



Together for birds and people

**BirdLife International Pacific Partnership
Volunteer Programme**

Volunteer Handbook

Last updated March 2010

Contents

1.0 Welcome

2.0 Introducing the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership

2.1 The BirdLife International Pacific Partnership

2.2 The work of the Pacific Partnership

3.0 How you can volunteer for BirdLife International in the Pacific Region

3.1 Forms of volunteering - professional volunteering and internships

3.2 Range of volunteering roles

4.0 Who can become a BirdLife International volunteer?

5.0 The relationship between BirdLife International and its volunteers

6.0 Support for volunteers

7.0 Application and recruitment process

7.1 How you can apply

7.2 The recruitment process

8.0 Logistics

8.1 Visas

8.2 Insurance

8.3 Accommodation

8.4 Environmental impact

8.5 Health and Safety

9.0 Costs

10.0 Contact us

Appendix 1: Volunteer Agreement

Appendix 2: Volunteer Induction Checklist

Appendix 3: Volunteer Emergency Contact Information

1.0 Welcome

Volunteers are extremely important to the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership and Secretariat. The time and energy contributed by volunteers help us immensely to protect globally threatened bird species and their habitats in the Pacific.

Volunteering with BirdLife International will provide you with all kinds of new and exciting opportunities. We hope that if you choose to volunteer with us, you will learn new skills, meet new people, explore some of the stunning areas we work in and experience something completely removed from your usual routine, whilst making a valued contribution to the important work of the Pacific Partnership.

This handbook has been designed to provide you with useful information regarding many aspects of volunteering and to answer some of the questions often asked by new volunteers.

2.0 Introducing the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership

2.1 The BirdLife International Pacific Partnership

BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations and local networks that work together to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. BirdLife Partners operate in over one hundred countries and territories worldwide and collaborate on regional work programmes in every continent (see www.birdlife.org).

In each of its Partner states, BirdLife works with one national, membership based, non-governmental organization (NGO) that has a focus on conserving birds and the environment. In the Pacific, these Partners are (*click on the country name for links to their websites*):

- Birds Australia, [Australia](#)
- Te Ipakurea Society, The [Cook Islands](#)
- Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie "Manu", [French Polynesia](#)
- Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie, [New Caledonia](#)
- The Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, [New Zealand](#)
- Palau Conservation Society, [Palau](#)
- O le Si'osi'omaga Society Incorporated, [Samoa](#)

These member NGOs are supported by a small Secretariat, based in Fiji, that manages regional strategies and projects and assists in planning, co-ordination and fund-raising. BirdLife International is also delivering a conservation programme in Fiji pending the development of an eligible national NGO to become the BirdLife Partner in the country.

2.2 The work of the Pacific Partnership

The Pacific region has more threatened bird species per unit of land, or per person, than any other region in the world. It is home to around a quarter of the world's globally threatened bird species, and has the highest number of species on the brink of extinction of any region of the world.

What are BirdLife Partners in the Pacific doing about this?

The Pacific Partnership came together in 2008 and developed a Regional Conservation Strategy (2009-2012) which is currently being implemented. This programme of work focuses on four main areas (see also www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/work.html):

1. *Species*: Preventing extinctions and protecting seabird populations through conducting surveys, research and the eradication of invasive species such as rats, cats and mongooses in priority areas.
2. *Sites*: Identifying, managing and conserving terrestrial and marine Important Bird Areas across the Pacific. Important Bird Areas, or IBAs, are sites that provide essential habitats for one or more species of bird, for example an important breeding area. A major part of this work is establishing and supporting networks of Site Support Groups: local conservation groups who work with BirdLife to conserve an IBA.
3. *Habitats*: Working with communities and other local stakeholders to develop conservation programmes in different habitats, for example forests (SFM), agriculture (sustainable agriculture) etc. This programme also includes climate change work.
4. *People*: Supporting local communities, including traditional landowning communities across the Pacific, to sustainably manage their natural resources. This programme also includes environmental education and awareness raising, membership development and institutional strengthening of BirdLife Partner NGOs.

Go to www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/index.html to find out more about our strategy, our past and current programmes, our Partners and our collaborators.

3.0 How you can volunteer for BirdLife in the Pacific Region

BirdLife International has a range of volunteer opportunities - both within Pacific Partner organisations (see 2.1) as well as at the supporting Secretariat in Fiji. Specific opportunities can be found on our website:

www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/pacific_in_action/volunteer_projects.html

Please check this website for 'live' volunteer opportunities which are posted there by the Pacific Partners and the Secretariat. If you don't see any opportunity that fits you, we still welcome applications of interest from anyone who would like to volunteer. So please send us your application even if you don't see a suitable live opportunity on the Pacific Partnership 'volunteer marketplace'.

3.1 Forms of volunteering

The structure of individual placements varies between each opportunity. Depending on the particular objectives, a volunteer placement can either be short-term (from 1-12 weeks) or long term (between 3 months and 2 years). We also make the distinction between 'professional' volunteering and 'internships'.

Professional volunteering

Many of the volunteer opportunities within the Pacific Partnership and Secretariat are designed for skilled and experienced professional volunteers (i.e. volunteers who already have a career). This includes employees seeking to spend their sabbatical by volunteering for BirdLife in the Pacific. Professional volunteers play a huge role in developing and building BirdLife International's capacity for conservation in the region and their contributions are invaluable. If you are a professional volunteer, you will benefit from a unique and diverse working environment, working alongside respected experts in conservation who have direct links with local communities. BirdLife will provide you with clear objectives for your role, so you will be able to address a specific area of need and demonstrate a clear impact from your work. By sharing your skills and experience with local staff and communities, the benefits of your volunteering can be long lasting and sustainable.

Internships

Internships are volunteer opportunities that are more suited to individuals who have a grounding in the area of work but wish to develop and gain further experience. Interns are often university graduates seeking on-the-job training and experience in a particular field of work. If you are a volunteer who falls within the 'internships' category, BirdLife hopes that by providing experiences and work opportunities for you, we will help build the regional and global capacity for conservation (while benefiting from your volunteering!).

All the opportunities listed on our website outline the duration of the placement and the skills and experience needed for a particular opportunity.

3.2 Range of volunteering roles

The BirdLife International Pacific Partnership and Secretariat can use volunteers in numerous roles across the region. This volunteer programme aims to attract volunteers from a variety of professional and academic backgrounds. It is helpful to have a clear understanding of conservation issues but you don't necessarily need to have a long history of work in that area or be a birder!

The range of specialist areas of opportunity/needs may include (but is not limited to):

- Communications
- Policy and advocacy
- Organisational development and institutional strengthening
- Field work
- Biodiversity surveys
- Species-based work
- Research projects
- Site Support Group support
- Information Technology
- Membership development
- Volunteer co-ordination
- Fundraising

However, it is not just the area of work that is important to consider before choosing a suitable volunteer opportunity. It is also important to understand the location and

environment of the work. For example, some field placements involve several days or weeks of camping in the bush, so it may not be appropriate for someone who likes home comforts or has a fear of creepy crawlies! Also, some volunteering opportunities in the Pacific require a good working knowledge of French, as that is the main language of the BirdLife Partners in New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

Therefore we strongly advise all volunteers to do some background research on the country and area where the opportunity is before they make a commitment to volunteer.

4.0 Who can become a BirdLife International volunteer?

BirdLife International has an equal opportunities policy for staff and volunteers. As an organisation it possesses a rich diversity of people which it intends to maintain and promote. Therefore volunteering is open to all adults, regardless of marital status, gender, sexual orientation, religion, philosophical belief, politics, nationality, ethnicity or national origin, or disability.

The BirdLife Pacific Volunteer Programme accepts any volunteer over the age of 21 and has no upper age limit. We recognise the valuable contribution made by older volunteers in terms of knowledge and experience.

Volunteer placements are agreed following the recruitment process. Decisions are made based on the suitability of the candidate to carry out the particular role in the context of the skills and experience required and the environment and location of the volunteer placement.

5.0 The relationship between BirdLife and its volunteers

BirdLife International recognises that volunteers offer their time freely. There is, however, an element of responsibility on both sides. It is important that if you choose to become a volunteer, you understand both the benefits that you will gain from volunteering with the BirdLife Partnership and the expectations of you as a volunteer. This is why we make a Volunteer Agreement with all our volunteers. A generic Volunteer Agreement is included in Appendix 1.

6.0 Support for volunteers

It is important to us that all volunteers are supported throughout their volunteering period. To help with this, each volunteer will have a named supervisor or mentor throughout their placement. This member of staff is ultimately in charge of your work and will give guidance and make sure that that you are well briefed on the role you are to carry out. They will take time at the start of your placement to plan an induction, using the induction checklist (in Appendix 2) for guidance. They will also make sure that you receive a Volunteer Role Description outlining the specific duties of your role, and they will connect you with key people who can help you with your work. Throughout your placement you will meet regularly with your supervisor, as agreed, to review progress and discuss any issues that may arise.

7.0 Application and recruitment process

7.1 How you can apply

To express an interest in volunteering with BirdLife International in the Pacific, go to:

www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/pacific_in_action/volunteer_projects.html

Step 1

Search the 'live' opportunities on our webpage and look for suitable placements. 'Soundbites' are provided in the table on the webpage, but more details can be seen once you click 'Click here to find out more information about the projects and volunteer roles outlined above'.

Step 2

Fill in the online Volunteer Application Form to register your general interest in volunteering with us, or to apply for a specific opportunity. You will need to provide the following information to complete this form:

- General personal information
- Information on the type, location and (if applicable) specific volunteering opportunity you are interested in
- Your qualifications
- Professional and voluntary work experience
- Language skills
- Contact details of 2 referees who have known you for at least a year in a professional or academic capacity
- An indication of the financial contribution you can make towards your volunteering (note that BirdLife can not assist with covering any costs for your volunteering)

Please note that this information will be automatically transferred to a spreadsheet which can only be accessed by staff of BirdLife Pacific Partners and the Secretariat who have been specifically invited to access this information. BirdLife International keeps all personal information about our volunteers secure and confidential in line with UK Data Protection Legislation. Your data will be held on our database for 9 months, or until you are actively volunteering, or until you indicate that you wish to be removed from the 'volunteer marketplace'.

7.2 Recruitment process

BirdLife International has a clear recruitment process for volunteers and works within a well-defined equal opportunities policy (see section 4.0). We are careful to select volunteers who fit the skills and experience required for the role.

The 9 stages of recruitment for each opportunity include:

1. The BirdLife Pacific Partners and Secretariat identify their volunteer opportunities (i.e. they identify which areas of work would benefit from volunteer placements)

2. They advertise their volunteer opportunities on the BirdLife Pacific Partnership Volunteer Programme website
www.birdlife.org/regional/pacific/pacific_in_action/volunteer_projects.html
3. Volunteers respond to an opportunity by filling in a Volunteer Application Form; applications will be gathered on a secure spreadsheet which can only be accessed by interested Partners
4. BirdLife will apply its Equal Opportunities policy to all applicants
5. The respective BirdLife Partner or the Secretariat will short-list the most appropriate applicants. All interested candidates applying for specific opportunities will be informed of their progress at the stage of shortlisting.
6. The respective BirdLife Partner or the Secretariat will interview the shortlisted volunteers - face to face, through Skype or by telephone
7. When the references are checked and all is found to be in order, the successful and the unsuccessful volunteers will be notified of the outcome of the recruitment process
8. The BirdLife Partner/Secretariat will then proceed to make the necessary logistical arrangements together with the selected volunteer (e.g. visa application, accommodation, travel dates, agreement on costs etc.)
9. When the volunteer arrives in the host country, the BirdLife Partner/Secretariat will take the volunteer through their role description, Volunteer Agreement and an induction

NB Prospective volunteers who submit an application of interest without a specific opportunity in mind will be contacted as and when a suitable opportunity becomes available.

Successful volunteers will meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Necessary qualifications and skills to fulfill the objectives of the volunteer role
- ✓ A willingness to exchange knowledge and develop/conduct activities to build capacity for the work of BirdLife International Partnership
- ✓ An understanding of the challenges of working in a diverse partnership and cross-cultural environment
- ✓ Motivation and enthusiasm
- ✓ Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- ✓ A flexible and adaptable approach to work

8.0 Logistics

8.1 Visas

Different visas are needed for working as a volunteer in different countries and they usually depend on the length of your stay. It is important that you discuss visas as part of the recruitment process. Please note that even traveling on a tourist visa often requires you to have at least 6 months remaining on your passport.

8.2 Insurance

Please ensure that you are fully covered by travel and other necessary insurance policies. We will help you with as much advice on this as we can, but you should not

assume that you will be automatically covered by an insurance scheme of your host organisation (i.e. BirdLife Partners or the Secretariat).

8.3 Accommodation

If you are traveling from outside the volunteer placement area, to volunteer with us, BirdLife will try to support you in identifying suitable accommodation. Options may include hotels, hostels, apartments or home-stay if appropriate. This can be discussed on an individual basis once you have been selected for a volunteer placement.

8.4 Environmental impact

We are aware that recruiting international volunteers means increasing our carbon emissions through flights to, or across, the Pacific. As a conservation organisation BirdLife International is committed to reducing its overall carbon footprint through:

- Supporting activities and projects which prevent habitat loss and help maintain and enhance the carbon value of natural ecosystems
- Reducing direct emissions through efficient use of electricity and heating fuel, improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions from air travel
- Investing in greater use of technologies which can potentially reduce travel, such as web- phone- and video-conferencing
- Wherever possible, sourcing its products and services (including energy) from companies that are offering low carbon products or processes
- Exploring opportunities for using renewable energy sources for the generation of electricity, heating and cooling

8.5 Health and Safety

When enlisting the help of volunteers, BirdLife International aims to ensure the health and safety of all its volunteers. BirdLife International routinely carries out risk assessments for its staff and volunteers. However we do not assess an individual's health or level of fitness. We will provide volunteers with sufficient information on the physical demands of the role and the characteristics of the location of the work, particularly for field placements. It is the responsibility of individual volunteers to ensure that their level of health and fitness is suitable for fulfilling their role.

9.0 Costs

At this time the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Volunteer Programme is not a funded programme, and although it is possible that some costs may be recovered through individual project funds, this would be on a case by case basis. The programme relies on self-funded volunteers and we are very grateful for this contribution.

In return we endeavor to provide clear role descriptions alongside a thorough recruitment process to ensure that each volunteer is matched to a placement that is both suitable and satisfies their motivations for volunteering.

10.0 Contact us

For further information about volunteering with BirdLife International Pacific Partnership please contact us:

BirdLife International Pacific Regional Secretariat
10 MacGregor Road
Suva, Fiji

Email: BirdLifePacificVolunteer@gmail.com

Telephone: +679 331 3492



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Pacific Partnership Volunteer Programme - Handbook *Appendix 1*

Volunteer Agreement [EXAMPLE - can be amended to accommodate specific circumstances]

Volunteers are an important and valued asset to the BirdLife International Pacific Partnership and Secretariat. We hope that you enjoy volunteering with us and will feel like a full member of our team. This agreement outlines what you can expect from us, and what we hope to receive from you in return. We aim to be flexible, so please let us know if you would like to make any changes and we will do our best to accommodate them.

We, (BirdLife International Partner / Pacific Secretariat) will do our best:

- To introduce you to how the organisation works and what your role in it will be.
- To provide a named person who will meet with you regularly to discuss your volunteering work with you.
- To do our best to help you develop your volunteering role with us.
- To respect your skills and individual wishes and to do our best to meet them.
- To consult with you and keep you informed of possible changes.
- To provide a safe workplace.
- To apply our equal opportunities policy.
- To address any problems that arise.
- To keep all personal information about our volunteers confidential in line with (UK) Data Protection Legislation.

We expect all volunteers and interns:

- To work reliably to the best of their ability.
- To give as much warning as possible whenever they cannot work when it has been mutually agreed.
- To ensure they are covered by all necessary insurances.
- To follow BirdLife International's procedures and standards, including health and safety and equal opportunities, in relation to its staff, volunteers and clients.
- To maintain the confidential information of the organisation and of its clients.
- To provide referees as agreed who may be contacted, and to agree to a Criminal Records Bureau check being carried out where necessary.

Note: this agreement is in honour only and is not intended to be a legally binding contract of employment.



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Pacific Partnership Volunteer Programme - Handbook *Appendix 2*

Volunteer Induction Checklist

Name of volunteer.....

Role title.....

Supervisor.....

Topic	Date completed
BirdLife International aims, values and beliefs	
The Pacific Partnership setup	
Staff structure (Partner / Secretariat - depending on placement)	
Introduction to other staff members and sessions with key members of staff to understand their roles	
Understanding of core conservation issues	
Volunteer role description	
Key policies and procedures (Volunteer policy/agreement, confidentiality policy, other)	
Possible training opportunities during volunteering period	
Expenses procedures	
Health and Safety regulations, including fire procedures, first aid provision, personal safety, manual handling and risk assessment - for at the office and in the field	
Office layout e.g. toilets, refreshment facilities, where to keep personal belongings etc.	
Orientation of local area - including, shops, post office, internet access, nearest medical facilities	
Understanding of customs and culture, in particular local sensitivities and protocol (e.g. for village or field visits – if appropriate)	
Emergency Contact Information form	
Dates of review/supervision meetings	



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Pacific Partnership Volunteer Programme - Handbook *Appendix 3*

Volunteer Emergency Contact Information

Name

Volunteer role title

Volunteer placement (Partner/Secretariat - country)

Volunteer's date of birth

Residential address (in home country)

Phone number

Email address

Placement start and end date

Address during volunteering period (in host country)

Phone number during volunteering period

Contact person in an emergency (name / relation to volunteer)

Emergency contact phone numbers (including country code)

Contact us

BirdLife International Pacific Partnership Secretariat

10 MacGregor Road, Suva, Fiji

Email: BirdLifePacificVolunteer@gmail.com

Telephone: +679 331 3492

Or:

Partner details [FILL IN]