



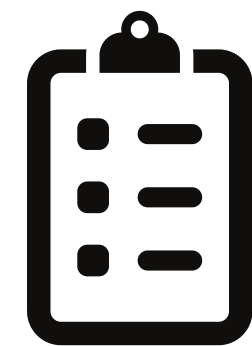
## Introduction

Between February and April 2025 we collected feedback from our volunteers through an online questionnaire and in-person feedback sessions which were held at practical conservation work parties across the county.

The online survey was distributed to 3,245 registered volunteers and 185 responses were received, resulting in a 5.7% response rate. The survey asked 14 questions about our volunteers' experience at the Trust, using a combination of closed, open and Likert scale questions.

The Communities Team led 7 in-person feedback sessions at the following locations: Quarry Hanger, Blindley Heath, Papercourt Marshes, Wallis Wood, Royal Common, Barossa and Pond Farm. At these feedback sessions volunteers were asked how they feel we could add value to their volunteering experience, and were asked to share any feedback they had.

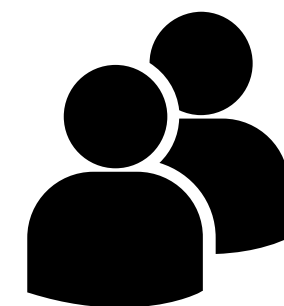
This report summarises the feedback we have received and lays out recommendations for improvements and development.



**185**  
survey  
responses

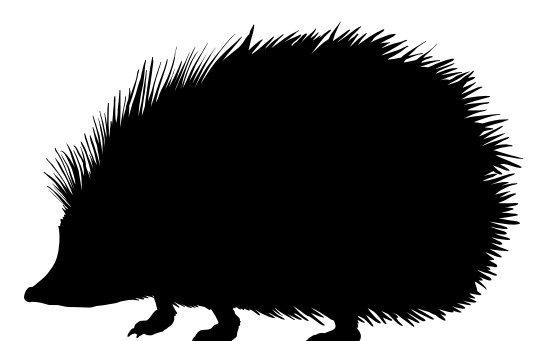
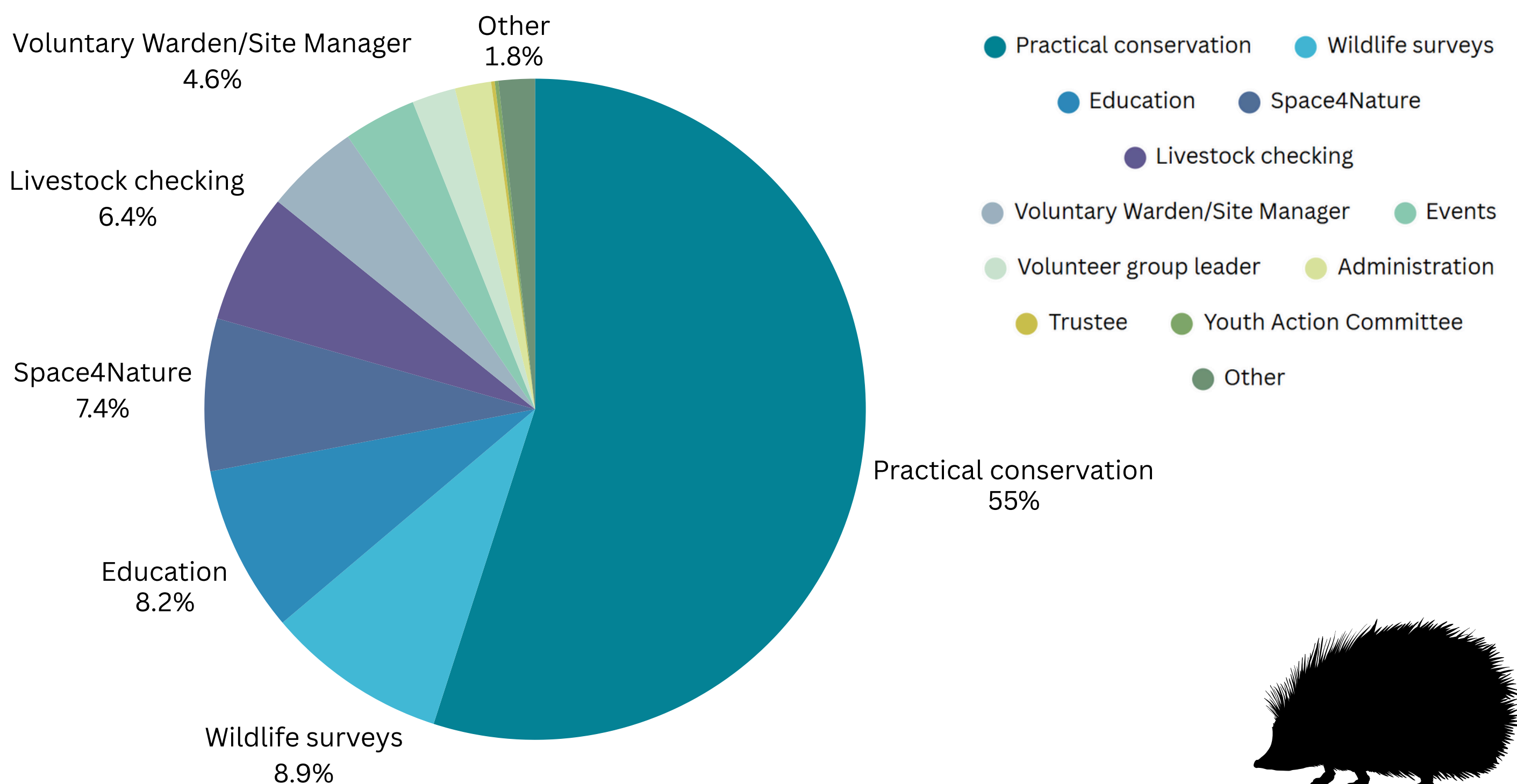


**7**  
feedback  
sessions

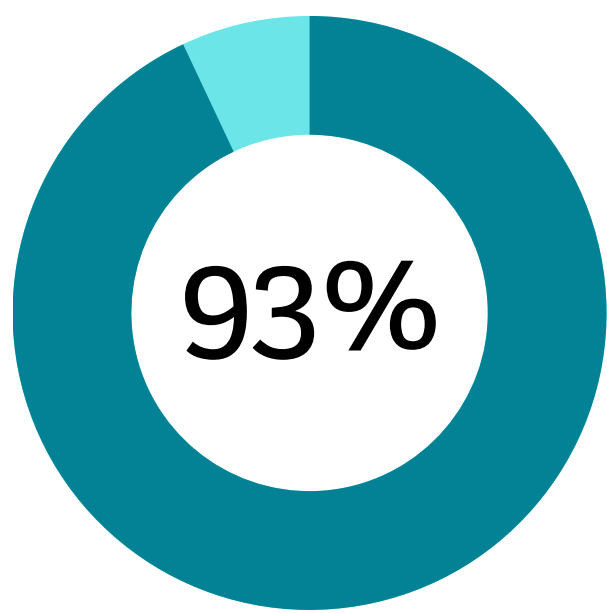


**63**  
feedback  
session  
attendees

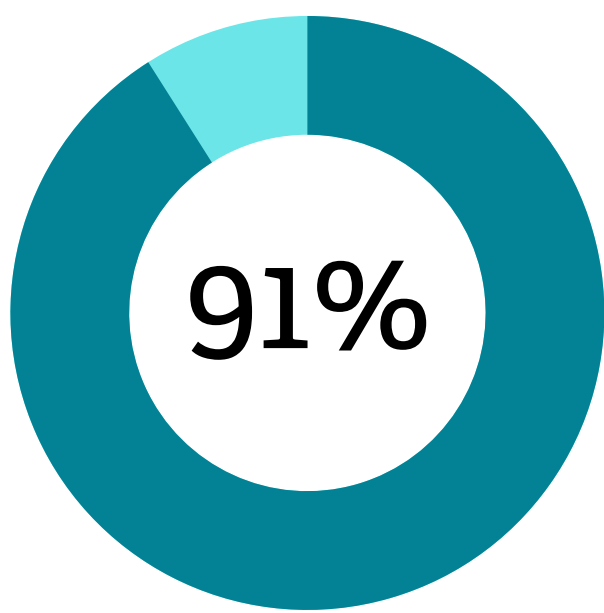
## Volunteer roles



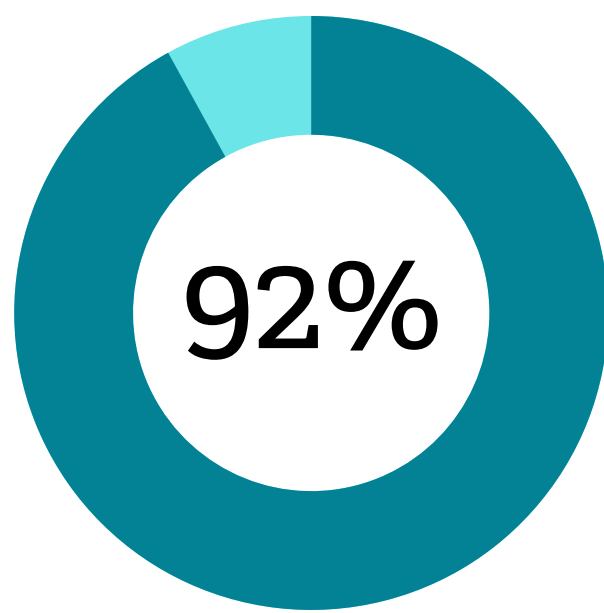
# Highlights



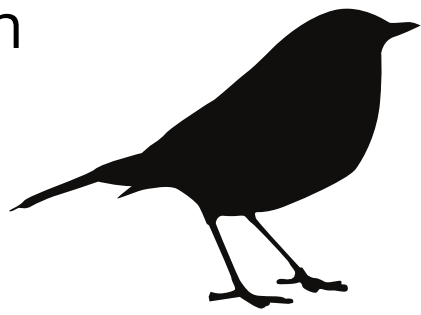
of our volunteers feel our volunteer days have a friendly atmosphere



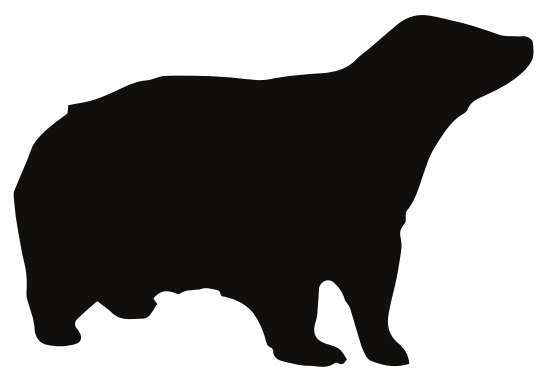
of our volunteers would recommend volunteering at SWT



of our volunteers feel they receive regular communications and know what's going on



“ [I enjoy] being outside and working alongside very friendly, supportive, like-minded individuals. I feel well supported and love that the Trust also provides me with extra training opportunities and I also love the courses that it runs as a supporter of the Trust. It breathes fresh life into me and I just love being able to participate and feel that I can make a difference whilst connecting to and feeling the benefits of working outside in nature. ”

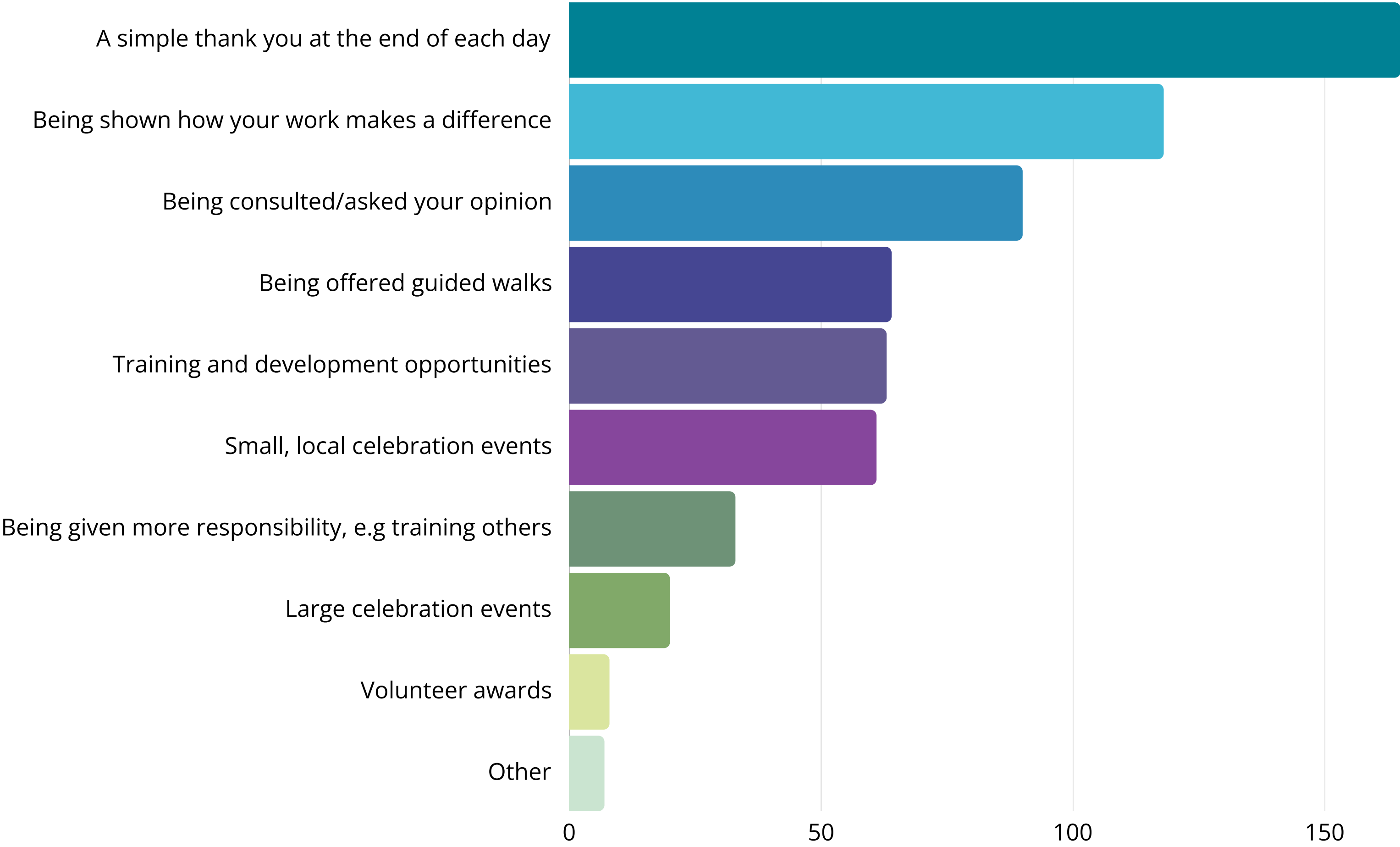
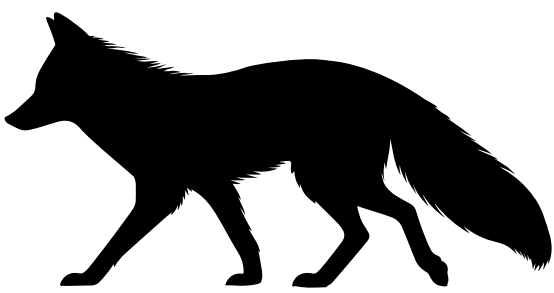


## What do you enjoy most about volunteering with SWT?

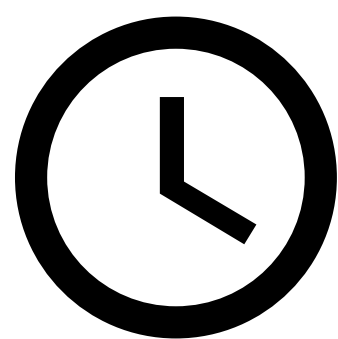
Answers have been turned into a word cloud to highlight key themes, with words that came up more frequently appearing larger.



# What does being valued by Surrey Wildlife Trust look like to you?



## Last year in numbers



**27,400 +**  
volunteer hours



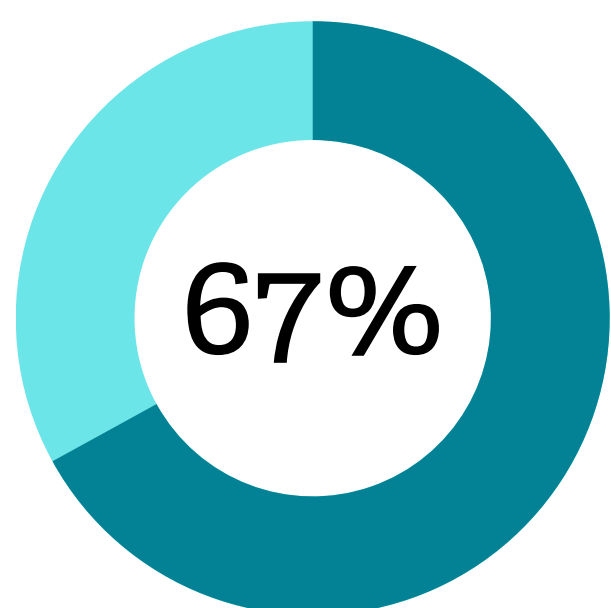
**488 +**  
volunteers gave  
their time



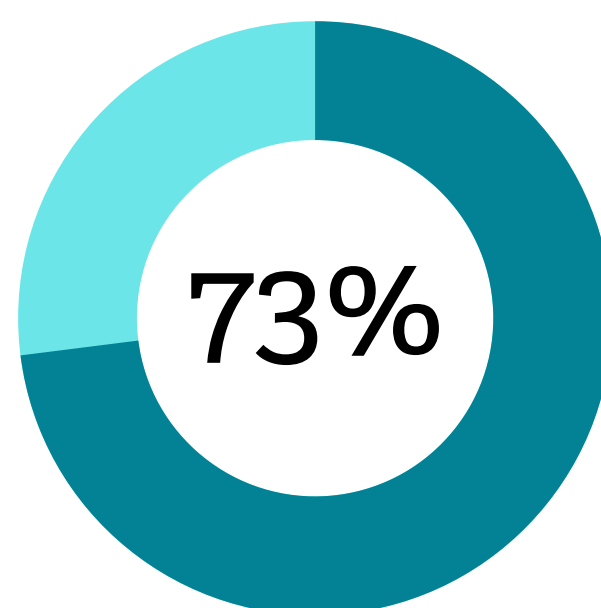
**6,100 +**  
volunteer task days

“ I actually believe we do make a difference. Nothing gives me more pleasure than looking back at work we did possibly years before and seeing the impact it has had. ”

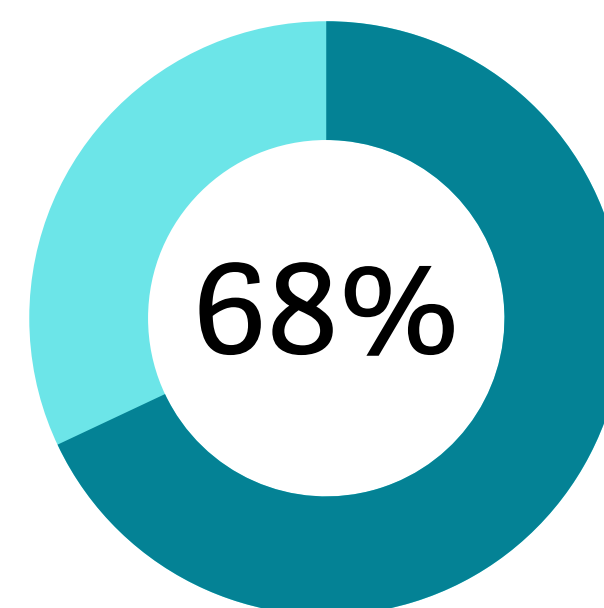
# Focus areas for development



of our volunteers feel their skills and knowledge are utilised



of our volunteers feel there are regular opportunities for them to express their opinions



of our volunteers feel celebrated by the Trust

## How could Surrey Wildlife Trust improve your volunteering experience?



### Key Themes:

- More **impact sharing** to highlight the results of our volunteers' hard work
- More information shared about **organisation structure, goals, management plans** and how volunteering fits into this bigger picture
- More **background information** shared about **volunteer sites**
- Provide **more information about what to expect** for new volunteers, and more details about what to expect at practical conservation work parties in the weekly email
- More, better maintained **tools**
- Bigger **capacity** at work parties and better management of **Eventbrite** tickets
- Better **planning and communication** of changes
- **Utilise volunteers more**
- Provide more information about **public transport links** to volunteering sites, and provide more transport support e.g. a **minibus**
- More **weekend and evening** volunteer opportunities
- More varied tasks, especially during scrub season, including **hedge laying, surveys and guided walks**
- Provide more **training** opportunities and **skills-based sessions**
- **More contact with staff and working together with more unity** to achieve the Trust's mission



I'd like to see how we've improved (or not) the sites I've worked over time. I can say I helped do that! Maybe via a website with photos and videos. We can see whether the goals set have achieved their purpose or not.





# Recommendations

Based on the feedback obtained from the volunteer survey and in-person feedback sessions, the Communities Team are making the following recommendations to improve and add value to our volunteering opportunities at the Trust:



## **Better impact sharing**

We aim to adopt a more targeted approach with impact sharing. In addition to general volunteer E-news, a more detailed newsletter could be developed and sent to practical conservation volunteers including quarterly updates from Conservation Managers. Before and after photos could be taken and shared regularly in E-news and on the website. We aim to create a volunteering blog page on the website, sharing stories about the work of volunteers across the Trust. Volunteers would be invited to share their stories and achievements to feature.

## **Better context sharing and highlighting the bigger picture**

We aim to communicate the purpose of volunteer tasks more clearly, contextualising the bigger picture by sharing more information about conservation management plans. Information about volunteer opportunities on our website will be reviewed and updated to better highlight project goals and the wider context of each volunteer opportunity. For practical conservation volunteers, conservation management plans for the coming few months could be included in detailed quarterly update emails with information from Conservation Managers.

## **Offer more skills-based volunteering opportunities**

Many volunteers feel we are not utilising them properly, yet we know they have many skills, expertise and enthusiasm to offer. Ideas included delivering talks at work parties about a particular species, leading guided walks and taking part in more skilled work like hedge laying and planting, such as the recent Pierrepont Farm volunteering day. Opportunities like these will be reviewed to see how we can best incorporate more of them into our offering. We encourage volunteers to get in touch if there are any particular skills they would like to utilise at any time.

## **Offer more opportunities for volunteers to help with surveys**

A popular request has been for SWT to offer more opportunities to take part in surveys to help develop species ID skills and to have the chance to contribute to monitoring of our work. Being a part of monitoring will help improve a sense of impact and achievement which can be shared with all volunteers. It would also help to add variety to our opportunity offering.

## **Offer more guided walks**

Guided walks have been frequently raised by volunteers as a positive offering. These are perceived as a nice 'thank you' to celebrate our volunteers. They also help add variety to volunteer tasks, help to improve volunteers' knowledge and ID skills, and helps boost understanding of the sites' management plans and the impact of the work that's taken place there.

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“ It's a privilege to share my passion for wildlife with school children at Nower Wood. As a belkie liker I get to spend time with my favourite animals in a wonderful setting, and with Space4Nature I'm contributing to valuable research; all of which are outside in the fresh air where I like to be.



# Recommendations

## **Clearer communication**

We have identified areas for improvement with our communication with volunteers. We aim to make our volunteering opportunities more accessible by providing more detailed information to new volunteers when they join about what to expect at volunteer days in the welcome pack, as well as including more information in the practical conservation volunteers' weekly email about what to expect at each task. Details could include a link to more information about the reserve, information about public transport links and additional information such as distance required to walk from the car park to the work site.

Changes affecting volunteers need to be communicated more clearly. Communication channels will be reviewed by the relevant teams and updated where necessary to improve clarity.



## **Review the functionality of Eventbrite for volunteering**

Although it is unlikely that we will be able to change to a different booking platform for the foreseeable future, we will review the way we use Eventbrite and make improvements where we can to ensure its suitability for booking practical conservation work parties. This will include reviewing the way we manage non-parking/car-share tickets, waiting lists and booking multiple tickets per week. Any changes will be communicated to volunteers.

## **Tools**

Opinions on tools for practical conservation days was mixed, but it was a recurring theme. We aim to regularly review the condition and provision of tools for work parties. Some volunteers have expressed interest in receiving tool maintenance and sharpening training, and helping staff with tool maintenance at work parties. Although not all volunteers would wish to participate, semi-regular tool maintenance work parties could be run.

## **Celebration events**

There was a very positive reception to our most recent Christmas volunteer celebration events for practical conservation and grazing volunteers, which were smaller, local celebration days spread throughout the county. We are pleased to hear such a positive response and aim to continue with this approach in the future. We also recognise that other volunteers enjoy larger celebrations, and so we endeavour to provide a mix of small and large events where possible.

## **Opportunities to provide feedback**

The volunteer survey results have highlighted that we have work to do to ensure our volunteers feel they have suitable opportunities to share their feedback. We will continue to carry out annual volunteer surveys each spring. This year we have conducted in-person feedback sessions with practical conservation volunteers. Going forward, we aim to continue providing these in-person sessions and other means of feedback gathering with volunteers across more opportunities at SWT.

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“ [I enjoy] feeling like I'm helping to save and protect wildlife; learning so much about ecosystems; being out in the open, often in beautiful spots; enjoying the company of both volunteers and staff.





# Progress to date

We're pleased to say we've already made a start on acting on our volunteers' feedback:



## Tools

We have recently ordered a selection of new tools and PPE to improve our provision for volunteers. This included new bow saws, bow saw blades, pitch forks, hole diggers, mattocks, shears, weed slashers, rakes, secateurs, Stanley knives, tape measurers, scything gear, rigger gloves, UV protection safety glasses, side protection safety glasses and waders. In March we held three work parties where practical conservation volunteers in the West of the county helped with tool maintenance at Pond Farm and Pirbright HQ.

## Weekend volunteering opportunities

We have recently launched our Wild Youth practical conservation days, hosted so far by our Central Reserves Team. These volunteer days, aimed at 16 - 30 year olds, provide volunteering opportunities at the weekends. We are currently planning more Wild Youth volunteer days over the summer to continue providing opportunities for young people outside of our usual working hours.

## Grazing log book

To improve communication with our volunteer 'lookers', we have reinstated the use of a log book on site to act as an additional, back-up communication channel for any unexpected changes to cattle whereabouts. In our most recent volunteers E-news we introduced our newest member of the grazing team, Lee Smith, who is now working alongside Kate Otto and Tamsin Harris to support our cattle and grazing volunteers.

## Minibus

We are grateful to have recently been granted the use of a Toyota Community Loan people carrier. Staff members throughout the Trust are now able to drive the minibus which can be used to help transport volunteers. This will be utilised for volunteering projects such as our upcoming summer work experience programme, and has already been used by our Reserves Team for some practical conservation work parties. We aim to continue to make good use of the vehicle where possible.

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“ I find the whole experience of volunteering very fulfilling and enriching.  
A big thank you to the team for creating such a great experience. ”

 “ I love learning about wildlife and it's very satisfying when working  
in a group to see the difference that a day's work can make. ”

“ [I'm] making a difference across Surrey and I feel like a part of  
something. It is an amazing stepping stone towards my career in  
conservation that I wanna do! ”