

Student Volunteering Opportunities with the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

Who we are

The **Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI)** is a 4-year partnership project which works with local organisations and volunteers to control invasive non-native species across Northern Scotland, for the benefit of our native wildlife and communities. SISI is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

What we do

Our project is working to control key invasive non-native species (those species alien to Scotland and causing harm) and restore habitats. Our target species include five invasive plants (Giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, American skunk cabbage and White butterbur) and one mammal – the invasive American mink.



Survey & monitoring of plants and rivers



Chemical treatment of invasive plants



Pulling of invasive plants by hand



Monitoring for and trapping mammals



Education and outreach events

While volunteering with us you can assist with a range of these tasks and we will provide you with the relevant training you need to do the work including; survey techniques, application of pesticide, leading groups, for example. Our staff are experienced and knowledgeable, and you will be able to learn much from working alongside them.

Why volunteer

Volunteering while you are a student can go a long way to improving your employability and make you stand out from the crowd when you graduate and are looking for employment.

- Gain relevant skills, training and real-life work experience which will enhance your academic studies
- Show your commitment to your chosen career path
- Meet new people and develop inter-personal skills such as communication, team-building, leadership, community engagement - all great additional skills to boost your CV
- Get a change of scene from your studies and improve your physical and mental well-being through both spending time outdoors and taking on a new challenge
- Do your bit! Contribute to the conservation of our natural environment and have fun doing it!

What we can offer

Volunteering with us will provide an excellent opportunity to gain practical experience, work within a major conservation project, work with volunteers and learn specifically about invasive species and more generally about countryside management. This would suit someone looking to enter a career in the conservation/environmental sector or someone who has an interest in the countryside, ecology, or conservation or anyone who is simply looking to get outdoors, meet people and make a difference to their local environment.

Individual volunteering. Our team welcomes individuals who want to volunteer and help our project carry out practical conservation work. This can take the form of ad hoc volunteering when you have the time and if you prefer to gain experience in a specific activity, or a more formal placement over a set period to gain a variety of experiences. Placements may be a regular one-day-a-week over a period or a block placement during holidays.

Research Projects. We are happy to discuss supporting student projects, research work and practical coursework etc. If this is something you think we could support you with, please get in touch.

Group volunteer activities. We can offer opportunities for existing student groups, societies or classes to volunteer with the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative. These take the form of Conservation Volunteer Days and are a great practical experience where you will gain knowledge and skills, connect with the local environment, get to know each other better and have some fun while giving something back.

Anything else! We'd love to hear from you if you have any skills or hobbies you think would be beneficial and would help support our project. So, if you are an avid photographer or drone pilot, blogger, vlogger, videographer, artist, kayaker or social media guru – get in touch!

Where?

Our project area includes northern Perthshire, Angus, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Highland and we can offer activities throughout these areas. Work placement opportunities are most likely to be available near to our partner offices and staff which are;

- **Tayside** – Blairgowrie, Brechin
- **Deeside** – Aboyne
- **Aberdeenshire** – Huntly, Keith
- **Moray** – Elgin, Forres, Aberlour
- **Inverness-shire** – Beaulieu, Contin
- **Ross-shire** – Gairloch
- **West Sutherland** - Scourie

When?

Project seasonality means that opportunities are mostly available between **April and October**. However, there are likely to be opportunities to get involved in our mink monitoring work or help at events all year round, and some occasional winter conservation work may also be available.

Our normal volunteering days are during the week; however, we are happy to undertake group activities at the weekends and there may be some outreach work and events at weekends that volunteers could assist with.

What you need to know

Any protective gear and equipment will be provided, and we can even usually help you out with a pair of wellies or waterproofs, if you let us know beforehand. Please always bring your own lunch and drink.

Unfortunately, we cannot offer any paid work experience placements, nor are we able to offer any travel expenses.

Our work and offices can be at remote locations, so we will try and accommodate lifts for those who don't have access to a car. For individuals or small numbers of volunteers our project staff may be able to arrange a meeting place at the nearest town. For groups activities, check with us to see if there is suitable activity location that can be reached by public transport.

Safety & Insurance

The activities are all fully risk assessed and your leader will carry out a safety induction at the start of your placement / a briefing at the start of the activity. All our staff are qualified first aiders and first aid kits will be on site. The organisation hosting the activity has the relevant insurance in place to cover your volunteering with us.

Find out more

To find out more about our project please visit our website, or to discuss a student volunteering opportunity please get in contact with our Volunteer and Communications Officer for a chat. If you have any other general queries, please email us sisi@nature.scot and we'll be happy to help you.

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We'd love to hear from you!
www.invasivespecies.scot

