

Volunteer Warden at Gosforth Reserve

The Natural History Society of Northumbria is a small charity based in the Great North Museum: Hancock in central Newcastle. You can find out about the Society and our work at www.nhsn.ncl.ac.uk

We need help in Gosforth Nature Reserve to discourage trespass and vandalism, to monitor wildlife, report any problems, carry out small scale improvements and assist our Warden.

1. Requirements

- You must be physically able to walk around the reserve paths, which is a distance of 2-3 miles on unsurfaced and often muddy and slippery surfaces.
- You must have a mobile phone so that you can call for help if needed. We can not supply you with a phone or reimburse you for the cost of any calls made.
- You will need to wear suitable clothing, such as wellington boots and clothing to protect you from cold/rain/sun/insects. We are unable to provide you with any clothing equipment.
- You must carry your volunteer warden badge with you when you are wardening in the reserve (we will supply this).
- You must read the risk assessment we provide to you and act on the advice in it in order to reduce any risk to you or other reserve visitors.
- You must be able to spend at least 3 hours in the reserve on a regular basis. If you can help more often than that is great.
- You must be polite to Society members.
- If you don't have one, we will give you a key to the hides but you must return this to us if you stop volunteering.

2. Typical Responsibilities/Tasks to be undertaken

Checking for problems

Walk the reserve paths checking for obstructions and damage. Eg overhanging vegetation, fallen tree, damaged boardwalk, fire, etc. If it is safe and possible to do so then to carry out any remedial work, eg pruning or diverting path. Any major damage, obstruction or problem should be reported to either the Warden or the Society Office as soon as possible (or the fire brigade on 999 in the case of a fire).

You should generally restrict your rounds to the reserve paths in order to minimise disturbance to flora and fauna.

Discouraging trespass and vandalism

The best way to discourage trespass and vandalism is simply to be in the reserve walking the paths. The reserve is especially at risk during weekday afternoons when often there is no-one in the reserve, this risk is increased during school holidays and when the weather is dry and sunny.

If you encounter anyone who you think should not be in the reserve or who is behaving unacceptably:

- Call the police on 999 or 101 if you witness criminal activity such as vandalism. You should not attempt to approach these people.
- If you strongly believe that the person(s) is trespassing but they are not doing anything illegal then you should assess the situation and whether you feel it is safe for you to approach them:
- If you consider that it is **not safe** or you do not feel comfortable approaching them then contact the Warden on his mobile immediately (07749239944/07840341452 – put these numbers into your phone address book). You may wish to continue observing such people at a distance to discourage any criminal activity.
- If you consider that it is safe and you do feel comfortable approaching them then you should ask them if they are a member and ask to see their card. Trespassers tend to be of 3 types:
 - i. People interested in wildlife who have “sneaked in” for a look. These people pose no threat and you should be friendly, chat to them and politely explain that if they want to visit the reserve they should either join or obtain a permit. Give them a leaflet and try to talk them into joining.
 - ii. People who are “exploring”. Many people are ignorant of access and trespass laws and may not be aware that they are in a private nature reserve and not supposed to be there. Explain that the land is private, they have no right to be there and ask them to leave and escort them off the reserve (depending where they are you may ask them to leave via the entrance rather than the way they came in).
 - iii. People who are “up to no good”, such as drinkers or vandals. If they appear harmless then try and be firm and ask them to leave and escort them out.

There is no need for you to put yourself at risk – if in doubt do nothing and call the Warden or the office.

Monitoring wildlife

Record any flora or fauna you see on the log sheets in the members huts. If you see any rare birds then please report this to the Warden or Office.

Keeping the Reserve Tidy

Generally most members do not drop litter but this can fall from pockets, be blown in from surrounding areas or be left by trespassers. If you are able, please pick up any items and put them in the bins next to Lake Lodge (tip = carry a plastic bag with you to put any items in).

Assist the Warden & Management Committee

The Warden or Office may contact you to ask for your assistance with work in the reserve.

Member Liaison

Most members visit the reserve for an enjoyable experience. You can help facilitate this by answering any questions they may have.

3. Reporting

There is no need to tell us when you are planning to warden the reserve but it would be helpful if you could let us know when you have been! Please make a note on one of the sheets in the log book in the Members Hut.

If you need to report a problem that is not serious or urgent you should do so as soon as reasonably practical by either:

- calling the warden or office
- sending an email to the office
- putting a note through the door of Lake Lodge

(ideally this would be done on the same day the problem was encountered).

Office: 0191 208 2790 (Mon-Fri 9-5) or nhsn@ncl.ac.uk

Warden: 07749239944 or 07840341452

Local Police: 101