

# Eastleigh Countryside Volunteer Guidelines



Eastleigh Countryside Volunteers assist the Borough's Countryside and Trees Unit with managing over 800 acres of the Eastleigh's richest countryside on a variety of sites. The Council's countryside management aims to balance the need to conserve our natural and man-made heritage with the demands for recreation and education. Countryside areas owned by the Council include:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)
- Local nature reserves
- Two country parks
- Many other important wildlife habitats.

They also contain many features of archaeological and historical interest and receive large numbers of visitors each year from local people and tourists for recreation and study.

## Staff Structure

The Countryside Manager has overall responsibility for all countryside sites and the activities of the Countryside Officers and Rangers within the Borough. The Countryside Officers and Rangers carry out habitat management, site development and conservation work.

## What you need in order to become a Countryside Volunteer

Volunteers must be over 16 years of age. Under 18s must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

No previous experience is necessary, although any of the following skills/attributes would be useful:

- An enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside and wildlife. This will probably be the reason most people will want to volunteer. However, it is worth mentioning that countryside management is not only for the benefits of wildlife, but also for people to enjoy and appreciate the countryside.
- An enjoyment of meeting new, like-minded people.
- Practical outdoor work, getting muddy and grubby, and generally "doing something" for our wildlife and countryside is also useful. You don't have to get muddy though, we need help with surveys, data inputting and events as well.

- An ability to get on with different types of people. You will be dealing with a whole cross-section of the community when working with other volunteers or helping out at one of the country parks.

## Role Description

As a Countryside Volunteer you can become involved in as many of the following activities as you wish:

- Helping with practical conservation tasks such as scrub clearing, coppicing, planting, fencing, etc.
- Helping to improve visitor access on the Borough's countryside sites, by assisting with path maintenance and construction, building bridges, boardwalks etc.
- Assisting with events and guided walks

## Volunteers' Code of Conduct

Whilst volunteering with Eastleigh Countryside Volunteers you represent the Borough Council and we ask that you act courteously and politely with members of the public, staff and other volunteers.

## Health and Safety

- Whilst working as a volunteer, all the health and safety precautions and legislation, that protect and govern full-time members of staff, apply to you.

This means that we have a responsibility for your health and safety while you are volunteering by ensuring that you:

- Wear the correct safety clothing, and equipment when necessary
- Have had sufficient training and are capable of using the tools and equipment assigned to you.
- You have a personal responsibility to work in a safe manner so as not to affect the health and safety of yourself, staff, other volunteers or members of the public.
- The task leader will have a current first aid qualification and first aid kits will be on-site. Help or assistance can be summoned by means of the leader's mobile phone or radio.
- If you suffer from an unusual condition or are allergic to stings/bites, or have any other allergy please ensure the task leader is aware.
- During hot periods, please bring sun cream and plenty of water.
- If you have an accident or near miss (no matter how minor you consider it) please report it immediately to the task leader.
- It is recommended that you have current protection against tetanus and Hepatitis B.
- Always ensure you thoroughly wash your hands after the task. Hygienic wipes will be available on task to use during the day.
- This pack also includes information about Weil's and Lyme's disease which you must read before coming on task.

## Clothing

When attending tasks or undertaking surveys, you must ensure that you wear suitable clothing for the work and conditions:

- Sturdy footwear, suitable for outdoor work, is essential
- Wear appropriate clothing for the weather conditions e.g. close fitting so that it does not get snagged or caught on tools, or vegetation etc. Please remember that on most tasks whatever you wear is likely to get dirty!
- During hot periods please remember to wear a sun hat.
- Safety clothing will be available for your use on tasks e.g. hard hats and gloves

## On Task

The task leader will give a talk prior to work commencing to say what needs to be done and why, and to point out any hazards or safety precautions needed. Please ensure that you listen to what is said. Risk assessments will be available on task for everybody to read and volunteers will be asked to sign in. If you arrive after the task has started please make yourself known to the task leader so that you can be signed in and briefed about any health and safety procedures and the task. If you leave before the task has ended please let the leader know you are going.

## Training

During practical tasks there will be plenty of on-the-job training with the task leader and more experienced members of the group. From time to time there will be opportunities to assist with and learn about the various wildlife surveying projects.

## Tools

Where new or different tools are being used that require training, the task leader will give the necessary instructions to enable you to get the best use of the tool and use it safely. If you have any doubts about how to use any tools - please ask the task leader. If you find that a tool is damaged or defective do not continue to use it, simply report the problem to the task leader immediately.

## General Information

### Volunteering at Itchen Valley Country Park and around the Eastleigh Borough

Tasks are advertised in the newsletter, which is published every three months and are carried out on a number of sites in the Borough - usually on the third Sunday of each month (any changes will be notified in the newsletter or by email).

- 10am start, finish between 3pm and 4pm (depending on the job), with a break for tea, coffee and biscuits, and a lunch break around 12.30pm. You are welcome to come for all or part of a day.
- The only exception being when tasks are at Itchen Valley Country Park when volunteers are welcome to meet at the Woodland Café between 09:30 and 10am for tea or coffee and a chat before work starts.

## Volunteering at Lakeside Country Park

- A practical task is organised by a Countryside Officer every Wednesday morning at Lakeside Country Park.
- 10am to 12pm midday (summer) or 1pm (winter).

**Social Activities** At Christmas we have a quiz and buffet.

**Newsletter** A three-monthly newsletter is distributed to all volunteers with progress and updates, as well as upcoming volunteering opportunities.

**Uniform** Whilst on volunteering activities regular volunteers will be supplied with an official volunteer sweatshirt, polo shirt and if required – steel toe capped safety boots.

**Insurance** Volunteers are covered by the Borough's insurance policies whilst engaged in activities for the Borough

## Car Parking

- Itchen Valley Country Park operates a pay and display scheme, volunteers will be issued with free permits, on request, by the task leader
- Lakeside Country Park has free parking for four hours on a weekday. If you plan to stay after a task you will need a permit which you can get from the task leader.

## Enquiries

The Volunteer Co-ordinator

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## Leptospirosis

### What is leptospirosis?

Two types of leptospirosis infection can affect workers in the UK.

- Weil's disease. This is a serious and sometimes fatal infection that is transmitted to humans by contact with urine from infected rats.
- The Hardjo form of leptospirosis. This is transmitted from cattle to humans.

### What are the symptoms?

Both diseases start with a flu-like illness with a persistent and severe headache, which can lead to vomiting and muscle pains and ultimately to jaundice, meningitis and kidney failure. In rare cases the diseases can be fatal.

### Who is at risk?

- Anyone who is exposed to rats, rat or cattle urine.
- Farmers are now the main group at risk for both Weil's disease and cattle leptospirosis: the cattle form is a special risk for dairy farmers.
- Other people who have contracted leptospirosis in recent years include vets, meat inspectors, butchers as well as abattoir and sewer workers.
- Workers in contact with canal and river water are also at risk.

### How might I catch it?

The bacteria can get into your body through cuts and scratches and through the lining of the mouth, throat and eyes after contact with infected urine or contaminated water, such as in sewers, ditches, ponds and slow-flowing rivers. People working in dairy parlours are often in contact with cattle urine. Rat urine may also contaminate animal feed stuffs on farms.

### How can I prevent it?

- Wash cuts and grazes as soon as possible.
- Cover all cuts and broken skin with waterproof plasters before and during work.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking.

### What else should I do?

Report any illness to your doctor. Tell the doctor about your work. Leptospirosis is much less severe if it is treated promptly. If your doctor decides you have leptospirosis tell your employer, who must then report it to the Incident Contact Centre (Tel: 0845 300 9923).

# Lyme's Disease

## What is Lyme's Disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is spread to human by infected ticks. Ticks are small, spider-shaped insects that feed on the blood of mammals, including humans.

## What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom of Lyme disease is a red skin rash that looks similar to a bull's eye on a dart board. However, if Lyme disease is left untreated, further symptoms can follow including:

- a high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F) or over,
- muscle pain,
- joint pain and swelling, and
- neurological symptoms, such as temporary paralysis of the facial muscles.

A person with Lyme disease is not contagious because the infection can only be spread by the ticks. Lyme disease can be a difficult condition to diagnose, particularly in its latter stages, because its symptoms are also shared by other, more common conditions, such as infections, or arthritis. While the characteristic skin rash can provide an important clue, not everyone with Lyme disease will develop the rash.

## How might I catch it?

Lyme's disease is contracted from tick bites.

## How to remove a tick

- If you find a tick on your skin (or your child's skin), you should remove it by gently gripping it as close to the skin as possible, preferably using fine toothed tweezers, and pull steadily away from the skin.
- Do not use a lighted cigarette end, a match head, or volatile oils to force the tick out. Some veterinary surgeries and pet supply shops sell inexpensive tick removal devices, which may be useful if you are frequently exposed to ticks.

## How can I prevent it?

Currently, there is no vaccine available for Lyme disease. The best way to prevent getting Lyme disease is to be aware of the risks when you visit areas where

ticks are likely to be found, and to take sensible precautions. You can reduce the risk of infection by:

- being aware of ticks and which areas they normally live in,
- wearing appropriate clothing in tick-infested areas (a long-sleeve shirt and trousers tucked into your socks),
- using insect repellents,
- inspecting your skin for ticks, particularly at the end of the day, including your head, neck, and skin folds (armpits, groin, and waistband),
- making sure that your children's head and neck areas, including scalps, are properly checked,
- checking that ticks are not brought home on your clothes, and
- checking that pets do not bring ticks into your home in their fur.

## Photosensitive damage caused to skin by plants

Many species of Umbellifer, especially Wild Parsnip, can cause people to develop a severe skin irritation from contact with the sap. Umbellifer plants have chemicals that cause photosensitive damage to the skin when exposed to UV light on both sunny and cloudy days.

Umbellifer burns usually occur in streaks and elongated spots, reflecting where a damaged leaf or stem moved across the skin before exposure to sunlight. If the sap gets into the eyes, it may cause temporary or permanent blindness.

The problems with these plants can occur throughout the summer.

If working near these plants it is advised to keep your skin covered, if you think you have got sap on your skin the advice is to wash the area thoroughly and keep the affected area protected from UV light. If burns occur seek medical advice.



Pictured: Wild Parsnip