

## Volunteer Wardening at Gosforth Park Nature Reserve



***Thank you for your interest in volunteering at  
the nature reserve***



*Gosforth Park Nature Reserve from the Pearce Hide*

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

We need help in Gosforth Nature Reserve to welcome visitors, carry out small-scale improvements, monitor wildlife, report any problems, discourage trespass and vandalism and assist the Reserve Warden, Paul Drummond. Volunteer Wardens can be supplied with a copy of the site Management Plan and receive other updates from the Director so that they are up to date with reserve matters. We encourage all Volunteer Wardens to be members of NHSN so that they keep up to date with news and can be a well-informed ambassador for NHSN.

### **1. Requirements**

In order to successfully carry out the role of Volunteer Warden you will need to:

- be an ambassador for NHSN, welcoming members and non-members to the reserve and be professional and courteous at all times.
- 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.
- have a mobile phone so that you can call for help if needed. We cannot supply you with a phone or reimburse you for the cost of any calls made.
- wear suitable clothing, such as wellington boots and clothing to protect you from cold/rain/sun/insects.
- carry/ wear your volunteer warden badge with you when you are wardening.
- read and follow the risk assessment to keep yourself and others safe.
- spend at least 3 hours in the reserve on a regular basis. If you can help more often that is great.
- carry a hide key, if you don't have one already we can give you a key to the hides (this will need to be returned if you cease volunteer wardening).

## 2. Typical Responsibilities/Tasks to be undertaken

### Welcoming visitors and responding to enquiries

An important part of the Volunteer Warden role is to be a welcoming and positive 'face' of the Natural History Society. Some visitors may come to the reserve regularly and have been members for years, increasingly we are attracting new members who may not know much about the reserve, its wildlife and history. Please keep up to date with NHSN and reserve news by reading the newsletters, website and pop into the members hut to look at the sightings log at the start of your visit. If you cannot answer a question or a matter needs following up please do pass on the details of the office or Paul's contact details. If you use social media please do tweet / post on Facebook – please keep these positive, professional messages #GosforthParkNR

### Keeping the Reserve Safe and Clean

Please pick up any litter and place in the bins next to Lake Lodge (carry a plastic bag with you to put any items in). The Council is responsible for litter collection in the layby, however in practice their resources are under intense pressure and the layby does affect the first impressions of our visitors. If you can help keep the layby clear of litter this would be most welcomed. A litter picker is available in the woodshed adjacent to the Information Hut.



The Ridley Hide (Jill Tate)



Reedbed and lake from the air 2015

### Checking for problems

Please walk the reserve paths checking for obstructions and damage. E.g. overhanging vegetation, fallen tree, damaged boardwalk, fire, etc. If it is safe and possible to do so then carry out any remedial work, e.g. pruning. Any major damage, obstruction or problem should be reported to either the Warden or the office as soon as possible (or the fire brigade on 999 in the case of a fire). Please restrict your rounds to the reserve paths in order to minimise disturbance to flora and fauna, unless you are investigating something off the path. A small number of individuals may be seen off the paths carrying out maintenance or surveys. During the summer it is helpful to take secateurs or loppers with you and cut back vegetation growing across paths as you walk around.

### Conservation tasks

Regular conservation volunteer tasks are held in the reserve to carry out a range of practical tasks. They generally run every Wednesday 10am – 1pm throughout the year, and the last Saturday of the month during the months of September – March, meeting at the reserve entrance at 10am. Everyone is welcome, tools and training are provided. It is helpful if Volunteer Wardens can attend some conservation tasks to learn more about the reserve.



Roe Deer (Richard Potts) Speckled Wood (Jim Asher)

## Discouraging trespass and vandalism

Most visitors to the reserve are paid up members of NHSN. Non-members are welcome to visit the reserve if they purchase a day pass for £3.50 from the office / online. The best way to discourage trespass and vandalism is simply to be in the reserve walking the paths. The reserve is more at risk during weekday afternoons when often there is no-one in the reserve 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:

- If you consider that it is safe and you do feel comfortable approaching them then you ask them if they are a member and to see their membership card. People tend to fall into 3 categories:
  - i. People interested in wildlife who have “sneaked in” for a look. These people pose no threat, please be friendly, chat to them and politely explain that if they want to visit the reserve they should either join or obtain a day pass. Give them a NHSN leaflet and outline the benefits of joining. Supplies of the leaflet are kept in the Information Hut cupboard. Day passes can be bought in advance online or by paying on site that day (envelopes are kept in the Information Hut to put cash into and posted into Lake Lodge)
  - ii. People who are “exploring”. Many people are ignorant of access and trespass laws and may not be aware that they are on private land and not supposed to be there. Explain that the land is private, they have no right to be there. Politely ask them to leave and escort them off the reserve.
  - iii. People who are “up to no good”, such as drinkers, vandals or poachers. If they appear harmless then try and be firm and ask them to leave and escort them out.
- If you consider that it is **not safe** or you do not feel comfortable approaching them then contact the Warden on his mobile immediately (07840 341452). You may wish to continue observing such people at a distance to discourage any criminal activity.
- Call the police on 999 or 101 if you witness criminal activity such as vandalism. You should not attempt to approach these people.

Please do not put yourself at risk – if in doubt do nothing and call the Warden or the Office.

## Monitoring wildlife

Please record any flora or fauna you see on the wildlife sightings sheets in the information hut and encourage visitors to record their sightings too. The information from the log sheets is used for writing up articles in our newsletter and are entered into ERIC's database – the Environmental Recording Information Centre for the NE.

If you see any rare birds please report this to the Warden or Office.



*Coralroot Orchid (Paul Drummond)*



*Bittern (Ron McCombe)*

## Assistance with other tasks

The warden or office may contact you to ask for your assistance with work in the reserve, for example for specific construction projects, when rare birds are present we can experience higher numbers of visitors and at the annual reserve open day in the summer.

## 3. Reporting

Please make a note in the Volunteer Warden log book file in the Information Hut at the end of your visit, recording the times of your visit and any key points to note and tasks undertaken. If you need to report a problem that is not serious or urgent please do so as soon as reasonably practical, contact the warden or office, put a note through Lake Lodge door (ideally this would be done on the same day).

Useful contact info Office: 0191 208 2790 (Mon-Fri 9-5) or [nhsn@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:nhsn@ncl.ac.uk)

Warden: 07840 341452

Local Police: 101

Thank you very much for all your help.  
We hope that you enjoy your time as a Volunteer Warden.

If you would like to use this experience to build up your CV please contact Clare who will be happy to supply additional information and advice.

*Clare Freeman*  
Director

*Paul Drummond*  
Reserve Warden

*Hazel Makepeace*  
Admin and Support Officer