

Lochaber Life – The Value of Volunteering

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I'm delighted to have just started as the new Conservation Officer with Nevis Landscape Partnership. My post will give me the opportunity to work with an exciting team on a number of innovative landscape projects around Ben Nevis, including the ongoing regeneration of native Caledonian Pine forest. For me, it's a major career step and the kind of job I've been working towards since getting into Conservation.

As with most people in my industry, it all started with volunteering. Upon leaving high school, I signed up to a volunteer project in the Galápagos Islands - where I spent two months clearing brambles which had grown into an impenetrable forest around the islands! Inspired and enthused by the experience, I then spent several years volunteering with conservation organisations around the country while studying and working.



in 2016 I began a full time Volunteer Ranger position with the National Trust for Scotland in Glencoe, which gave me a vital foot in the door to an extremely sought-after industry. I learned a huge variety of skills – from fencing and path work to leading educational groups – which would have been difficult to acquire elsewhere, as well as the real-world experience that ultimately led to a paid job.

In an increasingly competitive job market, it's this experience that can make the difference between making it or not. It seems that full-time volunteering placements are an essential step into many careers in the conservation industry, though there are few positions available around the country.



For the past three years, Nevis Landscape Partnership have run an excellent Trainee Volunteer Ranger (TVR) programme, taking on 8 volunteers over 12 weeks of the summer season. The TVRs are given a variety of training from first aid to mountain skills, as well as the chance to gain hands-on conservation experience and learn from local experts about the fantastic wildlife and geology in Glen Nevis. It has become a well-respected programme amongst employers and

many previous TVRs have since gone on to find relevant jobs. We'll be advertising for the next round of placements soon, with a deadline of April 26th.

Whether you're trying to break into conservation or not, volunteering can be a brilliant way to open new doors, broaden your skills or just meet new friends. Last year in Scotland, over 1.2 million people gave up some of their time to volunteer and in my view, it is one of the most fulfilling and worthwhile things you can do with your time.

We'd love to see you at one of our Footpath or Conservation Work Parties, taking place throughout the year. Find out more at www.nevislandscape.co.uk/local/events or find us on Facebook.