

Student Volunteering Opportunities with the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative

Who we are

The [Scottish Invasive Species Initiative](#) is a partnership project working with local organisations and volunteers to control invasive non-native species in Northern Scotland for the benefit of native wildlife and local communities.

What we do

We work to control key invasive non-native species (those species alien to Scotland and causing harm) and restore natural habitats. Our target species are four main invasive plants (giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and American skunk cabbage) and one mammal – the 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 you can get involved in a range of tasks. We will provide you with the training you need to do the work including, for example, in survey techniques, the application of pesticide and in leading groups. 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. You will:

- Gain relevant skills, training and real-life work experience which will enhance your academic studies
- Show personal commitment to your chosen career path
- Meet new people and develop inter-personal and communication skills in areas such as team-building, leadership and community engagement - all great additional areas to boost your CV
- Get a change of scene from your studies and improve your physical and mental well-being through 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 as part of a major conservation project, work with volunteers and learn specifically about invasive species and more generally about countryside management. This would suit someone who is looking to enter a career in the conservation sector or has



an interest in the countryside, ecology, or conservation or anyone 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 us carry out practical conservation work. This can take the form of taking part in ad hoc sessions when you have time to give 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 through regular e.g. one-day-a-week participation 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 might be of interest then please get in touch.

Group volunteering

We can offer opportunities for student groups, societies or classes to volunteer with the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative. These take the form of Conservation Volunteer Days which offer 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. You can view the project area map [here](#). Work placement opportunities, if available, are most likely to be near to our partner offices and staff who are in:

- **Tayside** – Perth
- **Angus** - Brechin
- **Deeside** – Aboyne
- **Aberdeenshire** – Huntly
- **Moray** – Forres, Aberlour
- **Inverness-shire** – Beauly, Contin
- **West Sutherland** - Scourie

When?

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

Our normal volunteering activities take place during the week. However, we do sometimes offer weekend activities depending on demand and staff availability.

What you need to know

We provide required protective gear and equipment. We can also 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 travel expenses.

Our work and offices can be at remote locations, so we try to accommodate lifts for those who do not have access to a car. For individuals or small numbers of volunteers our staff may be able to arrange a meeting place at the nearest town. You can check with us to see if there are activity locations reachable by public transport.

Safety & Insurance

Our activities are risk assessed and your leader will carry out a safety induction at the start of your volunteering activity or placement. 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 – from there we will have the right person get back in touch.

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We'd love to hear from you!

www.invasivespecies.scot

