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- About us
- How you can help
- Living Seas
- Wildlife & Reserves
- Discover & Learn
- What's on
- Get Involved
- Advice

News

What we do

Who we are

Blogs

History

Funders & Funding

Contact Us

Make a Complaint

Publications

[Back to news listings](#)

Traineeship opens path to wild career for six passionate people

Wednesday 13th March 2019



Thanks to funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund's Nature Skills NI Programme, six passionate and talented people are celebrating their success having completed a year-long paid traineeship with Ulster Wildlife.

Throughout their action-packed year, the trainees gained a wide range of specialist skills and training to help secure a future career protecting our wildlife and wild places, from hands-on work laying hedges and controlling invasive species to assisting with marine and terrestrial conservation events throughout the country.

The trainees also learnt how to identify and survey our diverse local wildlife, from birds and butterflies to basking sharks, and helped to inspire people of all ages about nature on their doorstep, from leading nature walks and education workshops to delivering snorkel safaris throughout the summer.

As well as receiving training and mentoring in-house, the trainees undertook certified training courses, workshops with leading nature experts and obtained work experience with other organisations in the sector such as Keep Northern

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Ireland Beautiful and National Trust. In between their very busy work schedule, trainees also achieved a new Lantra accreditation in Natural Heritage Skills.

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The range of qualifications and training I've gained will help me further in pursuing a career in the conservation sector - from chainsaw training to ongoing species identification skills in the field.

Speaking about the traineeship Eiblin McGeever, from Donegal, said: "I've had the most amazing and unforgettable year as a Nature Skills Trainee with Ulster Wildlife. The range of qualifications and training I've gained will help me further in pursuing a career in the conservation sector - from chainsaw training to ongoing species identification skills in the field. Having the opportunity to work outdoors everyday on nature reserves has been one of the highlights for me, especially with the support of an amazing team and dedicated mentors."

The traineeship follows from the success of the previous program run by Ulster Wildlife, which saw two-thirds of trainees gaining paid employment within the environment sector upon completion.

Celebrating their success, Sharon Archer, from National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "We are passionate about helping people learn new skills, so our heritage can be enjoyed and maintained for the future. We love hearing the stories from trainees who have gained new skills and experiences to help them with their future careers.

"We are keen to ensure the heritage work force of the future is as diverse as our heritage, so we are delighted to support Ulster Wildlife's Nature Skills traineeship project. By pairing trainees with experts they gain access to specialist knowledge plus practical, paid, on-the-job experience. It's simple, yet highly effective, but requires funding which we are able to provide thanks

to National Lottery players."

Ulster Wildlife's Nature Skills traineeship has two more years of funding remaining, with seven lucky candidates set to start their year long adventure in March this year. The traineeship provides opportunities to those traditionally underrepresented in the heritage sector, including under 25's, non-graduates and people who have a disability.

For more information, or to follow the journey of this year's trainees, visit www.ulsterwildlife.org/nature-skills

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