

Description - Assistant Species Recovery Officer - Wildcat (PB6a)

Job summary

Forestry England manages England's beautiful, diverse and productive publicly owned woods and forests. We are the largest provider of home-grown sustainably produced timber in England, shaping the land we manage and building the future for wildlife, for people and for the climate. As part of our national Growing the Future strategy and Biodiversity Plan we are looking to restore fully-functioning ecosystems.

Forestry England's Biodiversity Plan sets out a bold ambition of nature recovery in the Nation's Forests. Working across five principal focus areas, Forestry England aims to restore resilient biodiversity in the nation's forests, delivering our vision to ensure that these forests provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England.

Established in 2022, Forestry England's Forest Wilding Programme brings together two of these focus areas as part of a coordinated effort to deliver a step-change in nature recovery. Our species recovery work focuses on the reintroduction of key influential species, with more than 30 projects nationwide to re-establish populations of beaver, wildcat, pine marten, white-tailed eagle, golden eagle and wood ants. Alongside this nationwide effort, we have established Wild Areas on over 14,000ha of the nation's forests, bringing innovative approaches together with a sound evidence base to recover and enhance nature through restoring natural processes.

Wildcats, also known as the wood cat for their association with woodland habitats are a European Protected Species. They are a native carnivore and play an important role in the balance of our woodland ecosystems and are currently one of Britain's rarest mammals on the verge of extinction. Forestry England has identified European wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) as a national priority species to be considered for re-introduction.

The Assistant Species Recovery Officer role will be based in Northumberland from our office in Bellingham or Kielder. The Assistant Species Recovery Officer will work across Kielder and will assist the Species Recovery Officer in all areas of their work, including public and stakeholder engagement, ecological monitoring and, dependent on ongoing feasibility outputs, development of reintroduction plans.

This is a unique opportunity to join our dedicated Nature Recovery and Ecology Team in the North England Forest District. Kielder Forest is a hub of nature recovery, home to breeding populations of hen harrier, osprey, pine marten and red squirrel, all monitored and supported in their recovery as part of a diverse, multi-purpose forest.

Many projects such as the restoration of the Border Mires, native woodland restoration at Kielder Wildwood, reintroduction of the water vole are helping to make this landscape, in conjunction with our partners, a leading location for wildlife to thrive. This landscape also inspires passion and debate. Species translocation projects, by their nature, introduce a change and elements of uncertainty to the environment we manage. Inevitably they can attract a range of perspectives from stakeholders, which we must understand and consider at all stages of project design development and assessment.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

Key work areas

The post holder may be expected to focus on the following key work areas.

- Assist with the development, feasibility and if appropriate, delivery, of species recovery focused on European wildcat; whilst supporting ongoing species recovery efforts such as golden eagle and water vole.
- Help to plan and undertake necessary ecological surveys to inform decision-making, including coordinating volunteers and contractors,
- Work closely with academic partners to enable applied research which supports the potential for peer reviewed publication.
- Ensuring Forestry England procurement and contract management regulations are followed throughout.
- Support the Species Recovery Officer with information dissemination via engagement events.
- Liaise with stakeholders to ensure the success of the project.
- And any other tasks, reasonably requested by their line manager.

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- A good understanding of ecology
- Excellent communication skills.
- Strong organisational skills and ability to plan own time efficiently.
- Ability to work independently while maintaining good relationships and knowledge exchange with wider teams.
- Competent in IT including core Microsoft Office applications.
- A good understanding of Health & Safety in the workplace.
- Competent map reader with the ability navigate your way around Kielder Forest.

Desirable professional and technical experience

- 2 years of experience working on development and/or delivery of a nature conservation project, and an understanding of the barriers and opportunities to species recovery .
- Direct experience working in similar species reintroduction projects and or undertaking surveys in the field
- An understanding of applied ecological research
- Experience with stakeholder and community engagement
- Experience of working with volunteers

Behaviours

Seeing the Big Picture

- Focus on the overall goal and intent of what you are trying to achieve, not just the task.
- Ability to communicate the wider context of the project to others.

Communicating and influencing

- Actively listens, allowing others to fully express their opinion.
- Be an effective representative of the team

Working Together

- Build, maintain and improve relationships with different stakeholders at the relevant level to understand differing views and issues.

Technical

- The demonstration of specific professional skills, knowledge or qualifications.

Qualifications

Essential

- Qualification in ecology or similar discipline and/or experience in conservation and/or land management
- A full driving licence