



### **Natural Talent Case Study**

**Name:** Nia Howells

**Age:** 25

**Traineeship:** Hemiptera as indicators of grassland management and quality

**Dates of traineeship:** January 2018 – January 2019



### **About your traineeship**

**Can you give an overview of your Natural Talent UK traineeship? (What organisations are you placed with/type of work you will be involved in?)**

I will be based at the National Museum Wales, Cardiff, within the Natural Sciences Department. I will be carrying out fieldwork at various sites, including an open cast coal mine, and learning how to identify leafhoppers and planthoppers down to species level as part of a research project investigating how we can better use this group of insects to monitor changes in grassland. I will also participate in public engagement events and practical habitat management activities.

**Why did you apply for a Natural Talent traineeship?**

I have grown up with a passion for conservation and have pursued a career in the environmental sector since graduating from Cardiff University. This traineeship seemed like a fantastic opportunity to gain the skills needed to enter a career in conservation. The partnership with both TCV with their links to working with communities and the National Museum of Wales with their access to taxonomic collections attracted me to this position.

**What kind of employment were you in before undertaking a Natural Talent traineeship?**

Before undertaking my Natural Talent traineeship, I was working as a customer assistant at Lidl. Over the past summer I gained experience working for Acer Ecology during a 6-week internship. I have also undertaken bat surveys on a casual basis.

**What voluntary experience had you done prior to your traineeship?**

I spent my professional training year volunteering for WWT as a practical reserves assistant. I have also volunteered doing practical habitat management for my local wildlife trust and as a seabird research assistant for the RSPB. I currently volunteer for the Spirit of Llynfi Woodland Community Project where I take part in planning projects for the site, conducting practical habitat management and leading nature walks.

**What are you most looking forward to during your traineeship?**

I am looking forward to all the opportunities to learn new skills and become a better conservationist and biological recorder with the chance to meet and learn from experts. I love science and I'm looking forward to taking part in some interesting research that may affect the way we monitor and manage grasslands. I'm looking forward to hopefully finding some interesting and rare species and getting out in the field.



**What skills do you anticipate this traineeship will give you?**

I anticipate gaining a well-rounded skillset needed for a career in conservation including a highly specialised set of identification skills which few possess. Additionally, I hope to enhance my surveying skills, project management skills, social media skills and public engagement skills.

**How do you feel your traineeship benefits the conservation sector in the United Kingdom?**

Leafhoppers and planthoppers are a wonderfully diverse and abundant group of insects in grassland. Very few people however choose to study them as they're so small and you need to dissect them to identify them down to species level. However, the information we can gain from these hoppers about the effects on climate change and how to manage our grasslands means that we are missing an opportunity to improve our knowledge of these important grassland indicators. This traineeship will help me gain the expertise needed to study these creatures, gain valuable information on grassland management and hopefully pass on my interest and identification skills to other conservationists.

**What career path do you see yourself pursuing and how will this experience help you?**

My goal is to ultimately gain a working knowledge of wildlife monitoring and habitat management schemes to help create and improve conservation strategies to countermand the rapid decline of wildlife in the UK. I am also interested in the wider policies governing conservation and how scientific data can inform policy decisions.

I believe this opportunity will allow me to gain the skills needed to achieve my goal of not only working in the conservation sector, but of creating a meaningful impact on wildlife populations in the UK. I am passionate about reversing the rapid decline of British species and restoring the ecosystems they live in.