, to survey and identify a wide range of UK species groups, and to handle and curate reference specimens. Importantly, it will also cover how to train others in these skills.

Five trainees will be hosted by the Museum each year in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Traineeships will start at the beginning of March.

The project is generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund through their Skills for the Future Programme.



Why are species identification and biological recording skills so important?

The UK's natural environment is under substantial pressure from human activity, with many species and habitats in severe decline. If the UK's biodiversity is to be conserved for future generations and important ecosystem functions are to be protected, tremendous challenges must be addressed. Our knowledge of the distribution and abundance of species and habitats, and how and why these are changing, depends on reliable biological recording. The UK's tradition of natural history study has provided a rich legacy of biological records – many collected by skilled amateurs – as well as an important and complementary physical archive of specimens.

To document, monitor and understand changes in biodiversity, biological recorders need survey, sampling and identification skills, and techniques for handling and preserving reference specimens. Unfortunately, the number of people developing, using and passing on such skills is declining, precisely when capacity to monitor the UK's biodiversity is most needed.

Identification Trainers for the Future aims to tackle this growing skills gap.



What trainees will be doing

Traineeships will be based at the Natural History Museum, in London, with day trips to other key organisations and short work and training placements with the Field Studies Council. As a trainee, you will be taken through a four-phase programme to build your skills, confidence and experience across a broad range of UK natural history subjects and job roles.

Phase 1 – An introduction to UK biodiversity

This first month introduces you to the Museum as a workplace, the other trainees and some of the staff you will be working with. During this introduction you will explore your existing understanding of the UK's biodiversity and highlight interests and skills you would like to develop.

Practical training will include an introduction to the history and diversity of UK wildlife, and to the core skills you will use throughout the programme. These include planning and undertaking fieldwork, fieldwork first aid, collecting and using biological specimens, and handling biodiversity data. You will also learn more about the employers and voluntary natural history groups you will develop contacts with during the traineeship.

Phase 2 – Developing core skills

During this five-month phase, you will combine working in the Museum's Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity with a series of workshops. These will develop your identification, survey and biological recording skills for a range of UK species groups.

You will work as part of the Identification and Advisory Service and on the Angela Marmont Centre's citizen science and science outreach and communication programmes. You will also do a placement with the Field Studies Council, which will help you understand some of the intricacies of managing educational facilities and communicating wildlife information to a wide range of audiences.

Practical identification training courses will cover key UK biodiversity groups, with a focus on those commonly regarded as more complicated or less accessible.

The following species groups will be covered:

- Flowering plants
- Mosses, liverworts and hornworts
- Lichens
- Fungi
- Freshwater invertebrates
- Moths
- True flies
- Bees, wasps and ants
- Beetles
- Earthworms

Phase 3 – Developing a specialism

The next three months are spent in one of the Museum's curation teams. You will refine your identification, fieldwork and curatorial skills for a particular species group, depending on your interest. This will enable you to develop a true specialism and give you an unrivalled opportunity to work with some of the leading experts in their field.

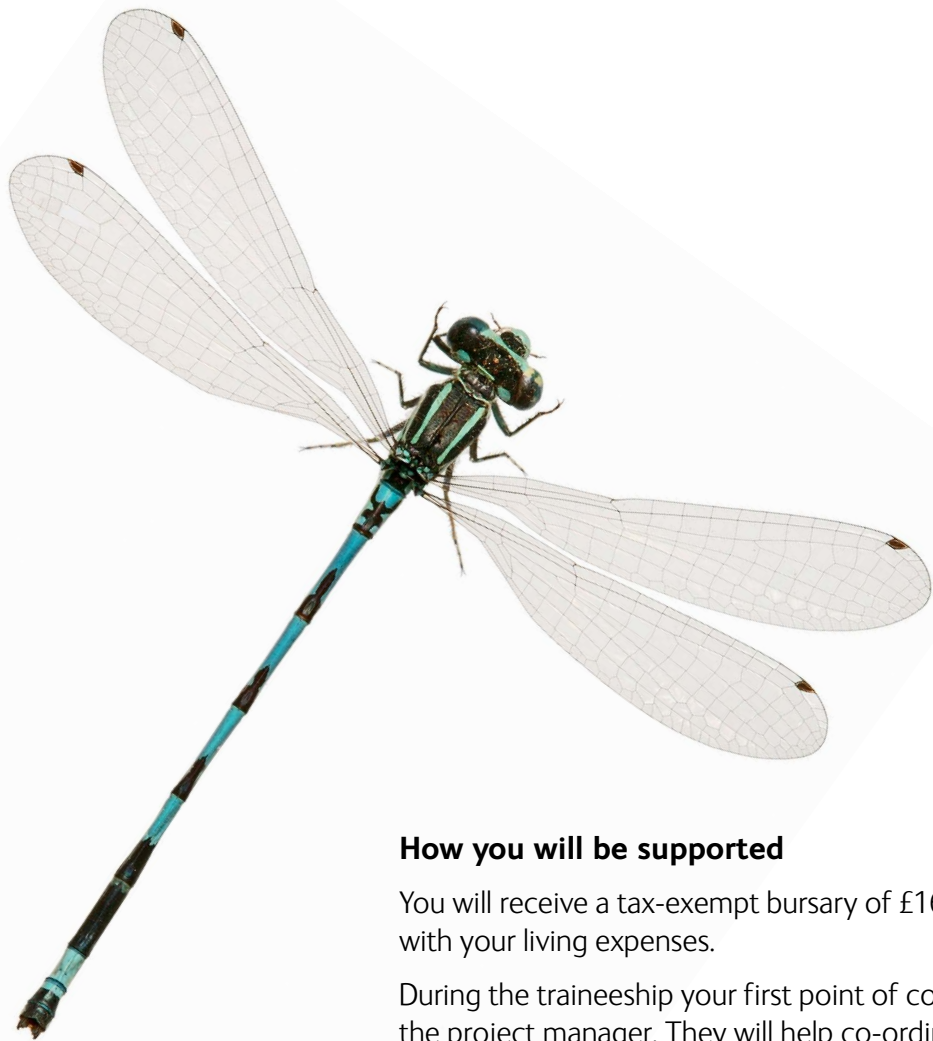
Phase 4 – Skills transfer and training delivery

It is vital that the specialist training you receive during the first three phases of the traineeship does not stop with you. Consequently, Phase 4 focuses on developing the skills and experience that will help you to pass your knowledge and enthusiasm on to others.

Working with the Museum's Learning and Engagement team, you will gain experience of learning theory, education-delivery and scientific communication. In addition you will gain a training qualification through the Field Studies Council and attend practical workshops that will help you develop your presentation and training-delivery skills.

Bringing it all together

To finish, you will pull together your new expertise to deliver a novel identification training course or resource that inspires and supports others to develop their skills in species identification and wildlife recording. The Angela Marmont Centre team will support you throughout this process.



How you will be supported

You will receive a tax-exempt bursary of £16,500 to help with your living expenses.

During the traineeship your first point of contact will be the project manager. They will help co-ordinate your training programme and support your development. You will also receive support from a mentor, wider staff members and other trainees in your group. The Museum also provides a wide range of pastoral care and recreational facilities.

Throughout the traineeship you will be encouraged to establish close links with the UK's fantastic network of volunteer biological recording societies. Membership of these groups will aid your skills development, and enable you to support the vital role these groups play.

Where a traineeship could lead

At the end of the traineeship you will have gained broad skills in species identification and recording, and developed your own area of specialism. You will also have the ability and knowledge to pass those skills on to others. From here, you could potentially go anywhere within the UK biodiversity, ecological or conservation sectors, passing on the knowledge you have learnt to others and helping bridge the natural history skills gap.

You could consider natural history museums, non-governmental organisations such as the Wildlife Trusts, educational organisations such as the Field Studies Council, Biological Records Centres, governmental organisations such as local council ecology units, or statutory agencies such as Natural England. You could also enter the commercial ecological consultancy sector or professional training agencies, or move into educational establishments such as schools, colleges or universities. The options at the end of the traineeship are wide open and we hope all trainees will progress into fulfilling and rewarding careers where they can continue to use and develop the skills they have gained through working with us.

Our Museum Lives videos provide further insight into what it is like to work at the Museum and some of the diverse routes that have led people here:



Miranda Lowe



Louise Tomsett



Patrick Campbell

Who can apply?

Are you keen to develop a career in the UK biodiversity sector, to be at the forefront of a resurgence in species identification and recording skills among UK wildlife professionals? If so then please apply.

We're looking for people that have a demonstrable passion for UK natural history and a commitment to developing a career in this sector. To maximise the benefits the programme provides, it is aimed at early career rather than established UK biodiversity professionals.

There are no minimum or maximum age limits, however to be eligible you must have:

- a minimum of three A-levels (or equivalent)
- less than six-months paid employment in a UK biodiversity, ecology or conservation-related job
- not previously undertaken a traineeship in the UK biodiversity, ecology or conservation sector

You don't need to have significant species identification skills when you apply. However, you will need to demonstrate an interest in learning to identify, study and record UK wildlife, and communicating this knowledge to others.

If you have any questions regarding your eligibility please contact us at idtrainers@nhm.ac.uk.

How to apply

Applications for the second round of traineeships will be invited in November/December 2015. During this period you can view application guidelines, learn about the selection and appointment process, and apply online by visiting www.nhm.ac.uk/search-vacancies. Applications can only be submitted through the online form and will only be accepted during the application window, so please do not send CV's or speculative letters outside of this period.

Successful applicants will start in March each year.



Attend a taster day at the Museum

As the application window approaches we will be announcing a number of taster days for potential applicants for the traineeships. To find out more, experience our working environment first-hand and meet some of the people that will be supporting your development, please do register to attend one of these.

This relaxed event will introduce you to the traineeship in more detail, including the types of work and study that the trainees will undertake. It will include tours of the facilities at the Museum, including the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity, where trainees will spend much of their placement. It will also be an information opportunity to meet some of the staff that will be hosting work placements and delivering training workshops. There will be time to ask questions, as well as the opportunity to work with specimens under the guidance of specialist in our curation teams.

Do keep an eye on our webpage for information on the 2015 taster days.

Further information

For more on the traineeships or if you have a question, please email us at tdtrainers@nhm.ac.uk.

