



EcoTrain 3- Spain Information Sheet

The project will send three cohorts of two volunteers out to the Riet Vell project at the Ebro Delta, Catalonia, Eastern Spain, for 9-week placements at intervals during 2010.

Cohort 1: Mon 5 April to Mon 7 June 2010 (2 places)

Cohort 2: Mon 24 May to Mon 26 July 2010 (2 places)

Cohort 3: Mon 13 Sep to Fri 15 Nov 2010 (2 places)

Host Organisation

Seo/birdlife is a national Spanish organisation involved in conservation of bird species and habitat. Riet Vell is a sustainable development project of Seo/birdlife, it consists of two nature reserves, a company producing organic rice and a centre of research for the development and conservation of wetland areas. The site is in a rural location at the Ebro Delta in Eastern Spain a 30-minute car ride from Tarragona and an hour and a half from Barcelona. This wetland environment is renowned for its array of resident and visiting bird species, including pink flamingo. The Riet Vell project aims to combine organic rice agriculture with the restoration of natural wetland habitats. This is achieved by carrying out applied research, enhancing the status of protected species, maintaining the environmental and landscape value of the area and assisting rural development and eco-tourism. In addition there are specific projects involving research, public use, environmental education, conservation of habitats and species in the reserves. www.rietvell.org

Travel

Ambios is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of all operations and we are therefore avoiding travel by plane wherever possible. Travel to placement will be arranged by train (although some past volunteers have driven by car) and you will be collected from the station by representatives of Seo/birdlife.

Accommodation and Food;

Accommodation is provided on site at the reserve in shared dormitory rooms. A number of international volunteers are usually present and a communal, social atmosphere reigns, with people sharing tasks, cooking, etc. A small weekly allowance will be paid and a budget for food contributed to a central food 'kitty' on the placements behalf. Whilst in a rural location, the centre can be busy at times and lifts / use of a vehicle to access local towns and shopping are available.

Programme for the placement

You will be assigned a mentor from Seo/birdlife who will provide support and guidance. The placement will consist of an introduction to the site and the working practices of Seo/birdlife, familiarisation with local culture, geography, fauna and flora. Some Spanish or Catalan language skills are a distinct advantage, regular language classes are included as part of the placement to help you improve. Projects currently running at Riet Vell will be introduced and volunteers will be trained in relevant field skills. Trainees will be expected to settle into a partly autonomous (but overseen) role during the placement period, supporting staff and projects at the reserve. All volunteers will be expected to work the same core hours as Seo/birdlife staff (8.30 am to 4pm each day), plus out of hours work as fieldwork requires. Weekends will normally be for leisure and cultural activities, which will be the mostly the responsibility of the trainee although some trips may be organised by the host. The overall programme of fieldwork for the training period will remain flexible due to the dynamics of different events at the reserve and specific projects being undertaken at various times.

Tasks for volunteers

Work will be varied and include some or all of the following tasks; maintenance of reed beds, lagoon and nesting areas used by wetland birds, scientific monitoring of the fauna, flora and physical parameters at the reserve, participating in activities of environmental education and publicity and welcoming visitors and general public. Promoting the organisation and providing birding opportunities for visitors, interpretation and activities for the many visitors to the nature reserve. Bird observation and bird census in different parts of the Delta. Bird ringing sessions. Sorting aquatic fauna samples. Estate work including collecting seeds, weeding, cleaning the observatory and information centre and inputting data into a computer. Water quality analysis; taking samples and recording data for temperature, oxygen, salinity, fauna, and circulation.

Knowledge and skills to be acquired

Volunteers will gain knowledge of Spanish, Catalan culture and Spanish language as well as ecological survey and monitoring techniques. They will experience and practice a range of field skills and practical habitat management as outlined in the tasks above. Employability skills acquired will include time management, communication skills, teamwork and the ability to be adaptable in response to changing working circumstances. Volunteers will gain a perspective of environmental conservation in a different European context along with various ecological issues and species present at the site.

Application for a placement

Please read the 'application information' pdf and complete the application form and return to Ambios by e-mail and also by post. For these placements, some knowledge of Spanish language would be a distinct advantage. An interest in birds, water quality, habitat and reserve management would be most relevant or just a desire and commitment to find out more and contribute to the great work Seo/birdlife do at this unique reserve.