



## How to set up a District-wide Wildlife Warden Scheme.



For more details of our **Action on Climate in Teignbridge Wildlife Warden Scheme**, go to [ACT Wildlife Warden scheme](#)



**How we can help organisations and individuals within and outside of our Teignbridge District.**  
We will share useful information, such as:

- what has worked and what hasn't worked;
- information about how we started and how we administer our scheme;
- essential information about insurance, Health and Safety training and Risk Assessment.
- how we carry out initial and more advanced training (especially during Covid restrictions);
- our detailed, step-by-step Project Documents - covering Hedge planting, Orchard creation and restoration, creating wildflower meadows and more.
- how we support ACT Wildlife Warden's Parish Projects - including finding and applying for funding, providing a bank account for funds and auditable accounts.
- how to fund a Coordinator, including contracts, Coordinator insurance and criteria for a Coordinator to be classified by HMRC as either self-employed or employed.
- **How to work closely with your Parish Councils, Town Councils, District Council or Unitary Authority.**

**What is a Wildlife Warden Scheme, using the ACT Wildlife Warden Scheme as a working example?**

- A Wildlife Warden Scheme is a Parish or community-based way of helping wildlife survive the Ecological Emergency and Climate Emergency, while increasing biodiversity.
- Wildlife Wardens don't need to have any special conservation/wildlife knowledge because we provide training in many different areas for our enthusiastic volunteers.
- We have found that many of our Wardens have brought very useful 'transferable skills' to the Scheme.
- The Scheme can provide wildlife with enormous benefits, but it needs good coordination, good recording systems, good communication and a **very friendly ethos**.

- Ideally there should be between one and five Wildlife Wardens in each Parish.
- Wildlife Wardens can be found by using local publicity (Parish Mags, Parish Facebook, local papers etc) or by asking Parish Councils or Wildlife Groups to nominate people.
- The Coordinator could be a volunteer, it could be a group of volunteers taking complimentary roles and working closely together, or it could be a paid person (if funding can be found).
- Providing Wildlife Wardens with Third Party insurance is important - this could be bought independently, or provided through the Parish Council, through the Wildlife Group, or through a District-wide or County-wide 'umbrella' organisation. It is important to make sure it covers all of your activities!
- Plan the launch carefully – if you get too much publicity, you may get dozens of enquiries and be unable to cope with replying.
- Having a brief application form will help find out people's skills and interests.
- It is strongly recommended that the organising body should first provide Introductory Training before any Wildlife Wardens start work; this **must** include good information (and feedback) on Risk Assessment (how to assess risk and how to use it when working) as well as good communication methods to reduce the possibility of conflict. Zoom (or similar) meetings are very useful for this, allowing for good discussion without lots of travel.
- More advanced training can be available on a range of wildlife areas and issues. Some, or most of this can be in the form of online training and resource lists.
- Several spread sheets are needed (we use Googledocs) so that it is easy to track people who have asked for information, which Parish they are from, when info was sent, when they applied and when they received introductory training.
- Anyone can use information from our website, but we would appreciate you telling us you are using it, as it helps us to monitor the success of the Scheme.
- Setting up a website or having an area in a website is really important.
- **It is important to have as much 'infrastructure' as possible set up before starting a scheme, as our experience shows that there is a strong demand and people want to have information and support available immediately, so that they can start work!**

**The main aims of our Scheme:** to have a network of Parish-based Wildlife Wardens (WWs) carrying out key objectives that:

- Increase local knowledge and love of wildlife (and in doing so, give joy and achievement).
- Strengthen habitats, habitat connectivity, the amount of biodiversity (flora and fauna) and species-numbers.
- Feed Parish-based information to the organising body on a district-wide basis - that will also be shared throughout the district.
- Strengthen connectivity between communities and their wildlife through shared projects.
- Increase knowledge of and participation in the Planning process, so that we can protect wildlife, enforce mitigation and Net Gain and provide corridors to prevent the loss of connectivity.

### **What is a Wildlife Warden?**

- Anyone interested in wildlife can become a Wildlife Warden.
- Wildlife Wardens need to love wildlife, but don't have to have specialist knowledge - the parent organisation can provide training and support.
- Wardens need a commitment to give their Parish's wildlife several hours of their time a month.
- They will look out for opportunities to protect, help and increase the wildlife in their Parish.
- They will sometimes need to work with other local organisations of different sizes, such as Parish and District Councils, Wildlife Trusts and Biodiversity Recording Groups.
- Although many Wildlife Wardens will be active, outdoor people who can walk/cycle around their Parish, there will also be opportunities for carrying out desk-based surveys, using existing records and information. Some IT skills would be needed for this.
- Wildlife Wardens who are good communicators could liaise with landowners and the public.
- Wardens who carry out surveys need to have good ID skills - but training can be provided, online/in the field.
- Wardens with really good ID skills may like to share their skills with others.
- Practical people can carry out habitat creation and management

- Wildlife Wardens from the same Parish will need to either work together as a team, or agree to divide up the area geographically, or undertake different aspects of work for wildlife – or all of these.
- Wildlife Wardens will often need to work with, or meet with neighbouring WWs so as to be effective in linking wildlife habitats.
- Members of existing Parish Wildlife Groups can act as their Parish's Wildlife Wardens, organising work and sharing their areas of expertise.
- Local schools and youth groups can become Wildlife Wardens too!
- A Wildlife Warden's Code (see next page) is useful to give guidance and avoid conflict.
- Wildlife Wardens need to send the organising group and the Parish or Town Council a brief, monthly account of what they have been doing in their Parish, so that they can all share successes and difficulties; if there are several WWs in a Parish, they will need to compile the report together.

### Who can run a Wildlife Warden Scheme?

- An existing organisation can start a WW Scheme - it will be easier if it already covers an entire District, City or County. It could be a Council, if it can get funding, but people often prefer a non-governmental organisation, such as a local nature partnership, climate group, wildlife trust or other wildlife charity.
- Wildlife Wardens can be Parish-based, or cover different areas.
- An organisation could be set up specifically to start a WW scheme
- Whichever route is taken, the organisation will need a band of volunteers to run the scheme and train the volunteers.
- They will either need funding for a Coordinator, or a dedicated voluntary Coordinator with **plenty** of time.
- The support group volunteers should include people with wildlife knowledge, organisational abilities, community contacts and a really strong belief that it can and should be done!
- Wildlife Wardens can either be found through the media, or by asking Parish Councils to find one or more. We have concentrated on finding WWs through the media; where we have contacted a Parish Council response has often been slow.
- A gradual introduction of the scheme is helpful, so that the organisers aren't overwhelmed with interested people at too early a stage.
- If Wildlife Wardens are asked to send the organising body and the Parish/Town Council, a short monthly report, then it will be easier to know how enthusiastic and committed the Wardens are. It will be even better if all of the WWs in one Parish can put together their reports.

### Areas where Wildlife Wardens could work:

1. **Parish Habitats** (any work on site must be with the permission of the owners or owning body, such as a Council or Trust): Possible tasks include -
  - Undertaking Parish Wildlife Surveys - working on the ground or surveys using online resources such as mapping, apps and websites).
  - Using existing information to draw up connectivity maps so that key wildlife routes and Nature Recovery Networks can be joined.
  - Recording species so that County Schemes (such as Devon Biodiversity Records Centre) benefit - and so that records can be shared from the County or National Scheme to the Parish.
  - Surveying to find new County Wildlife Sites.
  - Giving habitat management advice and/or help to interested land owners.
  - Helping with habitat management
  - Creating new habitats.
  - Undertaking the Actions in the local Parish Biodiversity Audits - if the WWs Parish has one, or wants one.
  - Working with and advising the Parish/Town Council on wildlife matters.
2. **Wildlife Gardening:**
  - Encouraging Organic Gardening, so people can see there are alternatives to chemicals.
  - Encouraging wildlife gardening with untidy areas that provide the best habitats.

- Promoting gardening campaigns such as Plantlife's Say No to the Mow.
- Sharing useful info via the parent organisation's Website.

### 3. Monitoring building and development

- Becoming familiar with the Local Plan, so as to be able to cite Planning Policies that protect wildlife.
- Checking details of Planning Applications when they are first submitted and informing the parent organisation if any response from the group may be needed.
- Checking developments as they progress for unexpected removal/damage to trees, hedges and other habitats.
- Checking TDCs Tree Preservation Order details online.

### 4. Working with young people in schools, youth clubs and other groups.

- This is really important, as so many young people spend little time out of doors. But to avoid WWs needing criminal record and disclosure and barring checks, please do not work with children unless a parent, club leaders or teaching staff are present.
- A very effective way of involving a local school or youth group is for it to **become** a Wildlife Warden. Schools have very dense curriculums so this should be very flexible and fit with other work. The school or youth group can then put together a wide variety of observations, records (maybe from the school grounds/wildlife area), artwork, poems, stories, songs and videos to send to the parent organisation. This would involve at least one member of staff doing the Introductory Training.

#### The Wildlife Wardens' Code. The organising group and its Wildlife Wardens aim to:

- Work **with** land owners to help wildlife
- Work **with** local Councils, planners and ecologists to ensure that developers do as little damage to wildlife as possible and provide the legal mitigation quickly.
- Carry out surveys and fieldwork, **but only** after getting all of the necessary permissions and making risk assessments.
- Carry out practical work (usually **without** using power tools of any sort, as more expensive insurance and more training is needed to cover this).
- Avoid arguments and **keep communication channels open**.
- **Work with everyone**, on the basis that most people want to learn, but might not want to feel that they are being taught.
- **Work safely** using their training to write Risk Assessments. If WWs are out working on their own, they should let a friend or partner know where they are and when they expect to finish – and ring them to let them know they are home again.
- **Planning Applications:** send the Wildlife Warden Coordinator details of any planning application that they are not happy with, with the reasons. They can, of course, object as an individual, but the organisation should, where necessary, put together and submit a combined submission, taking into account all aspects of the objection.

#### Communication:

We have realised that communicating well with our Wildlife Wardens is absolutely vital for:

- Their enjoyment of and their commitment to the Scheme
- Their continuing development and on-the-job training
- Making good working and personal relationships with other Wildlife Wardens
- Informing their Parish Councils and Communities what they are doing
- For informing our funders what we are achieving

Our main communication methods are as follows:

- **An email group**, which is used by a large number of Wildlife Wardens for discussing projects, habitat management, species identification – and for arranging visits to each other's Parishes.
- **A Facebook Page** – this is used for smaller topics of discussion, but is also used for news topics and lobbying opportunities.

- **The Wildlife Warden Newsletter:** our Coordinator puts this together on a monthly basis; it includes snippets of the month's wildlife and information about what has been going on. It is sent out by Mailchimp to ensure Privacy.
- **The Wildlife Warden Podcast** – one of our Wardens collects news from all of us and does a monthly podcast.
- **Emails:** we have offered .....@actionclimateteignbridge addresses to our WW. These can be for individual WWs, or a shared address for all of the WWs in a single Parish; the Wardens choose how they want to do it. Having special emails makes it easier for the Wardens to be contacted by their community – and protects the WW's personal accounts from spam and intrusive emails.
- **Zoom meetings:** these were introduced to make sure that the Scheme flourished during the pandemic – but they have also reduced the carbon footprint of the scheme and saved a lot of travel time. They are effective for several training courses – but of course less so for ID skills. Plant Identifying Courses include a lot of observation, crushing and smelling, feeling of textures etc. Freshwater invertebrates and bird recognition involve techniques, observation and listening. Our outdoor training courses have involved small groups, social distancing and other sensible precautions.
- **On Site meetings:** face-to-face meetings can be invaluable – and can almost always be outdoors. Parish-based groups are starting to organise informal, themed meetings which are open to all WWs. This is hugely rewarding, as our WWs start to take control.

### **Appendices:**

#### **Free Training will be provided in some of these areas - in the field, as Handouts, or online:**

- An Introductory Wildlife Warden Training Day that includes all topic areas as well as Risk Assessment. After completing this, the Wildlife Warden is ready to start.
- Identification of small mammals, invertebrates, birds/birdsong, flowers, trees and woods, freshwater wildlife
- Habitat management and connectivity: hedges, woodlands, meadows, verges, ponds
- Farming and wildlife - including working with farmers.
- Leading groups of volunteers - organising tasks, writing risk assessments for group work and working with groups.
- Wildlife Gardening - including management, projects, competitions, making wildlife boxes and creating Insecticide-free zones
- Carrying out desktop surveys - including finding historical information
- Working with Parish and District Councils, including Planning and Development Control.

### **Training details:**

- A group of people willing to do training sessions a year in their specialist subject is needed; this could be in the field, online, via handouts or Zoom meetings - or combinations of these methods.
- Training can be very informal - for example, putting WWs with similar projects in touch, so they can arrange visits and email/Zoom conversations.
- Training sessions in the field would usually be 10-1pm or 2-5pm.
  - Training would take place at suitable wildlife sites - reserves or farms, used with owner's permission.
  - Ideally sessions would be spread about the District, to reduce the carbon footprint of attending and to increase the local interest.
  - Wildlife Wardens will be put in contact with other WWs, and with others carrying out similar projects, helping people to car-share, share ideas and promote friendships.
  - Covid-careful methods would be used when necessary: handouts would be provided in advance, with WWs carrying out tasks on local wildlife sites and then having Zoom sessions together to discuss all aspects.

### **Coordinator's work description**

If you can get funding, it may be an advantage for some organisations to engage someone who is self-employed, especially if it is essentially a part-time post, as the small number of hours could make employing someone too time-consuming and complex.

The Coordinator needs to have a basic knowledge of practical ecology and be good at working with people of all ages (including local Councils and farmers) as well as being good at administrative work and record-keeping.

Support will be needed from members of the lead organisation, especially by providing local knowledge.

A6 month or 1-year contract, with 4 weeks' notice from either side may be most suitable.

The work is mainly:

- **Communication:** communicating with people who are, or want to be, Wildlife Wardens.
- **Organisation:** Keeping spread sheet records of WWs, Parishes, projects etc. Keeping records so that Privacy Laws are not infringed. Keeping resource lists available for WWs to use.
- **Organising Training Days and finding training venues** for a wide range of different training days: To do this, you will need to work with members of our Ecology Group, local ecologists/naturalists and members of local wildlife groups who all have relevant knowledge and have offered to help train our Wildlife Wardens. These could be nature reserves, open spaces or privately owned land.
- **Refreshments:** making sure there are refreshments for training days (this will depend on the Covid19 situation – while it continues, we may need to ask WWs to bring their own packed lunches).
- **Recording wildlife:** the coordinator would liaise with Devon (or a local) Biodiversity Record Centre, the organising group and other experts to find the best ways of recording species, habitats, planning issues and work done - and helping Wildlife Wardens to record it.
- **Record-keeping:** Keeping good records of applicants, applications, skills and projects is really important. We recommend Google docs and Google sheets for shared working/team work.
- **Publicity:** publicising achievements and appealing for more help through social media, newspapers, local TV and local radio. Making sure that photos and videos are taken (with necessary permissions) to use with Press Releases etc. Ideally there should be WWs in these, not just wildlife! Keeping a list of media contacts.
- **Making a very small budget stretch like elastic!**

#### Details to include in advert for Facebook and other media

- The ..... Group are looking for volunteers in all .... Parishes, who will help wildlife increase and survive climate change.
- Wildlife Wardens need to love wildlife, but don't have to have specialist knowledge - we will provide training.
- Most wildlife wardens will be active outdoor people who will walk/cycle around their Parish, however there will also be opportunities for people with IT skills, who can carry out desk-based surveys, using existing records and information.
- Wildlife Wardens who liaise with landowners and the public need to be good communicators.
- Those who carry out surveys need to have good ID skills - but we can help with training.
- People with good writing skills would also be valuable.
- Some of those with good ID skills may be good at teaching others!

This leaflet was written by Audrey Compton - ACT Lead for Ecology  
and Co-lead of Food, Farming, Forestry and Fisheries.  
It is constantly evolving!



[ACTion on Climate in Teignbridge](#) - is a CIC registered in England, number 12278894.



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ACT supports Teignbridge District Council, town and parish councils, community groups and residents to make the district carbon neutral, sustainable, resilient and healthy.