

Volunteer Policy & Procedures

Staff Policy and Procedures Manual for Volunteers

Shubenacadie Provincial Wildlife Park

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1. About the Provincial Wildlife Park

1.1 Welcome!

Welcome to the Provincial Wildlife Park Volunteer Program. You are one of the individuals who wish to volunteer their time and talent to help make our Park a safe, fun and educational experience for thousands of visitors each year. It is our desire to provide you with a challenging and rewarding experience that is both beneficial to you, the Park and our clientele.

Being a volunteer is an opportunity to help show the importance of wildlife, habitat and conservation to others. As a volunteer you provide support to enhance the operations of our facility and the enjoyment of our clientele.

1.2 About the Provincial Wildlife Park

The facility was opened initially in 1954 by Dr. Wilfred Creighton, Deputy Minister of Lands and Forest, as a wildlife rehabilitation centre. The Park's summer season is from May 15th to October 15th with daily hours of operation from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm, and is open for the remainder of the year on weekends only from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. The Park has expanded in the last number of years with emphasis on improving the facilities and educating those that visit the Park. The enclosures have been enlarged and improved to provide a more natural and open environment. The interpretive and enclosure signs provide visitors with information about the wildlife species. New diet preparation facilities and programs have been developed and implemented in the past few years. As well we have a 10-hectare picnic park and playground for our visitors to enjoy during their visit to the facility. Park staff are currently involved in Department research of the Mainland moose demise and several specific species relocation programs. Visitors can enjoy mainly indigenous and a few exotic wildlife species here at the Provincial Wildlife Park.

1.2.1 About the Greenwing Legacy Interpretive Centre

Construction on the Greenwing Legacy Interpretive Centre started in November 2005, as the marsh ponds were being shaped by equipment. This is a joint venture between Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Provincial and Federal Governments and many private sector sponsors. The object of the project is to increase and promote Ducks Unlimited presence in wetland education, conservation, outreach and to increase awareness of the importance of wetlands.

In the autumn of 2005, the pond area was drained, excavated and allowed to remain “dry but muddy” until the spring of 2006. The exposed mud flats allowed buried emergent plant seeds to germinate and establish along the riparian zone, on the islands and within the shallows. Water levels were gradually raised, a couple of inches at a time, allowing emergent plants to establish, to the desired depth of 18inch. The facility and trails were opened to the public on August 19th, 2006.

1.3 Mission Statements

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources:

“To build a better future for Nova Scotians through responsible natural resource management.”

Ducks Unlimited Canada:

“To conserve wetlands and associated habitats for the benefit of North American waterfowl which in turn will provide healthy environments for wildlife and people.”

Provincial Wildlife Park:

“To provide quality wildlife based education and recreation for Park visitors.”

2. Introduction to Volunteering

2.1 Background

Volunteers have been involved in many aspects of the Provincial Wildlife Park operation. Traditionally, the Park has attracted individuals with a wide range of backgrounds and skills, a shared commitment to animal care, the environment and a desire to help the Provincial Wildlife Park achieve its goals.

The Provincial Wildlife Park volunteer program brings substantial benefit to

- Our volunteers by providing them with an opportunity for direct involvement in the day to day operation of the Provincial Wildlife Park
- Our Park by bringing knowledge and skills into the facility that complements our operations and the visitors' experience
- The wider community by providing a fun, educational experience for our visitors

The Park recognizes and values the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the Park and the volunteer and strives to provide a volunteer program which both

- Supports the Provincial Wildlife Park
- Meets the expectations and needs of the individual volunteers

2.2 Definition

The Provincial Wildlife Park defines volunteering as:

- Volunteering is the process of performing work by people at the facility without being motivated by financial or material gain.

2.3 Job Shadowing

- This Policy does not apply to individuals who do not wish to participate with the work but rather observe to seek a better understanding of job tasks and responsibilities as part of a particular course or program from an educational facility.
- Such individuals will submit a request through their teacher to the Park Manager.
- Such individuals will not require OHS training.

2.4 General Principles

The Provincial Wildlife Park adheres to these principles of volunteering

- Volunteering benefits the facility, community and the volunteer
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering is a commitment that is unpaid and not undertaken for the receipt of salary, pension, government allowance or honorarium
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- Acknowledging that volunteers are of equal status and deserve the same treatment and respect as paid employees, and that the Park can expect the same standards from its volunteers as it expects of its paid employees
- Stating and acknowledging the contribution of volunteers in Provincial Wildlife Park documentation, including hours worked
- Providing opportunity for the volunteer to develop skills and experience

- Providing support for the volunteer, in the form of clear policy guidelines, training, recognition and support, and the provision of references if required

3. Recruitment

3.1 Recruitment Policy

The recruitment policy of the Provincial Wildlife Park is driven by its purpose, which is to fulfill the needs of the Park and the expectations of the volunteers.

The Provincial Wildlife Park will recruit volunteers fairly, on the basis of merit. That is, the person who is best qualified for the job will get the volunteer position. The Park applies the principles of equal opportunity to its recruitment process and will not withhold a volunteer on the basis of age, race, language, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious or spiritual beliefs.

The Education Coordinator, Head Interpreter and Park Foreman will determine if volunteer opportunities exist within their specific area of responsibility at the facility. If such opportunity has been identified, a proposal will be developed by the individual with details including:

1. Number of volunteer opportunities and how these support Park programs
2. Duties, expectations, duration of position, and time commitment
3. Names of staff who will act as Volunteer Supervisors
4. Training requirements for Health and Safety, orientation and to increase knowledge to meet minimum Park standards
5. Required safety equipment and personal protective equipment
6. Associated costs with placement of the volunteer(s) such as uniform, materials, supplies, etc.
7. Any other information pertinent to the request

This proposal is to be forwarded to the Park Manager for review and approval. Once approved, volunteer applications will be screened in an effort to fill the approved vacancies.

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed by the Park Manager or designate prior to placement. Placement and level of involvement will be determined on an individual basis at the time of the interview.

Prospective volunteers are matched for their suitability to existing position descriptions and volunteer vacancies. The selection criteria for each position depends upon the particular skills needed to fulfill the duties of that position. Commitment to the goals and values of the Provincial Wildlife Park will be looked upon favorably, as will the ability to work as part of a team, and the acceptance of the relevant roles and responsibilities.

3.2 Qualifications

All prospective volunteers must be at least eighteen years of age. Depending on assigned tasks, volunteers may need to have all of the following completed, at their own expense, prior to being considered for a volunteer position at the Provincial Wildlife Park:

- Criminal Record check
- Child Abuse Registry check (DUC Centre volunteers only)

WHIMIS training will be provided by our OHS Trainers at no cost.

3.3 Position Descriptions

The Provincial Wildlife Park policy is to meet with prospective volunteers to determine their particular skills, interests and expectations in regard to the needs of the Park. If there is a suitable position available, the volunteer is assigned to a staff member who then becomes responsible for their day-to-day supervision.

The Park Manager or designate will develop a Volunteer Position Description before a volunteer can be assigned to a staff member. This will include:

- The volunteer's position title
- A list of basic tasks involved

- Desirable skills required to carry out the position
- Duration of position and time commitment;
- Name of Volunteer Supervisor

The Park Manager will determine whether the requested position is appropriate for the volunteer and does not breach the Provincial Wildlife Park volunteer policy.

3.4 Application

Upon contacting the Provincial Wildlife Park, all potential volunteers will be directed to the Park's web site or e-mailed a copy of the Park's Volunteer Application form and the Volunteer Waiver of Liability form. All volunteers are to complete these forms and mail them to the Park prior to meeting with the Park Manager or designate to discuss the Park's recruitment policy, volunteer vacancies and their interest in volunteering.

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Determine the applicant's future plans, goals and ambition
- Discuss any particular expectations regarding volunteering
- Evaluate the applicant's relevant education, experience or background
- Determine the applicant's availability
- Determine if applicable volunteer vacancies are available
- Discuss the areas in which volunteers can work and the type of work they can do
- Talk about expectations from volunteers

- Ask about any special needs or limitations of the volunteer of which the Park needs to be aware
- Discuss the applicant's suitability for the Provincial Wildlife Park and the Park's suitability for him/her

3.5 Reference Checks

If the Park Manager deems it appropriate, the volunteer may be asked for work or character references and certificates before placement at the Provincial Wildlife Park.

3.6 Placement

Once the volunteer has chosen their preferred available voluntary position and the Park Manager agrees that it is a good choice for their skills and experience, a meeting will be arranged between the Manager, volunteer and Volunteer Supervisor for that position. Required Health and Safety training requirements will be confirmed at this meeting. Ability to deliver such training will be a factor in determining the start date of the volunteer term. Days and times of voluntary work will be confirmed at this meeting, which will be restricted to the Volunteer Supervisor's scheduled days of work. If both parties wish to proceed with this particular position, the Park Manager will initiate the induction process.

3.7 Induction

Once a volunteer has been placed, the volunteer's rights and responsibilities will be discussed with them by the Volunteer Supervisor. Volunteers are to be given a tour of the facility and introduced to all available members of the staff. Staff will be informed of the volunteer's duties and with whom the volunteer will be working.

3.8 Probation

All voluntary appointments are to be appraised by the Volunteer Supervisor after fifty hours and then again after one hundred hours, or at intervals as determined by the Park Manager. If either the volunteer or the Volunteer Supervisor feel that the appointment is not working, after consultation with the Park Manager, a new position may be found or the volunteer may be asked to wait until a suitable new position becomes available. The Park Manager reserves the right to terminate a volunteer's participation if so deemed necessary.

3.9 Training

The Provincial Wildlife Park will provide adequate information, training and assistance to ensure that the duties assigned can be performed safely and effectively. Supplies and equipment will be provided as necessary. Volunteers are given an orientation as well as in-house training. Operation Manual(s) applicable to the area of work must be fully understood by the volunteer. The Volunteer Supervisor will provide feedback on performance, while respecting the skills, dignity and individual needs of the volunteer, and do his/her best to adjust to these individual requirements but within the volunteer position description. The Park is receptive to feedback from the volunteer in regard to the volunteer's experience within the Park. The volunteer will be treated as part of the team but must understand that time spent volunteering does not entitle the volunteer to preferential treatment nor assurances of future employment nor any other benefit.

4. Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

4.1 Rights of Volunteers

Provincial Wildlife Park volunteers have a right to:

- Receive adequate information and a clear job description of what is expected of them for particular tasks
- Be assigned a suitable project, task or job and to say no to tasks they are unable to do or feel are not safe

- To have on the job supervision provided by a designated staff member
- Receive respect and support from co-workers, as well as recognition and feedback from their Volunteer Supervisor, for their work
- Request a reference from their Volunteer Supervisor when applying for a job.
- Provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations regarding their job
- Have their personal details kept confidential
- Work in a safe and healthy environment
- Be provided with suitable tools and materials

4.2 Responsibilities of Volunteers

Volunteers must agree to:

- Be reliable and commit to regular days and times of work so tasks can be planned accordingly;
- Keep the Volunteer Supervisor informed of changes to contact information and availability
- Be responsible to and consult with their Volunteer Supervisor
- Ask for support when needed
- Abide by the Provincial Wildlife Park policies and directives;
- Appreciate and respect the confidential nature of information that may be acquired during the course of duties

- Discuss any grievances or problems with the Volunteer Supervisor. If they remain unresolved, contact the Park Manager
- Notify the Volunteer Supervisor ,or the Park Manager, if they are no longer able to volunteer at the Park
- Show enthusiasm, loyalty and belief in the work of the Provincial Wildlife Park
- Agree to work in a safe and healthy manner and not jeopardize the health and safety of self and others
- Inform the Park Manager of any pre-existing medical conditions or special needs that might affect the volunteer's ability to undertake certain tasks
- Report any injury immediately to the Volunteer Supervisor

5. Provincial Wildlife Park commitment to volunteers

5.1 Volunteer awards and acknowledgements

Volunteers who have provided long-term support to the Provincial Wildlife Park will be recognized for their efforts. Once a volunteer has given one hundred hours of service he/she shall receive a certificate and gift chosen by the Park Manager.

5.2 Confidentiality

All volunteer's personal information will be treated with confidentiality. Resumes, forms and other personal information will be kept, by the Park Manager in the Park Office. Resumes, application forms and other relevant information may be shared with the Volunteer Supervisor in order to decide a volunteer's suitability for a position.

5.3 Health and Safety

The Provincial Wildlife Park is committed to providing a safe work place for all staff and volunteers. In return, the Park asks that volunteers accept their responsibility to work safely. This means working intelligently within set guidelines, policy and procedures.

All volunteers will be required to use the time clock for time management and to indicate their presence in that building or area of the facility. This is especially important in case of an emergency or fire. To increase safety, volunteers must always work under supervision and should never be left unattended.

Volunteers must comply with the Park's smoking policy.

Volunteers are to immediately report any injury to the Volunteer Supervisor.

6. Equal Opportunity & Harassment

6.1 Equal Opportunity

The Provincial Wildlife Park is an equal opportunity employer. The Park respects diversity and difference and aims to treat every employee, volunteer and volunteer applicant as an individual, not as a stereotype.

Volunteers will not be disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their age, career status, disability, industrial activity, lawful sexual activity, race, religious belief or activity, gender identity, sexual orientation or personal association with someone who has (or is assumed to have) one of these characteristics.

6.2 No Discrimination or Harassment

The Provincial Wildlife Park believes that all employees and volunteers should be able to work in a supportive environment free of any discrimination or harassment. The Provincial Wildlife Park will not tolerate harassment of any kind by or to volunteers or staff.

The Provincial Wildlife Park will treat any reports of discrimination or harassment seriously and will investigate such complaints promptly, confidentially and impartially as per the Respectful Workplace Policy.

In this work place there is to be no harassment: sexual, racial, ability related, or any other type. This means no behavior based on sex, race, age, or other protected attribute that is:

- Not wanted, not asked for, and not returned
- Likely to cause a hostile or uncomfortable workplace by humiliating, seriously embarrassing, offending, or intimidating someone.

If a volunteer feels someone is treating them unfairly, discriminating against them or harassing them, the matter should immediately be brought to the attention of the Volunteer Supervisor.

7. Medical, Liability and Accident Coverage

Volunteers will have to sign a Volunteer Waiver of Claim form upon starting their services with the Provincial Wildlife Park. Signing of this form indicates that the volunteer has read, understood and accepts the document.

8. Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Workplace Policy

Volunteers are prohibited from purchasing, transferring, using or possessing illicit drugs, alcohol or prescription drugs in any way that is illegal. This policy ensures a drug and alcohol-free workplace in order to provide a safe, healthy and productive work environment for all volunteers and employees.

9. Dress Code

Volunteers are expected to comply with the dress code in place for all staff. Wear clothing appropriate for the weather and working outdoors. Volunteers will need rubber boots for working at the Greenwing Legacy Interpretive Centre and steel-toed boots for working in the rest of the facility. Further details will be provided by the Volunteer Supervisor.

10. Fire Safety

In the event of a fire, or discovery of smoke, volunteers are to notify the nearest staff member immediately. No volunteer may risk personal safety by trying to put out the fire.

Should alarms go off, all volunteers should follow staff to the nearest exit and evacuate the building immediately. No attempt should be made to retrieve personal belongings or to complete tasks. All volunteers should then wait with staff outside the building until everyone has been accounted for. No one should leave the vicinity until such time.

11. Security Codes

Volunteers will not be issued security codes for facility buildings or safes unless so approved by the Park Manager.

12. Handling of Cash

Volunteers will not be permitted to perform credit and debit card transactions, handle cash or be placed in a position of control over cash.

13. Attendance Management

Quality of service to the public is affected by work performance, including attendance of volunteers. It is important that volunteers report to work regularly, be punctual in returning from breaks. It is recognized that from time to time volunteers may be absent from work due to disabling illness, injuries or other.

When a volunteer, for any reason, is not able to attend work as scheduled, that volunteer has the responsibility to call and speak directly with his/her Volunteer Supervisor. Such notification should be provided as soon as possible in accordance with facility requirements. Only in extenuating circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, is it acceptable that someone other than the volunteer make the contact as outlined above. The Manager/Volunteer Supervisor is responsible for returning the volunteer's phone call.

The volunteer must be familiar with and follow the notification process for his/her work area as stated in the applicable Operations Manual.

14. Use of Tools and Equipment

Volunteers are not permitted to use power tools and/or equipment that poses a potential hazard unless specific training is received and/or prior experience was obtained. The volunteer is to be determined competent by the Foreman in the use of the specific power tools or equipment. Applicable manufacturers Operation Manuals will be provided to the volunteer prior to using specific power tools and equipment.