



**Durham**  
**Wildlife Trust**  
From Tees to Tyne

## JOB PACK

### Willow Tit Research Officer

Salary: £30,633.00 pro rata

Location: [Rainton Meadows](#)

Term: [Full time for 3 months](#) (extension available see information below)

Closing date: 5pm 28/8/26

For more details contact:

[mdinning@durhamwt.co.uk](mailto:mdinning@durhamwt.co.uk)





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## About Durham Wildlife Trust

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### Our Vision

Nature restored from Tees to Tyne

### Our Mission

To deliver nature's recovery from the Tees to the Tyne with the backing of our supporters, partners and wider society; providing opportunities for participation, education and enhanced health and wellbeing.

### Our Goals

- Nature in Recovery (30 % of land and sea by 2030)
- Robust local metrics and data gathering to monitor progress.
- Exemplary land management of our own estate.

### Meaningful Action

- Adopting the 'Team Wilder' approach and a sub-region operational model based on local communities.
- Embracing supporters of all kinds and diversifying our audiences.
- Providing improved visitor destinations.
- Growing our public profile, operational partnerships and influence to bring about real change.

### Nature-based Solutions (nature central to solving local and global problems)

- Durham Wildlife Trust is the local leader in Biodiversity Net Gain and other natural capital solutions.
- There will be an evidence-based well-being focus across our activities.
- We will have a strategic approach to projects with nature-based benefits.

### The Organisation

The Wildlife Trusts are a grassroots movement of people from a wide range of backgrounds and all walks of life, who believe that we need nature and nature needs us. We have more than 900,000 members, over 39,000 volunteers, 3,600 staff and 600 trustees.

## About Durham Wildlife Trust

**Durham is one of 46 Wildlife Trusts, part of a national federation. Each Wildlife Trust is a place-based independent charity with its own legal identity. Trusts encompass groups of people working together to make a positive difference to wildlife and for future generations, starting where they live and work.**

Durham Wildlife Trust operates across communities in County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. The organisation is led by a Board of Trustees, drawn from its membership, with a broad range of skills and knowledge to ensure effective governance. Hundreds of volunteers provide vital support across all activities and strong partnerships assist the delivery of our work.

For more than 50 years Durham Wildlife Trust has protected and restored nature, making a real difference for people and wildlife. Today we own or manage over 50 sites across 1300 hectares, protecting rare and threatened habitats and species, and delivering nature's recovery at a landscape scale. We deliver projects that provide solutions to the ecological and climate emergencies and offer opportunities for participation and learning to thousands of people every year.

### Working for Durham Wildlife Trust

Durham Wildlife Trust is the leading organisation in environmental land management, nature conservation and rewilding in our region because of its dedicated staff.

Successful candidates will join our passionate and talented team of educators, influencers, fundraisers and skilled practical conservation officers and managers. To address the significant challenges faced by nature we need to recruit and retain committed and talented people and support them to develop further.

Central to the Durham Wildlife Trust staff journey is the ethos of personal and professional development. We offer a fun and stimulating working environment, with a competitive salary, holidays and benefits package -

- Staff welfare package, including access to online GP appointments for you and your family.
- Access to unrivalled training and development opportunities available across the Wildlife Trusts national federation, as well as training provision by Durham Wildlife Trust.
- Flexible and hybrid working arrangements.

**Durham Wildlife Trust is an inspiring and energetic place to develop your career and we welcome applications from anyone who wants a role that makes a difference. We are creating a work environment that's inclusive as well as diverse – where all our people can be themselves. Every idea, insight and perspective is valued.**



# The Role

## Willow Tit Research Officer

We are pleased to offer this exciting role at the heart of the national fight to save Britain's fastest declining resident bird species.

Natural England's Species Recovery Programme has awarded funding to launch the first truly national-scale response to the decline of the Willow Tit in England. The funding comes at a critical moment for Britain's second fastest-declining bird. The Willow Tit has declined by 96% since 1975, and emerging evidence suggests the species could disappear from Britain within decades without effective intervention. This is the first time partners have come together to tackle the species' decline at a genuinely national scale, spanning study areas in Cheshire and Lancashire, the West Midlands, Derbyshire, County Durham and Cornwall.

Despite more than 20 years of conservation effort, no intervention has yet succeeded in halting the Willow Tit's decline. Much of the response has focused on creating and restoring young woodland, scrub and wet woodland habitats thought to benefit the species. While these approaches have often succeeded in creating habitat, they have not stopped population declines. We still do not know whether this is because habitat creation has been delivered at insufficient scale, or because other pressures have continued to suppress populations despite habitat improvements.

Although suffering one of the most severe declines recorded in any British bird, the Willow Tit has never previously benefited from a coordinated national recovery programme. This project represents a long-overdue step change in ambition, matching the scale of the response to the scale of the crisis.

Willow Tit is therefore an urgent priority for population recovery. The main suspected cause of population decline is poor breeding productivity, and this project aims to support projects across England to collect standardised data on year-to-year survival, nest success and numbers of juveniles at the end of the breeding season. The project aims to identify if there is regional variation in breeding productivity and factors affecting population decline across most of the remaining Willow Tit distribution in England providing a basis for designing a population recovery plan.

Led by Natural England and the RSPB, the project will deliver the most comprehensive national study of Willow Tit productivity yet undertaken. Through colour-ringing and intensive field research, the programme will identify if and why some populations may be faring better than others, pinpoint the factors limiting breeding success, and provide the evidence needed to develop interventions that can finally halt and reverse the species' decline.

The project will investigate leading potential drivers of decline, including nest predation by Great Spotted Woodpeckers and competition for nesting opportunities from Blue Tits and Great Tits, factors increasingly identified as possible causes of poor breeding success and population decline.

North East England is one of last landscape-scale strongholds of Willow Tit in Britain, although this population has never been intensively studied to assess how survival and productivity compare to other previously-studied regions where the species has subsequently become extinct. Durham Wildlife Trust, the northeast England partner in this programme is seeking to appoint a Willow Tit Research Officer for an initial 3-month period through the autumn of 2026. This is a critical role for both the project and the species' fight against extinction in Britain. As the Willow Tit Research Officer you will undertake key ringing activities of Willow Tit adults and juveniles at three sites in Wearside and Durham.

The successful candidate will set up the initial autumn population monitoring for this multi-year project. This will include ringing Willow Tit at selected sites in Tyne & Wear and County Durham. You will work closely with Durham Wildlife Trust's Ecology Manager, Community Ecologist and volunteers and partner officers from across the wider project, standardising approaches and supporting additional monitoring activity for Willow Tit. You will be expected to be able to identify Willow Tit and plan and undertake ringing activity through the deployment of mist netting. You will be expected to hold a BTO ringing license at C level or above with ability to catch passerines in mist nets.

This is an initial 3-month contract. Further work will be undertaken in Spring 2027, Autumn 2027, Spring 2028 and Autumn 2028, with the project concluding in March 2029. There will be the opportunity for the right candidate to be considered for these further seasonal roles. A job share could be considered. Some anti-social hours and weekend working will be required.



# The Process

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## Questions about the role

If you have any questions about the role, or want to discuss potential hours and working patterns before submitting an application, please contact:

**Mark Dinning, Ecology Manager by email in the first instance – [mdinning@durhamwt.co.uk](mailto:mdinning@durhamwt.co.uk)**

## How to apply

Please complete the application form available on the Trust's website and provide a personal statement (maximum two sides of A4) setting out your suitability for the role.

Submit the form and statement as two documents by email to – [jobs@durhamwt.co.uk](mailto:jobs@durhamwt.co.uk) Please put Willow Tit Research Officer in the subject line.

## Closing date for applications

5pm 28/8/26

## Interviews

Interviews are scheduled to take place at Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve, DH4 6PU on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2026. Should you have any concerns regarding availability for interview, please contact [mdinning@durhamwt.co.uk](mailto:mdinning@durhamwt.co.uk)

Please note, CVs and/or covering letters will not be accepted.



## Job description

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### Identification of post

**Post title:** Willow Tit Research Officer

**Function:** To contribute towards building the evidence base to identify if regional variation in breeding productivity is driving local extinctions of Willow Tit across England and provide a basis for designing a population recovery plan.

**Responsible to:** Ecology Manager

### Purpose of Post

Set up the initial autumn population monitoring for the two-year project Willow Tit Research Project and gather standardised data to inform the design of a population recovery plan.

### Main responsibilities

#### Ecological Survey, Monitoring & Recording

- Set up initial autumn population monitoring on agreed sites in County Durham and Tyne & Wear
- Undertake the initial autumn population monitoring
- Undertaking mist netting and ringing of Willow Tit adults and juveniles.
- Ensure data collected through ecological survey, monitoring and recording activities is stored and shared to agreed standards.
- Maintain appropriate records of activity planning, delivery and results to prescribed standards.

#### Volunteer development and support

- Work with colleagues to develop and deliver project specific volunteering opportunities.
- Maintain volunteer records through agreed systems

#### Administration

- Follow law and legislation and Trust policy in relation to the role including GDPR and Safeguarding and licensing conditions.
- With the support of colleagues produce content for social media/ blogs/ articles, interpretation and signage.

#### General

- Ensure role-specific activities are delivered safely with due regard for all relevant legislation.
- Pursue personal professional development, including attending training courses as/when required.
- Liaise with all Trust staff, honorary officers and volunteers on relevant issues.
- Attend meetings and events as requested.
- Carry out all other reasonable tasks as required by the Ecology Manager and Head of Conservation.



## General terms and conditions

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**Salary:** For a full time (37.5 hours/week) role, the salary is £30,633.00 per annum – pro rata for part time.

**Term:** Fixed term for 3 months (potential for extension subject to funding)

**Pension:** Employees will be automatically enrolled into the Durham Wildlife Trust pension scheme. Minimum employee contribution 3% of salary and employer contribution 6% of qualifying salary. Employees can decide to dis-opt out from the pension scheme if they choose.

**Hours:** Normal working hours are 9 to 5, with a 30 minute meal break. Early morning, evening and weekend work will be required.

**Holidays:** The number of days paid holiday per year is 33 days for a 37½ hour week inclusive of Bank and Statutory Holidays. Part-time employees are entitled to pro-rata holidays and public holidays.

If you start your employment during the leave year, the holiday entitlement will be calculated on a pro-rata basis depending on the number of completed months of service and hours worked.

After two years of continuous employment, you will be entitled to one extra paid day of leave per year worked, up to a maximum of five extra days per year.

**Place of work:** Usual place of work will be Rainton Meadows, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 6PU. You may be required to work from other DWT premises at the discretion of Trust management.

Durham Wildlife Trust currently operates hybrid-working arrangements, with a mix of office-based working and working from home as set out in a rota.



## Person specification

| Criteria               | Essential                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Desirable                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Education and Training | A BTO ringing license at C level or above with endorsement to catch passerines in mist nets                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Membership of a relevant professional body.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Experience             | <p>Experience of maintaining accurate and organised records.</p> <p>Experience ensuring that an project/initiative operates efficiently and meets all legislative requirements.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>Experience of Willow Tit behaviour and calls</p> <p>Experience of applying and resighting plastic colour marks</p> <p>Experience of providing ecological advice for species conservation.</p> <p>Experience of working with volunteers.</p> <p>Experience of writing project reports.</p> <p>Experience of using GIS mapping tools</p> |
| Knowledge              | <p>A good knowledge of bird ringing techniques</p> <p>Understand the requirements of a public facing organisations in terms of how it presents itself and maintains public support and trust.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                    | A good understanding of how to gather ecological data and how it can be used to inform nature's recovery.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Skills and Abilities   | <p>Ability to record standardised data to set protocols</p> <p>Able to identify and manage priorities.</p> <p>Ability to enthuse others about nature.</p> <p>Good written and verbal communication skills.</p> <p>Good attention to detail and record keeping.</p> <p>Ability to integrate into an existing staff team, supporting a positive working experience for colleagues.</p> | <p>Good IT skills</p> <p>Able to communicate and build relationships with partners.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Personal               | <p>Some early morning, evening, weekend and Bank Holiday working will be required.</p> <p>A driving license</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Access to a vehicle                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



## Relevant policies

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Please Note - This role requires a Basic Level DBS check that will be repeated every three years. Any offer of employment made in relation to this role will be subject to satisfactory DBS check.

### Relevant Policies

Please read the policy information below before completing your application.

#### Employing ex-offenders

This written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders is made available at the start of the recruitment process to all applicants for roles requiring a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

As an organization, assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Durham Wildlife Trust complies fully with the code of practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.

Durham Wildlife Trust undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

Durham Wildlife Trust can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that Durham Wildlife Trust are legally entitled to know about. A DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended and, where appropriate, Police Act Regulations as amended.

