

Volunteering in the Mendip Hills, Cornwall, Romania and the Netherlands!

THE National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) and the Cornwall, Isles of Scilly and Tamar Valley AONB Partnerships are hosting the NAAONB's 13th Annual Conference July 5th – 7th in Penrhyn, Cornwall.

2011 is the International Year of Volunteers and the conference will be looking at how the collaborative working of AONB partnerships can provide local solutions to national issues. The overall approach of the conference is to demonstrate that the integrated collaborative approach currently taken by AONB partnerships and their volunteers locally makes the AONB family, as a whole, a strategic national asset.

The conference is open to anyone with an interest in landscape issues. If you would like to attend this conference visit www.aonb.org.uk for more information.

Mendip Hills Volunteers

The Mendip Hills AONB Unit is setting up a new group of volunteers who will focus on practical tasks within the AONB.

Working in partnership with parish councils, community groups, landowners and charitable organisations the volunteers will tackle a range of tasks across a variety of sites and habitats. Tasks will include dry stone walling; fence construction; hedge laying; habitat management through scrub clearance; and repairing and maintaining footpaths and bridleways.

Owen Jones, Joint Volunteer Coordinator with the Mendip Hills AONB Unit and Quantock Hills AONB Service, has been tasked with creating a varied programme that aims to encourage people to get involved, learn new skills, discover more about the AONB and of course enjoy themselves! This is a beautiful landscape and we want to work with local people to keep it that way.

The volunteer group will run on alternate Tuesdays and is open to anyone aged 16+. For more information or to discuss a project either check out the website or contact Owen by email mendipvolunteers@gmail.com or leave your contact details on Tel: 01761 462338, mobile: 07770 646161.

Owen has just returned from a volunteer seminar in the Rodna Mountains National Park, Romania. Organised as part of the Grundtvig-funded project 'Volunteer Management in



Young Rangers orienteering at Ebbor Gorge

European Parks' three free places were available to members of the EUROPARC Atlantic Isles. It was an excellent opportunity to promote the volunteering work in the Mendip Hills and Quantock Hills. Owen was able to share, to exchange experience and to network with volunteer coordinators from parks across Europe.

CLIC24 and the Black Down Project

CLIC24 is the largest annual fundraising event that takes place on Black Down and it raises significant funding for its charity. The organisers and AONB Unit invited voluntary donations of £5 per rider towards essential repairs to the trails on Blackdown. It is hoped that the cyclists enjoyed their time on the hills and want to contribute to this project (see page 91).

The event organisers, as well as encouraging donations to improve access, are also promoting the AONB volunteer tasks, as riders have expressed interest in wanting to get involved. A number of volunteer tasks are being held after the event to clear paths and to turf the stone pitched Barrow.

The AONB have been seeking new funding and plan further work to improve access and manage some of the more sensitive parts of Black Down. This year, the Bronze Age Barrow on which the trig point stands has been stone paved and new oak signage now signs entrances, footpaths and byways.

AONB Young Rangers

Two AONB Young Rangers are off to the International Junior Ranger Camp being held in Weerribben-Wieden National Park, Netherlands. The Young Rangers are from Chew Valley School and Kings of Wessex School, Cheddar. Other countries attending include Latvia, Serbia, Finland, Estonia, Germany, Spain and Netherlands. The AONB has been represented at the Junior Rangers camps since 2008. Each camp undertakes a volunteering project in the host Park.

Recruitment for the new Young Ranger programme starting in September is now underway- application forms are on the AONB web site.



Mendip Society Sladers Leigh volunteers

The Mendip Hills AONB Unit is the voice of the protected landscape, working with landowners and the local community to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk
01761 462338. e-mail: mendiphills@somerset.gov.uk