



Countryside Jobs Service[®]

Focus on Employability

In association with Lantra



19 November 2018

Why a hands-on approach to training could benefit your career

With more than 3,000 environmental conservation organisations in the UK, the industry plays a vital role in protecting our landscapes, habitats and species and providing public access and recreation.

Its workforce is well-educated too, with around 75% qualified to degree level, compared to a UK average of under 30%.

Although having a degree or other higher level qualification is often a requirement for entering the industry, voluntary experience, vocational qualifications or training are an attractive addition to CVs as well, no matter where you are in your career.



(Lantra)

In today's competitive world, more and more people are realising how important it is to keep up-to-date with skills or technical knowledge and to highlight their value to potential employers.

Having properly trained staff helps ensure a safer and more productive working environment, so investing in training makes sense for employers too.

In recent years environmental protection and sustainability have become increasingly important, as organisations look to show that they comply with legislation and have sound environmental ethics that meet market

standards and customer expectations.

As a result, industry is coming under more scrutiny, and environmental and ecological factors are increasingly becoming an integral part of business decisions.

This in turn has implications for skills development, which has been looked at in research carried out by Lantra on employability skills within the environmental conservation industry

When asked what skills their staff lacked, around a third of respondents cited technical and practical skills, with 60% saying they would increase training activity to remedy the issue.

All agreed that the training they had undertaken had been of benefit to their organisation, with most also saying that it had increased productivity.

The research highlighted evidence of a need for practical skills such as manual handling, tree cutting, and dangers around the use of chemicals. Field survey and species identification skills are also a key industry requirement. Other important skills identified included time management, people skills, and numeracy and literacy skills.

Lantra is an awarding body which has been offering training and qualifications across the land-based and environmental sector for over 40 years, according to Business Relationship Manager Jacqui Bruce.

She explained: "it's really important that training and development within the sector is industry-led, as this should help ensure a competent workforce who have the skills to carry out their jobs safely and effectively.

Professional industry bodies and employers work closely with us too, as we want our training to be fit for purpose, to meet industry requirements and ensure safe working practices.

In order to make sure that our training courses and qualifications are recognised across the sector, we work with regulatory bodies Ofqual, Scottish Qualifications Authority and Qualifications Wales too.

Our courses and qualifications are delivered by a network of approved training providers across the whole of the UK and Republic of Ireland in a wide range of areas, including: tractors and attachments, pesticides and pest control, ATVs and 4x4, health and safety and first aid, chainsaws and arboriculture equipment, landscape machinery, safe use of firearms and e-learning.

Learners can go from basic training, improving their skills and completing refresher courses right through to a full qualification. Skills development is equally important to the continuing professional development of established staff as well as those looking to start their career in environmental conservation.

We are local, on a national scale, providing the recognition that people need but making our programmes accessible across the country."

Here are some of the training programmes that Lantra is offering for the environmental conservation industry.

Pesticides

Although pesticides can be extremely useful, they have to be stored, handled and applied in the right way, or they can be dangerous to humans, wildlife and the environment. To minimise these risks, anyone who uses pesticides as part of their job is legally required to go through the proper training and be skilled in the tasks they are carrying out. They must also have a certificate of competence if they supply, store or use pesticides.

This applies to operators, contractors, employers, and self-employed people in agriculture, horticulture, amenity horticulture in places like parks and sports pitches, in forestry, in or near water and industrial herbicides.

Lantra Awards' training courses and qualifications include: safe use of pesticides; weed wiper; knapsack sprayer, hand-held spraying near water and identification of invasive and injurious species.



(Lantra)

ATV

The versatility and small size of ATVs, or quad bikes, means they are increasingly being used in the workplace for travel and for carrying out a range of other tasks. But used in the wrong way, they can become unstable, and even experienced riders can put themselves at risk without proper training.



(Lantra)

It is a legal requirement for employers to provide adequate training for staff who use equipment like ATVs at work. Employers must also ensure that only those employees who have received appropriate safety training in using ATVs, attachments and towed equipment, are allowed to ride the vehicles. This also applies to those who are self-employed.

The fundamentals of driving, loading, health and safety and complying with legal requirements are covered in two Lantra awards: the Technical Award for Sit- astride ATVs, including loads and

trailed equipment, and the Technical Award for Sit-in ATVs.

Chainsaw use

One of the most common items of equipment across land-based industries is the chainsaw. It is a versatile and handy tool for cutting back branches, taking down trees and woodworking. This also makes it potentially dangerous in the hands of an unskilled or careless operator, so it's essential that those who use chainsaws at work have gone through the right training.

Lantra works with the HSE to ensure that training materials reflect current safe working practices. Its chainsaw courses are available from a basic level for occasional users and go on to specialist training for those working in forestry and arboriculture.

Find out more

For more details on the range of Lantra courses and training programmes on offer, visit www.lantra.co.uk or call 02476 696 996.



(Lantra)

Country Pursuits & Training Ltd offer the range of Lantra Awards firearms courses available (see website). Valued training with experienced instructors respected by estates across the UK for delivering best practice in the field or on shooting grounds. Facebook> Ann Litchfield >page @CountryTraining 07980 284549 or e-mail ann@countrypursuitsandtraining.co.uk

CEH can help you to enhance your skills and improve your chances of getting a new job. We specialise in learning and development activities related to the natural environment, especially Hydrology & Ecology. Current training opportunities include: Science Paper writing, Evidence Review, Drones, Water Management, Field Electronics and more!
<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/training>

TVT is a non-profit making training group. We have been in business for 30+ years, mainly land based training courses leading to Lantra or C&G qualifications. Courses such as pesticide, forklift, First Aid, ATV, chainsaw, workshop skills etc. Contact: 01777 872085 www.trentvalleytraining.co.uk

We offer Lantra accredited training courses for chainsaws, strimmers, brushcutters and pesticides. We can run these at either your premises or ours. Also bespoke courses. We cover south east, south west and midland areas. Contact Ian on 07831 644838 or email: millwd@globalnet.co.uk website: www.millwardforestry.co.uk

Bat Walk Leader training: A fun session in which you will learn how to plan and run a bat walk for your organisation. - Introduction to bats - Planning your walk - Using a bat detector - Identifying bats - Leading a bat walk £15 <http://www.wild-ideas.org.uk/events/>

Conservation and ecology training courses. Free introductory courses – ecology, conservation, animal assistants, animal first aid, basic maths and more. Personal tutoring for job applications, CV preparation, practical experience support. Find us at www.animalbiologyandcare.co.uk and email us at abccoursecontact@gmail.com

Careers in dry stone walling. Looking for a career with a difference? Love the outdoors? Want to get creative? Ever considered Dry Stone Walling? Career training leading to Lantra accredited qualifications offered by the Dry Stone Walling Association

Contact training@dswa.org.uk or tel: 015395 67953 for information



Conservation K9 Consultancy - We offer specialist dogs handler courses and training for conservation and ecological searches. Expert consultation for environment, ecology and conservation based individuals who are interested in using dogs to assist in their wildlife monitoring and surveying!
www.conservationk9consultancy.com Check us out on Facebook!

Froglife offer training courses in Great Crested Newt Surveying, Reptile Ecology, and Habitat Management for Amphibians. Our Great Crested Newt Surveying courses offer participants the chance to obtain a reference for licence application. We deliver courses in Peterborough, York and southern Scotland. Contact: laurence.jarvis@froglife.org

First for rural and land based training - A wide range of skills training - all levels catered for. We offer courses covering: Health & Safety, Skills, Management, Crop Protection. Vale Training Services Ltd is a registered Lantra, City and Guilds, BASIS and NPORS provider. For more information www.valetraining.co.uk

Funding your project - One day bid writing workshop. Learn to make an impression and demonstrate the value of your project. We will show you the key skills in writing a winning funding bid. £50 including lunch. £30 for volunteers. <http://www.wild-ideas.org.uk/events/>

Free download of our digital Outdoor First Aid manual. Download a digital Outdoor First Aid manual from First Aid Training Co-operative. Simply cut and paste this link into your browser and follow the instructions. The manual can be on your smart phone to read where you want or to use in an emergency. <https://c-js.co.uk/2PMRiHu>

Job Search Networking with the Countryside Management Association!



“Anything up to 60% of people seeking employment benefit from active job search networking. Developing contacts, talking to those already in the industry, friends and family, and attending events like training days and annual conferences all play a key role in accessing the pathway to that dream job you really want” (The Balance Careers 2018)

Taking control of your future



Dormouse class licence training in Belhus Wood, Essex
(P. Bolton 2018)

It can be a daunting experience finding a job. By tradition it is a strange and sometimes an embarrassing thing to advertise yourself, your achievements and why you think that an employer must give you a job.

But spare a thought for a moment, how do you know about anything at all? That new pair of trainers, that new dress heralding the new trending fashion or perhaps that gadget or computer game new to the market. All of these things are ‘advertised’. Finding a job is no different. Employers need to know that you are out there and you need to tell employers that you are available for hire.

So how do you ‘advertise’ you?

Well the simple answer is you do it every single day possibly without knowing it. Think about it, how many people do you physically

meet or talk too every day? How many people do you talk to by social media on a daily basis? How many likes, links or followers do you have? All of this is ‘advertising’ YOU! And all of these activities are ‘Networking’.

Getting ready to ‘advertise’ you!

- Get some calling cards made up;
- Produce a power point promotional testimonial;
- Subscribe to CJS; and
- Join the relevant social media groups and associations

Calling Cards

These are great when you are out and about. Calling cards are your ‘handshake’ a good positive handshake makes the all-important first impression. The card must have your contact details on it, a picture of you to remind the recipient of your meeting. If you have qualifications make sure that they are on there too (chainsaw, brushcutter, or even licences to work with European Protected Species). If it’s relevant put it on your card!

Use all of the card front and back, you have paid for it so use it! Use good quality card. Do not produce your calling card on cheap flimsy paper.

Power Point promotional testimonial

One of the main networking medians out there is the direct formal approach. In the old days letter after letter would be posted at great expense. Today we have email and dozens of emails can be sent in the click of a mouse. A power point promo is one of the most powerful ways that you can advertise yourself. Be short and sweet, bullet point your facts and use pictures of you in action. Perhaps it’s you volunteering, a school or college/university field trip. A testimonial from someone who knows your work value (voluntary or paid). This sends a powerful message to a potential employer.



Learning woodland skills at Nyman’s National Trust (P. Bolton 2018)

Remember a potential employer is busy so everything needs to be at a glance, colourful and something that catches the eye quickly is best.

Subscribing to CJS

Knowing all the job market and which jobs are on offer is where CJS comes in.

Social media groups & joining associations

Job forums, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are all useful ways to advertise yourself but none of these can replace direct contact with potential employers. Joining organisations like the Countryside Management Association will certainly get a future employers attention.

Formed in 1966 the CMA is the largest organisation supporting the work of conservation, access and recreation professionals in the natural greenspace and countryside sector throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



Freshwater ecology and Great Crested Newt training at Nymans National Trust (P. Bolton 2018)

Our aim is to support the development of staff, students and volunteers involved in the management, interpretation, and public enjoyment of natural greenspace and the countryside through networking, training and continuing professional development.



Study day and regional AGM at Runnymede National Trust (P. Bolton 2018)

Study days

Our study days are a fantastic opportunity to meet up and share best practice, see practical land management in operation, and test out new bits of kit or simply find out about a site and how it's managed.

These events take place at a wide range of sites from National Nature Reserves to Country Parks and everything in between. Study days also offer the chance to develop long lasting friendships and contacts within the industry.

It's easy to join CMA or attend one of our events. Simply go onto the website www.countryside-management.org.uk and follow the links to 'Join' or 'Study days and Events'.

CIEEM is the leading professional membership body representing ecologists & environmental managers. We provide information, training, events, webinars & conferences to students & professionals at all stages in their careers, some of which are free/discounted & focus on CV writing & employability skills.

Visit www.events.cieem.net/Events/Event-Listing.aspx and www.cieem.net/students-careers or email enquiries@cieem.net



ARG UK represents a network of volunteer amphibian and reptile groups. Our volunteers engage in diverse activities: survey and monitoring, practical habitat tasks, training courses, toad patrolling, public events and educational outreach. We are an inclusive organisation and everyone is welcome. To find out more visit: www.arguk.org/get-involved/local-groups or contact info@arguk.org.

Keen to gain employment as a botanist or ecological consultant? Holding a Field Identification Skills Certificate (the industry standard) will help: <https://bsbi.org/field-skills>. Volunteering with BSBI can also help you develop new skills and improve your prospects in the sector: <https://bsbi.org/volunteering-opportunities>. Email us for an informal and confidential chat: enquiries@bsbi.org

Wildlabs.net is the first global, open online community dedicated to conservation technology. Members use the platform to share information about how technology is being used, ask and answer questions to exchange best practice, and collaborate to improve or develop new technologies that address identified conservation needs. Join the community today.

PlantNetwork is a charity and membership organisation providing training and network support to gardens and gardeners throughout Britain and Ireland. We support the development of horticultural and plant conservation skills, provide networking opportunities and facilitate knowledge exchange. For more information, visit our website www.plantnetwork.org and get in touch!

The IFM is an international organisation, dedicated to the advancement of sustainable fisheries management. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in fish and fisheries, their proper management and conservation. We provide technical expertise to a number of groups and also offer a range of training opportunities. Email: info@ifm.org.uk

Our Bright Future: a stepping stone to employment for young people

By Anna Maggs, Communications Officer for Our Bright Future

The proportion of 16-24 year olds who were unemployed in June-August 2018 was 10.8%; that's 464,000 young people (McGuinness, 2018¹). To give this figure some context, that is more than the entire population of Edinburgh. If you have recently left school and are armed with a desire to make a difference, it seems there's limited opportunity. Faced with this uncertain future, it is unsurprising that the mental wellbeing of young people is reported to be at the lowest ever reported (Prince's Trust Youth Index, 2018²). But amongst these overwhelming statistics there is a glimmer of hope; young people are using their talents to help create a greener future through a ground breaking national programme.

Our Bright Future is a £33 million programme funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund. Beginning in 2016, this five year programme aimed to empower 60,000 young people to become skilled and engaged citizens. As we approach the midpoint of the programme, 80,000 young people have already been involved and the programme continues to gain momentum. Our Bright Future is formed of 31 projects. They cover all corners of the UK; from Cornwall to Glasgow, Swansea to Belfast. The beauty of the programme though is the variety of projects. Being a partnership programme, hundreds of organisations are involved in providing unique and specialised opportunities that young people may not have ever considered. Led by The Wildlife Trusts, it firmly falls within the environmental sector. Some young people are planting community orchards, while others are designing apps to tackle environmental issues. All of them are learning to love nature.

The programme is aimed at 11 to 24 year olds, working with young people from all walks of life. Within the 80,000 there are those at risk of homelessness, graduates, young people with visual impairment and aspiring young entrepreneurs. But does involvement in a programme of this nature lead to employment? At the end of 2017, a number of the projects followed up with their 436 alumni in the 18-24 age bracket and reported that 175 had secured paid work in positions such as Ecosystem Analyst, Recycling Engagement Officer and Farm Support Worker. Example employers were the Marine Stewardship Council and Yorkshire Water. It is therefore clear that not only are young people securing work, they are utilising the environmental skills that they have learnt on their project to enter the environmental sector. The projects also found that 52 young people secured paid training or apprenticeships and that 159 had started another learning opportunity. Clearly, Our Bright Future opens multiple doors for young people.

To give a flavour of the breadth of the projects and the employment that some of the young people have progressed to, here are the stories of Daniel, Ellie and Rachel.

Daniel: Community Ranger at the National Trust

23 year old Daniel grew up on a council estate. He dropped out of college before he was able to complete his A Levels and as a result he lost his confidence. He didn't know what jobs he would be able to do and felt lost. However, he did enjoy visiting National Trust properties and he began thinking about working outdoors. He spent two years on the Our Bright Future project run by the National Trust, 'Green Academies Project (GAP)'. This



enabled him to complete an NVQ in land-based conservation. Daniel grew in confidence and practical skills and following his completion of the project he secured a job as a Community Ranger for the National Trust. He now leads the GAP project for 11 to 16 year olds. He finds that because he has a similar background the young people who attend the group they can really relate to him.

'Volunteering and studying with GAP has given me the chance to do something that I have always wanted to do. Without the help and support of everyone involved in GAP I wouldn't have had the opportunity to go from a student to staff and progress on to do a job that I love.'

Ellie: GIS Data and Evidence Officer at Ribble Rivers Trust



25 year old Ellie gained a postgraduate degree in biodiversity and conservation from the University of Leeds. She had returned home to the Yorkshire Dales and found herself working in a local supermarket stacking shelves. She was itching to work in the environmental sector and was able to secure herself a graduate trainee position at the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT). This is how she got involved with Our Bright Future. The Green Futures project is run by YDMT and Ellie became a youth representative on the project Steering Group. Her interest in governance grew and she soon became a trustee for YDMT. From this experience she has been able to secure a job as a GIS and Evidence Officer at the Ribble Rivers Trust.

'One of my main aims in life is to make a positive difference to this world and becoming a Trustee for a charity such as YDMT is one way in which I can do

this.'

Rachel: Beekeeping Tutor at Blackburne House

Rachel joined the BEE You project at Blackburne House aged 22. BEE You offers a 15 week course and in this time she learnt the theoretical and practical elements of beekeeping including honey extraction, product making and how to market her products. She adored beekeeping and became the Bee You Our Bright Future Youth Forum member which broadened her experiences further. After completing the course, she trained as a beekeeping tutor and qualified as a teacher in May. She has now secured a job teaching the beekeeping course that she first took at Blackburne House!

'Being involved with the BEE You project and the Our Bright Future Youth Forum has contributed massively to my personal development and improved my mental wellbeing'



Our Bright Future may only offer short term opportunities for young people, from a few days to 12 months, but it's clear that it can be a launch pad for young people starting their careers. It gives them hope when they often don't know where to start. It allows them to dip a toe in the water and gain work experience and training that can equip them and boost their CV. It plants a seed of an idea that perhaps they could be a beekeeper for example. More and more young people are thinking creatively about their futures. Our Bright Future has a Youth Forum that steers the programme. We want young people to feel empowered for their future rather than fearful of employment uncertainty. But to meet the needs of the 464,000 young people who are struggling to find work more opportunities need to be made available to them. Our Bright Future is only scratching the surface.

To find out more about the 31 Our Bright Future projects visit: www.ourbrightfuture.co.uk/projects

1 <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN05871#fullreport>
2 <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/research-policies-reports/youth-index-2018>

With opportunities in practical conservation, communications, research and biological recording, our Student Naturalist Award Scheme is designed to provide early career conservationists in North East England with all the skills needed to 'make it' in the environmental sector. For more information contact: nhsn@ncl.ac.uk



The Open University understand that employability is about more than 'getting a job'. Our aim is to empower our students to realise their career and life ambitions by building their confidence to express their unique strengths and skills gained from previous work experience and OU study. We call it becoming 'career confident'. Try our Employability Skills Activity to identify what employability skills are & how they relate to OU study. <https://help.open.ac.uk/employability-skills>

Trees for Life, an environmental charity working to restore the Caledonian Forest and its unique wildlife to the Highlands of Scotland, are offering five exciting 'Skills for Rewilding' traineeships starting in July 2019. These positions offer a fantastic opportunity to live and work on a Highland Estate for 12 months, learning practical skills from professional mentors, whilst also working towards industry recognised qualifications. Stay out of the classroom and learn by doing.

Trainees may specialise in skills associated with horticulture and tree production, deer management and estate maintenance, woodland planning and creation or building relationships with communities through creative projects.

Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled us to offer a bursary of £7,450 with accommodation provided, or an additional £2,000 for living off-site.

The application process will open early in 2019 with people 18 years old or over, at the start of the traineeship, able to apply. No relevant qualifications are required. If you would like to find out more, please visit treesforlife.org.uk/traineeships - to register your interest and be kept informed please email traineeships@treesforlife.org.uk



One of the questions we get asked most frequently is: "I think I'd like to work in the countryside – do you have a job for me?"

The first time you hear that you think, "How do I answer that? Where do I begin?" Here is a general reply. If it doesn't answer your specific query please contact us and we'll do our best to point you in the right direction.



The countryside is a large place with an enormous variety of jobs, everything from tree surgeons to rights of way officers by way of wildlife officers not to mention rangers. We recommend that people take a little while to think about exactly what it is they want to do and about how they want to spend their days. Is a job outside in all weathers really the right one for you? Do you have the patience to spend days counting plants or birds or to cope with several classes of small children asking the same questions over and over again? Would you get vertigo hanging from ropes at the top of a very tall tree? Can you walk long distances over rough ground carrying a heavy pack? A good way to find out what sorts of jobs there are within the countryside sector is to look at the job adverts, most of which have a brief description of what you'll be doing and this gives you a rough idea of what the job entails. It is often much better to eliminate jobs you don't want than to look at the ones you quite fancy this way you'll reduce the range and focus your efforts much more effectively. Don't be afraid to have a look at job descriptions on employer's websites this gives you greater details than in the advert; however, please don't send for postal application packs for jobs for which you have no intention of applying and for small charities you're using hard earned funds. If you're still confused then have a look at CJS Focus (like this one!), this is a periodic publication each edition looking at a different area of the sector with articles from people working 'on the ground' highlighting specific issues.

Once you've worked out roughly which sector seems most suitable then a good way to 'try before you buy' is to volunteer, we know this is not possible for everyone but even if it's only for a couple of days you'll get an idea. By being a volunteer or shadowing someone you get to see the real job, not the pretty version presented in job adverts – recruiters are trying to attract applicants and do talk up the good stuff tending to bypass the not so favourable aspects. Spending time with someone doing the job gives you the opportunity to ask questions (but not too many – remember you're there to help, not hinder) and maybe ask a few of

yourself too. If you discover it's not for you then don't worry, a few volunteer days don't tie you to a career for life.

This works whether you're just starting to think about your future career, newly graduated or looking to change your life. If it is the latter then think about what skills you already possess and can offer a countryside employer and maybe be prepared to try for a job which is not your perfect post but one for which you're suitable with a countryside employer and then you'll be better positioned to move sideways.

We have more gems like this in our Helpful Hints covering how to get your job hunt started, your application and CV, interviewing and a few guidelines to help you make the right impression including a reminder to check your online profile and social media! Read on: <https://c-js.uk/CJSHints>

Right then, having decided what you want to do, where you want to work, you've applied AND got an interview CJS can still help you.

If you keep up to date with our news then you'll be primed with all the latest updates from across the sector. It's easy to check out your potential employers website to see what they're involved in and which projects they're really pleased with but not so easy to see how that might fit in across the sector. However, if you're applying for the beaver project in Dorset and you've read CJS news you'll know what's been happening with the Scottish beavers, adding in this additional knowledge and perhaps even quoting from the scientific papers we mention will show your interest and demonstrate both your knowledge and commitment. Read the headlines here: <http://c-js.co.uk/CJSNews>

Data Tree is a free online course on three themes: data management, ways to apply data, and communicating environmental research beyond academia. The course is an ongoing learning resource in eight modules, you can complete as a structured course or dip in for interest or problem solving. Funded by NERC. www.datatree.org.uk

Big Data and the Environment is an open access course for anyone interested in the data behind environmental analysis and how the environment itself produces big datasets. The course is packed with real-life examples and our mentors will be on hand for delving deeper into the digitised environment. <https://c-js.co.uk/2DtIVPS>

Career training for Budding Conservationists. Feeling lost in your conservation job hunt? This unique online course by the experts at Conservation Careers is designed to help you understand the conservation job market, to navigate your career options, and to get hired more quickly. Perfect for career starters and switchers. www.conservation-careers.com/kickstarter

Dry Stone Walling for Beginners Training Course with Dry Stone Walling Association in Cheshire on 11 & 12 May then 21 & 22 September 2019. Check out the website on dswacheshire.org.uk or find out more from Jack on dswacheshire@gmail.com

eLearning courses for job hunters. Arm yourself for work from your armchair. In today's competitive employment landscape, arming yourself with extended skills can give you the edge over other candidates. Visit our website to discover eLearning courses covering topics like Active Listening Skills, Making Decisions and Business Attitude. Visit www.ukruralskills.co.uk

Do you want to add another string to your bow? Teaching first aid courses is rewarding and can generate a good second income. To find out more about becoming a trainer and sign up for our email course about how to become a trainer, simply use this link <https://c-js.co.uk/2PgewWO> First Aid Instructor courses in Manchester and Glasgow.

Invasive non-native species are recognised as having huge environmental, social and economic impacts, the damage they cause put at 5% of global GDP. Invasive Ecology therefore is increasingly important and this course focuses on main problem species, ID features, control methods, legislation, strategies & recording. For more details see; <https://c-js.co.uk/2P4X9lv>

Permaculture courses are fantastic ways to learn about being genuinely sustainable and designing systems that work with nature meaning low input is required for a high output. The Glasgow permaculture design course is one weekend per month January to June 2019, come along for the intro in Nov/Jan. <https://lusalderlowe.wordpress.com/>

Green woodwork training courses are offered for the making of products such as mallets, spatulas, kuksas, traditional shave-horses, stools, and chairs. These courses take place in woodland workshop shelters using traditional tools such as draw-knives, and pole lathes. Search online for Sallerton Wood for details of all courses. Contact: alan@sallertonwood.org.uk www.sallertonwood.org.uk

Nationally recognised Lowland Leader and Hill & Moorland Leader training and assessment courses, plus National Navigation Award Scheme courses delivered in a clear, sensitive and fun manner from our base in Stirling, or at a location near you (for groups). Established 1984 and still committed to sharing expertise. www.cndoscotland.com

Gain certified skills in project management and strategy development for wildlife conservation through online and class-based courses across the UK. www.wildteam.org.uk

Bursary opportunities for Scottish residents to improve their species identification skills; various funders offer different opportunities. Applications welcome until 31 January 2019: see <http://www.brisec.org.uk/Bursaries.php> for details or email briscsecretary@live.co.uk

Transferable skills as a boost to employment

By Ben Deed - Manager, Merseyside BioBank



Ours is an unusual sector. Crossing the often ill-defined borders of Public, Private and Third and each with their own wants and needs. Jobs are often specialised and can be few and far between, training expensive for someone just starting out or looking to re-train.



Ben Deed

How then do those that dream of working in the environmental sector train in suitable skills to successfully navigate hurdles and meet requirements?

As a Local Environmental Records Centre Manager I have worked with a great many individuals coming through the doors, asking just these types of questions. The volunteers we work with come from a range of backgrounds from bar work and bins to other professional sectors and academia. We are fortunate that many do find their way into relevant professional employment and there are perhaps a few things that can be recognised as having given them that edge.

For a start don't underestimate skills you've already acquired! The mindset of many on the careers path is that they would love to work outside and engage with the environment. It is easy to become a little blinkered about what skills you need to do that and often those early on the career path will look only at species identification skills or field work.

An environmental profession is a profession similar to any other sector in that key skills are just as important.

Interpersonal skills like communication, IT literacy, punctuality and the ability to teamwork and self-organise remain vital. These are all skills that could be picked up and developed at any stage through your life. Perhaps you helped organise a university society or are the go to IT genius for your family. Maybe you joined with or brought together your local community to fundraise or hold an event. It doesn't matter where you got it from; if you've got it shout about it.

I left university without particularly good grades but with a wealth of experience in bar and shop work. Needing to bring in the pounds I went with what I knew and before long found myself working in bars in Manchester. However, I never lost my love of the environment or my desire to work in this sector so began to apply for positions. In the meantime I spent time volunteering with the Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT) as a conservation volunteer. Later I took on my own projects on behalf of the Trust and eventually found some work as a part-time assistant ecologist.

Punctuality was crucial, self-organisation and a willingness to learn also important, that interest, self-motivation and commitment really does help you to stand out.

A year or so later the position at Merseyside BioBank came up, an IT job that required the provision of support to volunteers in the office and in the field. Here my interest in computing (but still somewhat basic knowledge!) complemented a love of the environment and the interpersonal and administrative skills picked up from my time in the bars and hotels of Manchester and a commitment to wildlife and volunteering shown through my work with the LWT. That got me in the door and from there I have specialised. However, it was those cross-cutting skills, backed by a commitment and self-motivation that got me on the way.

Find out more about Merseyside BioBank at www.merseysidebiobank.org.uk

Some further experience

Dr Richard Burkmar - BioLinks Project, Field Studies Council

Although I gained a PhD in ecology and worked briefly in conservation, I spent most of the first 15 years of my working life in the IT sector. When I decided that I wanted to switch back to ecology and conservation, the key realisation I made was that my previous education and experience in ecology counted for little - I had been out of the loop for too long. So I embarked on a skills-based MSc in biological recording and cut my

working hours as a programmer to enable me to spend a day a week volunteering in the conservation sector. This did the trick: where I had been getting little response to job applications, I now got some interviews, eventually leading to a job looking after a Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

I think that the most important thing wasn't the MSc itself - I hadn't completed the course at that point - but the commitment demonstrated by both the MSc and, particularly, the regular volunteer work.

Find out more about the Biolinks Project from FSC at <https://www.fscbiodiversity.uk/>

Lessons Learned?

While we have different routes into the sector we have both found professional employment and made the most of skills we have learned both in previous employment and as general life skills.

Skills developed in life and in previous employment can complement and strengthen an application so never sell yourself short. Talking down an irate customer, balancing the books, performing a shop close show communications skills, attention to detail and responsibility.

You also benefit greatly from enthusiasm and self-motivation, the desire to want to do well, to deliver and improve. Someone who cares about what they are doing will apply themselves and develop over time. Many employers know they may not get all their desiderables but a member of staff is an investment. If you can demonstrate that the fundamentals are there and back that up with genuine self-motivation for the position then you can really shine.



Richard Burkmar

Nature's Calendar is a UK wide online phenology recording project run by the Woodland Trust in partnership with CEH. The online resources and practical recording experience are a great way to increase your identification skills and ecological awareness. Explore the website and start recording today: <https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

Help to monitor the health of the freshwaters of the River Thames catchment. Use quick kits to measure the levels of two widespread nutrient pollutants and contribute to a catchment wide survey of water quality. For more information please visit: <http://bit.ly/ThameWQ>

A complete training service offering practical, technical and management training for all industries nationally and locally, we specialise in all Rural and Farming Training, throughout the north of England. We offer certification in the majority of Lantra qualifications. Email: office@va-training.co.uk Tel: 01609 882408

Just starting out in the countryside sector or looking for a place to put down roots? Why not volunteer at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. Horticulture, Heritage, Arts, Science and Conservation all set in our iconic landscape. To find out more please contact peter.lee-thompson@gardenofwales.org.uk

We offer accredited courses and qualifications to enhance employment prospects for working with animals and conservation. We also run a Job Board to help students find employment. www.animal-job.co.uk www.animaljobsdirect.com

Newton Rigg College, part of Askham Bryan College, offers practical and professional landbased short courses to those based in the north of England. Expert led courses range from 1 day regulated qualifications to 6 month non-regulated courses. Contact employerskills@newtonrigg.ac.uk or 01768 893400 for details of courses currently available.

Discover the leading platform in the UK around Apprenticeships, Sponsored Degrees, Traineeships and First-time Jobs. For advice, guides and help with Interviews - Visit: www.notgoingtouni.co.uk

Lantra offers a range of training, technical awards and short qualifications for the land-based and environmental industries. These include Safe Use of Vehicles and Plant, Livestock, Pest control and Pesticides, Firearms, Leadership and Management, Amenity and Forestry Equipment use. Training is both classroom-based and practical and approved Instructors are quality-assured. Contact Jacqui Bruce to find out more. jacqui.bruce2@lantra.co.uk 07867 908164 www.lantra.co.uk



Tips of the bright green trade – how to maximise your career chances

By Stacey Aplin, PR Officer at Groundwork



Whether it's a love for the great outdoors, a passion for the environment or a desire to design and build – the greenspace and landscape sectors can create the perfect role for anyone who doesn't get fazed by working outside in all weathers, to people who bring creative and technical skills to the playing field – literally.



Groundwork's 'Unlocking Potential' project (Groundwork)

In our role as a community charity, Groundwork runs numerous horticulture and employment programmes that help people of all ages find work. Combining both practical, hands-on training and employability skills and opportunities to gain both experience and qualifications has been a proven recipe for success.

“My advice to the people I work with is to not be afraid of applying to local companies by sending out CVs or catching people on the phone. Personal contact is a good way of finding work in the garden or landscaping sector,” says Matt Sutcliffe, Groundwork's Senior Employment Tutor. “I'd also suggest that they learn to drive if possible, as this is a big help when it comes to travelling around for jobs. It's

also important to look after yourself – eating right and getting enough sleep is vital for outdoor and physical work, as well as mental health and wellbeing.”

Alongside practical skills, having qualifications demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of the sector, as well as proving dedication and commitment.

“Employers definitely like to see that any potential employee or apprentice has experience, but it's good to have the qualifications to back this up that demonstrate practical competency, such as licences – commonly known as ‘tickets’ – to use power tools,” says Kat Davies, Groundwork's Communities Project Officer.

“Qualifications show you have a good understanding, knowledge and competency regarding tasks and tools and experience demonstrates you can put this into practice,” Kat concludes.

The dos and don'ts

Before applying for a job there are some simple, yet effective, rules you can follow to maximise your chances of successfully securing an interview and gaining employment.

“Any well written CV for someone looking for employment should show a strong timeline that includes volunteering, experience and certificates that you have achieved so far as it helps to prove you are keen to succeed,” says Matt.

“Employers are looking for people who have good communication skills, and leadership or project management potential, as well as technical knowledge of how to use equipment and a driving licence. Specific training like first aid and health and safety are also really useful,” Matt concludes.

It is important that a completed job application form or CV reflects achievement and shows a strong balance of passion and skills.

“I always advise people to photocopy an application form before filling it in so they have a rough copy to draft their answers on,” says Alan Bull, Groundwork's Employment



Groundwork's Green Team in the East (Groundwork)

Programmes Manager.

Application forms are often the first impression that a potential employer gets from a potential candidate, so it is important to get it right and to ensure your answers are specific to the job specification and requirements.

“Tailor your application to what the employer is looking for and give real life examples where possible to show experience. Don’t underestimate the additional comments box that most applications have as this is the perfect time to sell yourself – so use this box wisely.”

Alan also stresses the importance of following instructions carefully before putting pen to paper.

“Simple things like using the specified ink colour, writing in capitals and correctly signing and dating a completed application form show that you have read and understood what’s been asked. It is also important to complete every box. Even if you don’t have anything to say, make sure you write ‘n/a’ or ‘none’ to show that you haven’t rushed the form and missed a question.”

CVs are ultimately the ‘shop window’ and the perfect way to grab someone’s attentions so it is important that it is as engaging as possible, both with what’s written and by ensuring that the formatting looks clear, correct and easy to read.



Community garden (Groundwork)

“If a CV is too wordy an employer will get frustrated and may even disregard it,” says Alan. “The aim is to get an interview, so concentrate on experience and what makes you the right person for the job as you can elaborate further if you succeed in getting an interview.”

If you are offered an interview, preparation is the key to ensuring you maximise your chances of getting the job. First impressions are not something you can redo, so there are steps you can put into place to help you do the best you can. Aside from experience, employers are looking for the right personality to work for them.

“Always ask a friend or family member to do a mock interview with you, or there are some training providers

that offer this,” says Alan.

“Punctuality is key, so don’t rely on what your sat-nav says or on the bus timetable. Do a rehearsal run a few days before to make sure you know exactly where to go to and how long it takes. Strong communication skills are also a key factor in hitting the right note in an interview.”

“Never just answer a question with a yes or no answer this can come across as uninterested and poor communication. Honesty and enthusiasm are always the best policy,” Alan concludes.

To find out more about Groundwork, please visit: www.groundwork.org.uk

Gain experience in various practical woodland management tasks plus surveying and monitoring at Volunteer Conservation Days at Hazel Hill Wood, near Salisbury, Wiltshire. Tasks planned for 2019 include ride and glade maintenance, bench creation, glow worm surveys and hedgelaying. Opportunity to take on more responsibility as an Assistant Volunteer Leader. <https://c-js.co.uk/2z55VMO>

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A focus on writing 'for free'

By James Common, Managing Director of New Nature Magazine



Voluntary work is not just desirable for progression in the environmental field, it is near mandatory. Although the prospect of yet another 'unpaid position' may be daunting, such roles are often the only way of providing cold, hard proof of the *dedication* and *passion* so many of us mention instinctively on our CV's. They also allow us to accumulate core and transferable skills, network and demonstrate that cherished ability to meet deadlines.



Thankfully, due to the rise of careers sites such as the Countryside Jobs Service and the increasing prominence of social media, voluntary opportunities in the great outdoors have never been easier to come by. Although, sadly, the same cannot be said for opportunities in the communicational side of conservation. Sure, a few internships and placements are advertised from time to time but, by and large, aspiring communicators are forced to think creatively when it comes to career development.

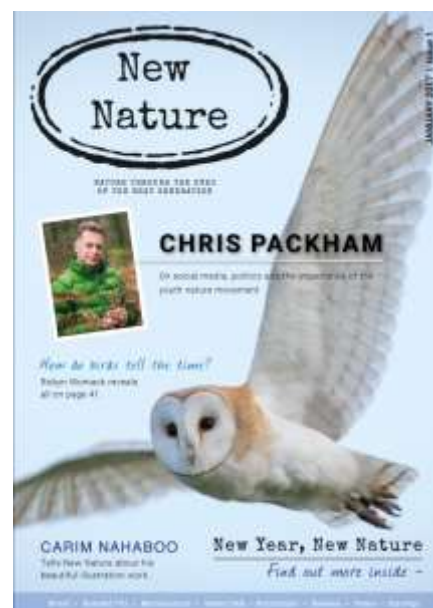
Getting noticed in environmental media and communications is difficult, as to write for well-known publications, you often require experience of writing for other well-known publications. It's a vicious circle and ideas, however interesting, are seldom enough without demonstrable experience. Whether we are talking editors, media specialists or communications officers, all demand evidence that you can string together a sentence, inform an audience and produce engaging content. A difficult situation if ever there was one but one that can be overcome with a little ingenuity.

To get your writing noticed, you need to think outside the box: publishing your work online for all to see in as many places as possible. This is where blogging comes in. Maintaining an online journal or column immediately puts your work out there, allowing you to share your opinions, stories and interests, and above all else, showcase your passion [yes, that word again] for your chosen field. Whatever that may be. It could be moths, microplastics or extinct marsupials – anything goes.

The subject of your writing is entirely up to you; though whatever you choose to discuss, blogging, coupled with the savvy use of social media, may well mean that potential employers are aware of you before you even walk into your next interview. Writing, tweeting or even vlogging about nature is a great way to display dedication to a cause and the ample feedback provided by the online community – environmental commentators are more than happy to highlight mistakes, believe me - can often help you develop your writing skills. This allows you to learn what kind of wording works for a specific audience and, in your ceaseless quest to share your work, teaches you a host of transferable skills in SEO, keywords, promotions, web design, content management – all vital parts of any communications role.

Of course, for those looking for something a little different, you can also volunteer your time to write for existing platforms. From my experience of writing for a range of charities and NGO's, many organisations, despite not openly advertising for such, welcome voluntary submissions. In our day of increasing reliance on digital content and social media, content is king, and providing your ideas fit with the ethos of an organisation, a letter, email or even tweet of enquiry can often lead to opportunities to get your work out there. Doing this not only allows you to showcase your skills as a written communicator but shows commitment to the organisations you hope one day to work for. This shows you are willing to give your time freely to aid in their success and, ultimately, stands you in good stead for the future. All of which goes without mention of the useful contacts made throughout the process – we all know the value of networking.

As we progress towards a more digital age, more and more platforms are opening to allow prospective writers to showcase their work. Of these, New Nature Magazine is a prime example: readily taking submissions from early career communicators and providing experience not just in writing, but



in pitching – a skill that will serve you well in later life. As the founder of New Nature, I have observed early-career writers near instantaneously picked up by bigger, mainstream platforms after submitting voluntary posts to us. Thus, it is clear that writing voluntarily can lead to bigger, brighter opportunities elsewhere. Just look at countless young writers and bloggers who have contributed work to A Focus on Nature and Wildlife Articles – two additional, great resources for early-career conservationists – now publishing widely in the form of books and hard-hitting columns.

Personally, I have spent years of my life ‘communicating’ for free, and while it has not all been plain sailing, it has certainly paid off: leading to opportunities to write for magazines and books, contribute guest blogs, attend educational events and even nervously blag my way through TV appearances. All of which, in turn, have finally amounted to my first ‘proper’ job in conservation communications.

If it can happen to me, it can happen to anyone, so do not be afraid to make your own luck, ask for opportunities, pitch your ideas and, above all else, have an opinion. You never quite know where doing so will lead you.

You can read James’s personal blog at <https://commonbynature.co.uk/> or pitch your ideas to New Nature Magazine at editorial.newnature@gmail.com

Funding our Environment - selling your story. An active workshop in how to sell your environmental improvement project. Inspire funders and donors to take action to support your organisation. Course to be held in Torbay on 28th February 2019 £40 <http://www.wild-ideas.org.uk/events/>

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Lantra Dry Stone Walling courses at the Derbyshire Eco Centre offer learners the opportunity to study in an internationally recognised training facility. Many learners become self-employed by the end of their course working in partnership with other students on the course. All tutors are members of the Dry Stone Walling Association. 01629 533038 www.derbyshire.gov.uk/ecocentre

Shuttleworth College offers a wide variety of full-time and part-time courses, making full use of the natural resources available, which include parkland, farm land, lakes and woodland. We are a specialist land-based college, and our tutors have real industry experience, and our aim is to get our students the qualifications and skills they need. www.shuttleworth.ac.uk

Learn in unique surroundings at BMet’s study centre in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Study in unique surroundings within 15 acres of landscaped gardens. Our courses are approved by the Royal Horticulture Society (RHS). Visit bmet.ac.uk to view our range of Countryside Management and Horticulture courses and make an application today!

Harper Adams University, offers a wide range of practical skills training courses that are open to all please see our website www.harper-adams.ac.uk or email ipryce@harper-adams.ac.uk for more details.

Brooksby Melton College - Specialist Land-Based Campus (Brooksby Campus) Leicestershire LE14 2LJ. College Telephone: 01664 850 850 Course Enquiries: 01664 855 444 Web: www.brooksbymelton.ac.uk / he.brooksbymelton.ac.uk Facebook: @brooksbymelton Twitter: @BrooksbyMelton Instagram: @brooksbymelton

At Derby College Broomfield Hall we offer full-time courses in Countryside Management at Level 2 and 3. We also offer Apprenticeships in Countryside. For more details go to www.derby-college.ac.uk or email paul.foskett@derby-college.ac.uk or call 0800 0280289

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Wiltshire College and University Centre offer: Lantra Chainsaw Maintenance and Cross-cutting and Lantra Basic Felling Techniques, both are suitable for the ‘occasional user’ i.e. “someone who intends to use chainsaws for domestic or leisure activities, but does not intend to work in forestry or arboriculture activities or work on Forest Enterprises land”. For more information: businessdevelopment@wiltshire.ac.uk 0845 3452235

Interview Skills

by Oonagh Nelson MCIEEM AssocRICS, Director of Contract Ecology Ltd, Preston, Lancashire. www.contractecology.co.uk, email: enquiries@contractecology.co.uk



contractecology
Green Space Professionals



Author Oonagh Nelson

I work in conservation and greenspace management for the private sector and, like all employers, my time is a valuable resource so I'll get straight to the point: there is no art to a good interview.

The land based sector is a difficult industry to break into so if you've been selected for an interview then firstly that is an achievement in itself and you should take real encouragement from the fact that you've managed to get the employers attention thus far!

If you've had several unsuccessful job interviews already and you're thinking of rolling out the same dialogue and answers at the next one, then you're likely to be facing another imminent disappointment.

You are unique, much like the post you will have applied for and failing to acknowledge these two realities can quickly lead to interview rejection.

I find that the most common mistake made by prospective employees when applying for roles at my company Contract Ecology Ltd is not researching the workload of the company and what the job role really entails. Unsuccessful applicants will answer their interview questions with a pre-conceived idea of what they think the position entails or what the generic industry is about. Predictably, speculative CV's sent by cold email tend to be the worst offender for this.

In this age of social media organisations who do not have a social media presence are few and far between so research the company - look at their Facebook, Twitter and Instagram feed. It's quick and easy to see what they've been doing this month; flick through the photos, check out the tasks, note the site conditions and observe the dress code of the staff and the equipment they are using. Other things to look out for are have the company been nominated for an award, are they a living wage employer or corporate sponsor of a charity?

This kind of information is gold when it comes to the interview as it will help you gain an understanding of what the company and job is really like. It will help you identify how you might fit in and highlight any areas that you would like to ask the employer a question about during the interview. It also importantly demonstrates that you have an interest in what goes on in the company and your future job role. With such easy access and insight into to a company's day to day activities, there is no excuse not to be prepared.



Stakeholders can be varied (Oonagh Nelson)

If this is your first attempt to break into your chosen industry then talk about any other job positions you've held. Even if they seem far removed from the prospective job, have a think if any of your skills are transferable and how these can be of benefit in the new role. There are few jobs which do not have stakeholders to which you will be answerable, whether that be funders, paying customers, land owners, or even your new colleagues.

It may not be clear initially how your part-time student job in hospitality or a call centre for example is relevant but both require people skills, patience and the ability to see a task

through. Did you work anti-social hours? Did you have to fill in time sheets or handle customers personal details? Even practical land based tasks will require input to a risk assessment, collating of volunteer emergency contacts or answering a curious member of the public's query as to what you are doing to their favourite dog walking route etc.

Think about what you are going to say both before the interview and during the interview before you answer each question. Take a moment to think about the question and what your answer will be as this will help you to compose yourself and ultimately articulate your answer. Even in a hands-on job, clear communication is essential.

At Contract Ecology Ltd we like to use a fairly informal approach to interviews, unless you are applying for a managerial or principal role, however always be mindful to dress appropriately. First impressions count at interview and looking presentable is still important. Let the interviewer set the tone and guide the interview yet if the interview style evolves towards conversational be careful not to slip into too casual an approach. The interviewer will still be assessing how you will come across when you represent the company and that you have the necessary capacity for professional conduct. Most importantly listen to the whole question and do not assume part way through that you know what the question is going to be. If your answer will require several kinds of information, do not be afraid to ask for the question to be repeated so you can ensure a fully rounded response.



Looking presentable is still important
(Oonagh Nelson)

Some job advertisements will come with a roles and responsibilities and/or person specification. It is important to read and understand these as they contain the information the employer is looking for from you. Have you got the skills, experience, training and/or



Some of the team at Contract Ecology Ltd
(Oonagh Nelson)

knowledge to fulfil this role? If not, can you demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn and become competent? Be honest about this. A person specification should guide you to look for what the employer wants in your interview, informing you of the skills, abilities, experience and knowledge that are essential or desirable for the position. It is good to have an example prepared for each that helps demonstrate your ability in this area, so that you can mitigate for 'mind blankness' and it is ok to take prompt cards in with you.

To summarise; do your research both on the company you are applying to and the industry within which they trade, be confident in the skills you possess including transferable skills from any and all previous employment and prepare yourself for the interview questions themselves.

Course: Presenting Yourself For Interview.

Delivered nationwide through our network of accredited training providers, this course aims to give trainees knowledge, understanding and basic skills in effective communication whilst presenting for interview, including ways to overcome communication barriers and increase confidence. Find your nearest UKRS training provider by visiting: www.ukruralskills.co.uk

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courses in ArcMap and QGIS (Open Source software) using environmental applications and data. Also bespoke courses tailored to your needs and deskside training. Discounts for unemployed, staff from charities and multiple delegates from same organisation. <https://www.geodata.soton.ac.uk/geodata/training/>; training@geodata.soton.ac.uk; tel: 023 8059 2719.

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Outdoor Leader Wild things! offer Woodland Activity Leader Training, a comprehensive 7 day course, suitable for all, that is accredited by the NCFE. For more details call 01309 69045, email enquiries@wildthings.org.uk or visit <https://c-js.co.uk/2qDCv3r>

Writtle University College offers a range of short

courses and certificates of competence aimed at those employed in the land-based sector such as Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture. Short courses are an ideal way to acquire new skills and enhance your career prospects. For information contact: shortcourses@writtle.ac.uk or call 01245 424286

You have a degree but are you equipped for the world of work?



26 years ago Anne Leonard MBE could see that some young people were leaving university well equipped with knowledge in their chosen subject but with a complete lack of practical life skills and the ability to secure a job. In response to a growing need Anne set up Operation New World to offer a skills training programme and since 1992, over two thousand participants have completed the course with 90% finding jobs or re-training shortly afterwards.



Dr Todd Lewis instructing in the field (Operation New World)

The aim is to give young people a boost to help them get onto the job ladder when it seems that their quest for a job is fruitless. They reach this impasse having completed a degree at a university and spent time working unpaid on various volunteer schemes.

The main impediments faced by people in this age bracket (20 – 25) are: degrees that are not aimed at the job market – few, if any, skills that an employer is able to pay you for – and, above all, time wasted on menial work. This can be volunteering to do manual work (sweeping up leaves etc), picking fruit in Australia, tidying up in a camp where there is some endangered species, mucking out in a zoo, anywhere. This is no good when you are trying to kick-start a career!

Before they know it, these young people are no longer very young – there are younger, fitter people coming up the chain who can work for less.

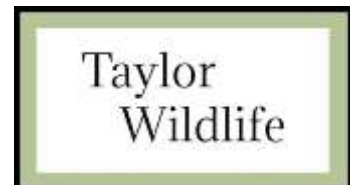
Often they ask the question, “How do I get the experience required in the job specification without having had a first job?” Operation New World aims to address those issues and enable participants to take the first steps in developing a worthwhile career.

If you want to find out more about the course please look at the website www.opnewworld.co.uk

01/06/19 – 02/06/19 & 15/06/19 – 16/06/19

Introduction to Upland Surveying Angus, Taylor Wildlife

A two-day course aimed at recent graduates and those new to ecology. We provide participants with skills in navigation, hill safety, survey techniques and data interpretation and aim to fill a knowledge gap not covered by university courses. Includes one night's accommodation, lunch and refreshments. The course takes place outdoors in the Angus glens to allow participants to see a range of upland habitats, flora and fauna and to discuss different upland management techniques. For more information on this or our courses in species identification, habitat surveys and camera trapping contact info@taylorwildlife.co.uk, or visit www.taylorwildlife.co.uk to download our course brochure.



Lynher Training is the leading provider of Training and Assessments for Forestry & Arboriculture in the southwest. We have been registered with Lantra for over 30 years and are also a City & Guilds NPTC Assessment Centre and ELCAS Provider. Check us out on www.lynher.com admin@lynher.com / 01822 832232

Our Rosewarne campus situated in West Cornwall offers Level 1, 2 and 3 courses in conservation and wildlife management within its picturesque 100 acre site. With expert teaching and exceptional facilities students can boost their skills learning about: coastal management, green woodworking etc. Visit www.duchy.ac.uk or call 0330 123 4784.

Job app, CV and interview support service, support and coaching for becoming self-employed, and review and support services for consultant ecologists. By Richard Crompton a Chartered Environmentalist with 20 years professional experience in charity, government and consultancy/freelance sectors. Friendly and supportive approach. richard@EcologyOD.co.uk, www.EcologyOD.co.uk



Making the leap into self-employment

My journey into self-employment started much sooner than I had anticipated. I had been fortunate enough to volunteer as a National Trust warden (originally through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme) from my mid-teens. As I was close to completing my Countryside Management Degree at Aberystwyth University, I applied for a job with a small UK charity as a conservation officer. I had specific experience relevant to the post stemming from my NT experience and was offered the job. I looked at the low salary, the London location (having completely loved three years in Aberystwyth which is 90mins drive from the nearest motorway and 2 hours from the nearest city!) and the lack of mention of 'must have a car' and decided it was not the job for me. I can now look back and see it was the right decision, but shortly afterwards and probably fifty job applications later, most with not even an acknowledgement and certainly no interview, I felt pretty silly. Another unemployed graduate!



Inspecting the teeth on a whiskered bat (Sam Dyer)

After that followed some self-employed gardening and landscaping work, some forestry work for two winters (thinning, weeding/beating-up, and planting), before I landed two large bat survey contracts one for the National Trust and one for Forestry Commission Wales – both at historic landscape sites in mid Wales. The FC survey report was noticed by the Forest District Manager who offered me a part time 'caretaker' estate warden job for a few months. Over 7 years I progressed from Warden to Estate Manager to Conservation Manager, but always continued my self-employed work, carrying out wildlife surveys (mostly for bats, but also other mammals, reptiles and nesting birds). As I was on a fixed term contract with FC for most of this time, I wanted to keep my freelance work going and had some regular architect clients. It

made for long working hours but enabled me to save up enough money to put a deposit down to buy my first house. This nicely takes me to my first two tips about becoming your own boss:

Before you go self-employed:

Tip 1. Make sure you have savings to cover a lean period of earnings. A part time job to support your early self-employed work can be a lifesaver for your survival cash-flow, until you have a more predictable income. Try to get 3-6 months survival income saved up before you make the leap.

Tip 2. If you intend to buy a house, do it before you leave full time employment. Otherwise you are likely to have to wait until you have at 3-5 years trading accounts in order to stand any chance of getting a mortgage.

The FC caught me out by offering me a permanent contract as a Conservation Manager, but still managing the Hafod Estate (www.hafod.org). By this point I had managed to generate quite a lot of work – mainly bat surveys for architects and planning consultants that I had worked for previously – enough that I was too busy to have a full-time job as well. Remarkably, the FC let me take on a permanent contract on part time hours (a 5-day fortnight) so I could honour the freelance work I was now committed to. This was a great way to mentally and financially prepare for going full time self-employed. Then I finally resigned about fifteen months later after a very enjoyable 7.5 years.

Preparing to be your own boss:

Tip 3. Try to develop a broad set of skills. When you become your own boss, you are suddenly the labourer, administrator, contract negotiator, accountant and main operative all in one. It can be overwhelming at times.



Radio tracking *Nathusius pipistrelle* near Cardiff (Laragh Níc Gabhann)

Tip 4. It is much more relaxing if you can gradually exit from your current employment whilst you become established, or keep a few employed hours in another job to keep your cashflow healthy.

At this point I decided to brand the company Wildwood Consulting (named after the Wildwood – the great forest that once covered most of the UK), and soon afterwards incorporated to become a Limited Company – both for credibility and for some of the financial and indemnity benefits of being a company rather than a sole trader. More tips here too:

Tip 5. Don't underestimate the value of good professional support. Ask around for recommendations when you are looking for legal and accountancy support. Three 'companies' and fourteen years later I still use the same firm of accountants even though I now live 2.5 hours drive away.

Tip 6. Take time to understand the basics of company finance, tax, shareholders, pension etc. Even if it doesn't seem relevant at the time, getting everything set up correctly will pay dividends later. If you set everything up correctly at the start you will reap the rewards later.

On becoming Limited I decided to slightly change the name of the company to Wildwood Ecology Limited so it 'does what it says on the tin'...

Branding:

Tip 7. Consider long term branding from the start. Even as a sole trader you can have a trading name (I was "Richard Crompton trading as Wildwood Consulting"). It should be easy to identify what a company does from its name.

Tip 8. Will your customers use alphabetic directories and lists to find you? If so try and choose a name that starts early in the alphabet (not with a 'W' for example!) once you are established none of this matters, but at the start try make everything as friction-free as possible.

After relocating to Cardiff for personal reasons, I was approached by an Australian company that made environmental monitoring equipment; I had used their bat detectors for years. They approached me to help them establish a European base in Cardiff and I became a part time sales representative, with my commission going straight into the company. Whilst not something I ever intended to do, I did enjoy it, and got to travel to conferences and events all over Europe, went to Australia for a product development workshop, and devised the concept for a new bat detector which is still sold today. The income this generated over 2.5 years gave me and my business partner the confidence to hire more staff.

During this period at Wildwood, I had some of my proudest achievements; bringing in a business partner when it was clear I could no longer manage alone; and taking on staff was a terrific highlight – not without its challenges - but I was hugely privileged to have an amazingly skilled team of colleagues.

Look beyond the core business:

Tip 9. Look at all possible opportunities. Growing a company requires funds; you either generate it yourself or borrow it. Sometimes a short-term opportunity is worth a temporary diversion of your time if it is profitable.

Tip 10. Surround yourself with people who can do the things you struggle with and bring wider experiences and knowledge!

In 2016, on the verge of fatherhood, I made the difficult decision to leave Wildwood Ecology in the capable hands of my business partner so I could become a part-time dad, to enable my wife to also continue her career part-time, and develop the training angle of my work (especially the Bat Licence Training Course working with Sandie Sowler - my amazing training partner of over ten years). Also to develop a completely new business approach; support, advice and troubleshooting. I formed Ecology on Demand (as a trading name of Richard Crompton Limited!) to help other ecologists with complex bat projects, and short-term specialist support on an ad-hoc basis. After just two years it is too early to declare it a



Richard leading a workshop on bats and trees
(Sandie Sowler)

success, but I love the variety of the work, have a great pool of regular clients and new ones arriving all the time. New developments in 2019 include the launch of Complete Bat Training – the evolution of the Bat Licence Training Course after ten years to cater to the needs of professional ecologists, and more titles in my short course programme. Providing training and coaching in business skills is also on the roadmap...along with many more ideas besides!

Richard Crompton is Director of Richard Crompton Ltd, runs the Ecology on Demand Service (www.EcologyOD.co.uk) and co-runs the Bat Training Partnership (www.BatTraining.co.uk) home of the Bat Licence Training Course. He started freelance ecology work in 1998 and was the founding director of Wildwood Ecology Ltd which he left in 2016. He is President of Cardiff Bat Group and was listed in the Who's Who of Young Business Leaders 3 years running as a Director of the Bat Conservation Trust. He has been awarded Chartered Environmentalist status and is a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London.

You can connect with Richard on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/EcologyonDemand/>
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Our online courses with mentor support provide a well-rounded view of botany and its role in the ecosystem and help towards proving commitment to continued professional development (CPD) for professional membership within the ecological/environmental sector. We offer CV building services and provide advice on further training. Visit <http://www.qualiteach.co.uk/training.htm>

The CJS Team would like to thank everyone who has contributed adverts, articles and information for this CJS Focus publication.

Next edition will feature Volunteering published on 11 February 2019

A4 sides this CJS Focus: 21 - Details believed correct but given without prejudice, Ends.