



Natural Talent Case Study

Name: Joanna Lindsay

Age: 23

Traineeship: Marvellous Mud Snails, Buglife Scotland

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?)

My traineeship is with Buglife Scotland in Stirling, working on their Marvellous Mud Snails project which began last year. This is largely a public engagement project and so I will be involved in a lot of outreach and educational events, including working regularly with local primary schools and getting people to love our pond snails and other freshwater species! As pond mud snails are a rare species, a major part of the project is to conserve and expand the current populations in Scotland. We will be doing this through surveying the seven current populations, creating habitat management plans and running a captive breeding programme with local schools and communities, after which the snails will be released into newly-created habitats. As well as assisting with the project I will be able to work on my own development; improve my knowledge of freshwater habitats, build up my invertebrate identification skills and from time-to-time work with TCV and the other trainees on their projects too!

Why did you apply for a Natural Talent traineeship?

Following my degree in Zoology from Glasgow Uni, I knew that conservation work was what I wanted to get into. Having volunteered with various organisations during uni and after graduating, I needed something that would give me that little extra push into the conservation sector and allow me to gain really valuable experience in a professional context; I'd heard that the Natural Talent scheme was fantastic for that! As a partnership between TCV and Buglife this traineeship affords such great flexibility. It will not only allow me to delve deeper into a specific taxonomic group and refine my skills in that area, I will also have opportunities to work with a variety of people and organisations to improve my knowledge of conservation and the natural world as a whole! In particular, I chose the Marvellous Mud Snails project as I was excited by the opportunity to contribute to the conservation of a rare species whilst also getting out into communities to inspire and educate the public.

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

Prior to my traineeship I worked in a variety of retail and customer service jobs whilst as university, as well as working part-time as an assistant editor with Glasgow-based wildlife photographer, David Palmar, on a regular basis for most of last year.



What voluntary experience had you done prior to your traineeship?

During university I was a voluntary member of two wildlife research expeditions: one to Madagascar with Operation Wallacea for a month and another to the Peruvian Amazon for two months with the University of Glasgow Exploration Society and CREES. On these expeditions I gained really valuable survey and data handling skills. After graduating, I was a regular volunteer at the RSPB visitor centre in Lochwinnoch for 7 months where I engaged with visitors and got families involved in 'wildlife explorer' activities which was great fun! I was able to develop my bird ID skills and gain my first experience of public engagement, as well as writing a couple of blogs for them. Then, last summer, I undertook a three-month residential ranger internship with the Scottish Wildlife Trust at their Loch of the Lowes reserve in Perthshire. I had a great time at Lowes – it was a fantastic chance for me to gain the practical conservation skills which I'd been lacking, whilst also building on my previous surveying and public engagement experience all in a stunning part of Scotland!

What are you most looking forward to during your traineeship?

I am hugely looking forward to working with such a variety of knowledgeable and like-minded people in the conservation sector. I love being able to learn from the people around me and this traineeship is perfect for that. I am really keen to build on the very brief experiences I have working with children and learn how to run exciting educational sessions – hopefully by the end I'll have inspired a new generation of young conservationists! I am looking forward to improving my ecological knowledge of freshwater habitats and invertebrates in general. I also just can't wait to get out in the great outdoors, get stuck into some survey work and explore the fascinating world of freshwater bugs!

What skills do you anticipate this traineeship will give you?

After a year in this traineeship I am going to come away with an enormous variety of skills. I am hoping to build my confidence in public engagement and public speaking, learn how to effectively plan and run events, coordinate with other organisations and gain experience running workshops with children and volunteers. I will build up a strong knowledge of freshwater habitats and species and refine my identification skills. I am also going to be involved in writing habitat management plans for the pond mud snail sites, which will be a completely new skill as I have never done this before. I will also learn some administrative skills such as how to manage budgets and write risk assessments.

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

The mud snails project definitely benefits the UK conservation sector through enhancing the profile of a rare and generally unheard-of species and their small freshwater habitats, which are often overlooked. Much of the project will contribute to the 2020 challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity through managing current and creating new wetland habitats, as well as connecting people with their natural environment and getting them to appreciate the importance of invertebrates. On a wider scale, the traineeship will allow me to contribute



personally to conservation in the UK by developing my own skills and knowledge, which I will hopefully continue to put to good use following the traineeship!

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

I know I definitely want to continue working in conservation, but as for following a specific path within this sector I am still not completely certain. When applying for this role I was strongly considering taking the route into public engagement/environmental education and so the traineeship will be excellent for giving me more experience in this area and helping me decide if that is something I definitely want to do. However, I will be exposed to so many different aspects of conservation work throughout the year that I may well find something else I love and change my mind! Whatever happens, I am excited for the following year to see how my own ideas and interests develop and to hopefully build a clearer picture of where I want to be this time next year!