Residential Volunteer
Internship placement information:

Central Highland Reserves, North Scotland
Practical Conservation

Overall purpose of the role
A fantastic opportunity to spend up to 12 months on 5 different reserves to gain experience and develop your skills and knowledge with the aim of achieving employment in the conservation sector.

You will be an essential and integral part of the Central Highland Reserves team with responsibility for aspects of the reserves management and individual projects. You will be involved with practical conservation, working with volunteers, health & safety, surveys and office based tasks.

The Central Highland Reserves team is based at the North Scotland Regional Office which provides opportunities to network with a wide range of staff from a range of disciplines. The reserves are located around the Moray coast including Nigg & Udale Bays, Fairy Glen, Loch Ruthven and Culbin Sands.

In this role you will gain:
- Experience of working as part of a small reserves team.
- Certified training relevant to the role worth approx. £1500 including First Aid, brushcutter, 4x4 off road driving, Safe use of Pesticides (PA1 & PA6).
- Experience of working on a range of habitats
- Survey and monitoring which may include Slavonian grebe, black grouse and waders.
- Opportunities to work with other reserves in the North Scotland Region
- Experience of working with and leading volunteers
- Skills in prioritizing, time management, problems solving and planning.
- Training on risk assessments, safeguarding, data protection and other topics as appropriate.
- A working knowledge of the RSPB and nature conservation issues
- A dedicated mentor who will monitor your progress and help with personal development during the placement.
- Assistance with writing application forms and developing interview skills.

“This position has hugely improved my CV and the additional help to find jobs and opportunities has been greatly appreciated. I’ve seen some of the best wildlife that the Highlands has to offer, from beautifully bright Slavonian grebes to huge gaggles of noisy geese, and I’ve met some great people along the way”

Rachel Cush, Intern 2015
Development
This scheme is designed to give you training and experience needed for a career in conservation, particularly practical conservation on reserves. We will assist your personal development and progression towards a conservation career, but it is also important that you take advantage of the opportunities that will arise during the placement to learn new skills, gain new experiences and increase your conservation knowledge. Your line manager will provide the structure to your internship in the form of written aims and objectives, regular one to one meetings, work with you to produce a personal development plan and a six month review

Volunteering at Central Highland Reserves
The Central Highland Reserves is a small team consisting of warden (Izzy), site manager (Steph), two interns and a small dedicated team of volunteers. Our Interns form a vital part of our team enabling much of the work to happen at our reserves. We are based at the North Scotland Regional Office at Inverness and our reserves are scattered around the area requiring a lot of travelling between the reserves. Normal hours are Mon – Friday 9.00 – 1715 with a lunch break, you’ll be entitled to Holiday and Time off In Lieu for additional hours worked similar to staff allowance. At times you may be required to stay away for several nights to attend training courses and assist at other reserves. During the spring and summer early starts, late finishes and weekends are required to fit in surveys and herbicide work

We appreciate that 12 months is a big commitment and in return we invest in our Interns training and development. At Central Highland Reserves we are able to offer some flexibility in our Interns hours to accommodate some evening/weekend work in the local area as well as the length of the internship, however this must be discussed and agreed in advance.

Free accommodation, including utility bills and cleaning products, is provided in Inverness approximately 3 miles from the Office. You will need to provide your own means of travel between the volunteer’s accommodation and the office.

Main duties
Take an active role in the reserves team and as part of the wider North Scotland Regional team.
- Develop and maintain a positive and productive working relationship with staff and volunteers
- Attendance of relevant training courses, meetings and conferences as appropriate
- Assist with work programs on other reserves e.g Corrimony, Forsinard Flows and Insh Marshes as required.
- Assist at Tollie Red Kite Centre as required, including preparing raw meat for feeding and people engagement.
- Assist the regional staff in the wider North Scotland team as required.
- Create and take learning opportunities where offered and appropriate.

Responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the Central Highland Reserves facilities and equipment.
- Maintenance of visitor facilities including hides, car parks, signs and paths to a high quality
- Completing monthly trail and safety checks
- Undertake infrastructure repairs
- Maintenance of machinery and vehicles in line with servicing and H&S requirements.

Assist the Central Highland Reserves team to carry out the work program of habitat management and monitoring

“\'I have been able to work on a great variety of habitats, while experiencing a huge array of things that I otherwise wouldn’t have had the opportunity to do. Assisting with black grouse surveys was terribly exciting, albeit once you get over the initial shock of waking up at such an absurd time of the morning. Working from the RSPB North Scotland Regional Office (NSRO) in Inverness has given me first-hand knowledge of the RSPB, the way it operates and all of the varied roles that it employs. All good things must come to an end, I will be moving on to employment, which ultimately means that the last ten months of the residential internship has been an overwhelming success!’

Colin Miller Intern 2017/18

Colin gained employment with Forestry Commission in 2018
- Responsible for mapping invasive species at Nigg and Udale Bays
- Carry out herbicide treatment of *Spartina anglica* and Japanese knotweed
- Responsible for Monitoring for the presence of mink at Loch Ruthven.
- Sand dune management at Culbin Sands
- Wet grassland management at Nigg Bay.
- Slavonian grebe monitoring at Loch Ruthven
- Assist with black grouse surveys at Corrimony as required
- Other habitat and survey tasks as required.

**Responsible for administration and office based tasks relevant to the role.**
- General administration tasks including emails, telephone calls, data protection
- Record keeping including risks assessments, machinery logs and audits
- Input of data into spreadsheets, databases and websites
- Report writing
- Manage and input GIS data
- Other day to day management and office based tasks as needed.

**Support Central Highland volunteer teams, events and visitor operations**
- Lead and support the volunteer teams at Loch Ruthven and the Central Highland Reserves Work Party.
- Act as a ‘Guide In Hide’ at Loch Ruthven, Nigg and Udale Hides
- Responsible for organizing events as required
- Assist with running events and seasonal visitor engagement work.
- Engage with visitors to the reserves providing information and answering enquiries
- Deal with difficult situations in an appropriate manner.

**Skills required**

**Essential:**
- 18 years old or over
- Available for the full 12 months
- Keen to learn and develop professionally and personally
- Full manual driving license
- Educated to standard grades/GCSEs or above
- Able to work as part of a small team
- Basic bird identification skills
- Basic computing skills using Word, Excel and Outlook
- Good verbal and written communication
- Demonstrable passion for wildlife and conservation
- Physically able to cope with the rigors of reserve work e.g. walking over rough ground, manual handling, heavy knapsac sprayers.
- Willingness to work weekends, early mornings and late evenings.

**Desirable:**
- Some previous experience of volunteering in conservation
- Some previous experience of surveying & habitat management

**Location and accommodation**
Free accommodation, including utility bills and TV license, is provided for the duration of the internship.

“This internship has been an awesome experience for me and is the perfect springboard for someone wishing to start a career in conservation. It’s also been a great way for me to expand my knowledge of the work the RSPB is doing in the North of Scotland, and I’ve had the chance to visit many of the reserves here…. I've been able to talk to many like-minded individuals and it's really helped reinforce my motivation to work in the conservation sector”

Nick Thorsen Intern 2018/19
Nick is currently employed as RSPB Estate Worker at Tayside reserves
in a modern 1st floor flat, on the edge of Inverness. This will be shared between two interns. The flat has two double bedrooms, living room, fully fitted and equipped kitchen and bathroom with both bath and shower facilities. There is a TV and DVD player but there is no internet. The flat is located 3 miles away from the North Scotland Regional Office, where you will be based with the Central Highland Reserves team. You will need to provide your own transport to commute between the accommodation and the regional office, by walking, by bike, by bus or in your own vehicle. Transport will be provided for getting to & from the reserves during the working day.

Inverness has a wide range of shops, pubs, restaurants, sports and recreational facilities, theatre and cinema. The city has good transport links, the nearest train station is in the centre of Inverness approximately 2.5 miles away from the accommodation and is the main hub for the Highlands with connections to Edinburgh and London.

**About the Central Highland Reserves**

The Central Highland Team covers a diverse group of reserves totaling more than 3,500 ha.

**Culbin Sands, Nairn**

Is a wild and windswept place stretched out along the Moray coast. It is a unique dynamic sand dune and shingle ridge system and is designated as SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar. Much of our work here is focused on removing scrub trees from the sand dunes during the winter. The World War 2 Anti-Glider Poles arranged on the reserve are the RSPB’s largest historic Scheduled Monument, by area. Small blue butterfly can be seen on the dunes and waders feed on the low tide. During winter rafts of eider, scoter and long-tailed duck can be seen.

**Nigg Bay, Tain**

Located along the Cromarty Firth Nigg Bay SSSI, SPA, is an extensive area of intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh and wet grassland. It is one of the most important bays in the Firth providing feeding and roosting areas for thousands of wintering ducks and waders. The wet grassland is managed specifically for breeding lapwing, snipe and other waders. Nigg Bay is the location of the Central Highland Reserves equipment store, and many of our volunteer work parties held here during the winter to remove gorse and maintain the wet grassland. The mapping and herbicide treatment of *Spartina anglica* is a vital part of the habitat management at here.

**Udale Bay, Jemimaville**

Udale Bay SSSI, SPA is located on the opposite of the Cromarty Firth to Nigg Bay. It is possibly the next most important Bay on the Firth after Nigg Bay. Most of the habitat work at Udale is focused on the eradication of *Spartina anglica*, a rapidly colonizing hybrid which out competes native saltmarsh plants and reduces the feeding and roosting areas for birds. Ospreys are often seen in the summer and in the winter geese and wildfowl, including a nationally important flock of scapau, arrive to shelter and feed in the bay.
**Fairy Glen, Rosemarkie**

Fairy Glen is a small attractive wooded glen with a series of small pools and waterfalls. The reserve was gifted to the RSPB in 1970’s and is one of the RSPB’s smallest reserves. It is a popular amenity area for the local community and tourism in the area, where visitors can see dippers, grey wagtails and a number of woodland and garden birds. Our work here is focused on visitor safety with regular trail and tree safety checks as well as path repairs.

**Loch Ruthven, Croachy**

Located south of Inverness surrounded by heather clad hills Loch Ruthven SSSI, SPA, SAC and RAMSAR site usually holds 50% of the slavonian grebes breeding in the area. The loch is fringed with sedge beds where the grebes nest. Ospreys, red-throated divers as well as black-throated divers are often seen. Our work here is based on surveying the Slavonian grebes, monitoring for mink and maintaining the reserve infrastructure. A small team of volunteers assist with visitor engagement on the site during the busy summer season.

**How to apply**

Please download the internship application form from the information page. Return your completed application form to “ResidentialVolunteering Internships”, Volunteering Development Department. RSPB UK HQ, The Lodge, Potton Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL or email to Residential.interns@rspb.org.uk

**The closing date for applications is Sunday 19th January 2020.**

Interviews will take place week commencing 27th February 2020. Successful applications will be expected to start Saturday 7th March 2020

Please ensure that information within your application takes into account the skills listed as essential and desirable. Enclose a CV with your completed application form if you wish.

If you would like any more information, or have any questions about the internship, please contact Isabel Morgan (Warden) on 01463 715000 or email Isabel.morgan@rspb.org.uk

**The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home.**