

Volunteering in Colchester's Countryside

WEEKEND PATROLLING RANGERS

BIG GARDEN GARDENERS

HEALTH WALK LEADERS

CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

VISITORS CENTRE ASSISTANTS

1. Weekend Patrolling Rangers

Patrolling rangers work on the weekends, usually one Saturday or Sunday a month of your choice. You will get the opportunity to help at any one of our sites in and around Colchester including High Woods Country Park, Wivenhoe, Colne Valley Local Nature Reserve, Hilly Fields, Gosbecks Archaeological Park and Cymbeline Meadows. Tasks include assisting visitors, patrolling, helping on guided walks and activities, carrying out practical and conservation work. You will achieve a lot and have fun too, with regular social and day trips out! **Patrolling volunteer rangers need to complete a short training programme. Dates are arranged throughout the year depending on demand.**

2. Big Garden Gardeners

Help maintain our unique organic fruit and vegetable garden in High Woods Country Park. Volunteers are welcome to attend any alternate Saturdays (You don't have to commit to every available Saturday) to work with the Community Gardener, creating vegetable beds and gardening. Any produce harvested can be taken home with you. Yum!!! In the autumn the work is more concentrated in the Essex apple orchard area. Community groups are welcome on Mondays and Tuesdays. No gardening experience needed. Dates are available from www.colchester.gov.uk/bigarden

3. Health Walk Leaders

Volunteers are needed on alternate Fridays and Sundays at High Woods Country Park, 11am - 12.20pm, to help lead these walks and motivate walkers. The walks are short and brisk, and a great form of low impact exercise, suitable for most people's abilities. About 20 participants attend each walk, all with various health needs. The Sunday stroll tends to be a more formal stroll around the Country Park. All volunteers receive full training, at no cost. Tea, Coffee, biscuits and a chat afterwards seems to be a very popular part of the activity!

4. Visitor Centre Assistants

Volunteers are needed on weekends throughout the year and some weekdays in the summer to help run the High Woods Country Park Visitors Centre. Working in the Centre you would have to deal with visitors enquiries, provide advice and help out in the shop. Full training is provided. We rely on volunteers to keep this popular Visitors Centre open.

5. Trainee Rangers

Specifically designed work experience for young people. Trident accredited.

If you are interested in becoming one of the above, please visit High Woods Country Park to speak to a member of staff or phone 01206 853588. Application forms are available from the visitors centre or by email countryside@colchester.gov.uk or www.colchester.gov.uk/article/3095/Getting-involved---volunteering or www.highwoodsvolunteers.org.uk/Task_Days

6. Conservation Volunteers

Conservation Volunteers help out on Mondays. Tasks take place on a variety of sites including High Woods Country Park. Jobs undertaken include coppicing, fencing, path work, wildflower management and much, much more. The tasks undertaken are very practical so volunteers need to be relatively fit and mobile. A wide variety of hand tools are used, and "on the job" training is given. We have the capacity for 8 -14 volunteers each Monday. The day starts at 10am at the Visitors Centre at High Woods Country Park or at approximately 10.15/10.20am on any one of our other 15 sites. A three month programme of task activities and location details is available in advance. Volunteers do not have to commit to coming out every Monday, the role is quite flexible. Bring along a packed lunch, bring or wear water proof footwear (steel toe caped boots if you have them). Be prepared for all weather conditions, the tasks still go ahead if it's raining. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided. The day finishes at approximately 4pm. Please be aware that toilet facilities are not available on all sites.

If you are interested in becoming a Colchester Countryside Volunteer Rangers, please ring 01206 853588 and ask to speak to one of the rangers. Monday Conservation Tasks are popular, so you may have to wait for a place. Please be patient.

Who are the Countryside Team?

The team comprises of Countryside Rangers, Community Gardener, Education and Visitor Centre Officer, Parks & Open Spaces Development Officer, Countryside Sites Manager and Seasonal Visitor Centre Assistant. All work for Colchester Borough Council's Parks and Recreation Service. As a volunteer you become a member of the Colchester Countryside Volunteer Rangers (CCVR), a constituted voluntary Friends Group that work in close partnership with the Countryside Team, and have done for many years.

The team is responsible for:

- Maintaining High Woods Country Park - 370 acre park with woodland, wetland, grassland and fishing lake.
- Maintaining 15 other sites including Salary Brook LNR (Local Nature Reserve), Gosbecks Archaeological Park, Cymbeline Meadows and Hilly Fields.
- Managing a team of volunteer rangers, which include; the visitors centre volunteers, health walk leaders and conservation volunteers. We now have over 80 regular volunteers. Over the last 10 years the volunteers have provided 8,000 volunteer days.
- Managing the High Woods Country Park Visitors Centre: The Centre is open 7 days a week in the summer and only weekends during winter (1st October to 31st March) Last year the centre had over 26,000 visitors.
- Providing environmental education programmes for visiting schools. Over 3,500 school children took part in our programmes last year.
- Providing children's activities during the school holidays: This includes making bird boxes in February, and other bookable activities throughout the term breaks.
- Managing the Health Walk programme: This volunteer led programme attracted over 300 walkers last year.
- Working with and supporting many local community groups.

Want to know more - have a look at their website: www.highwoodsvolunteers.org.uk

