

# Student Hub: Offseason Occupations:

From Armchair Ecologists to Whistle Punks (and everything in between)

With Christmas only a few weeks away, you're probably either cramming for exams, stuck in dissertation purgatory, or maybe, if you're one of the lucky ones (we're looking at you, first years!), simply looking forward to a few weeks of mince pies, eggnog noggling and not having to do your own laundry.

And yes, we know that pimping your CV is probably the last thing on your mind right now, but the winter months are the perfect opportunity to get involved in some volunteering. You'll up your experience, gain brownie points with local organisations/companies (who could be the golden ticket to your dream job in the future), as well as making your CV stand out from the crowd.

*"43% of employers think that employees who undertake voluntary work and learn new skills have a better chance of promotion and earning a higher salary."*  
TimeBank Employer Attitude Survey

But don't just take our word for it...

## Employer case study, Arup:

"When reviewing CVs for graduates or early career entrants we look for evidence that the candidate is actively pursuing additional training and CPD opportunities beyond those obtained from academic study. We look for signs the candidate has a genuine interest in ecology and an enthusiasm for knowledge. The first job is often the hardest to land (we've all been there!), so signs you are committed to CPD and ecological learning will make your CV stand out from the rest."

*"Over two thirds of volunteers aged between 16-24 see volunteering as a way of enhancing their career prospects."*  
TimeBank Employer Attitude Survey

## But where to begin...

- Getting involved in surveys and citizen science projects (e.g. [www.ceh.ac.uk/citizen-science-apps](http://www.ceh.ac.uk/citizen-science-apps)) is a great place to start.
- Simply attending events, such as those hosted by your local Wildlife Trust or CIEEM Member Network, are a great way to show you're engaged and interested. Plus, many of them are free, and some come with biscuits!
- Sign up to a CIEEM event. We run everything from full-blown intensive courses to webinars, (some free, some not) all over the country and even offer free student places at our conferences. See <http://events.cieem.net/Events/Event-Listing.aspx>.
- Develop your ecological skills by volunteering at a local bird club, nature reserve, bat group or botanical society. Although the winter months are quieter, they're often still after help with things like scrub clearing, tree felling and coppicing.
- Join your local CIEEM Member network. They run events, talks, field trips, seminars, workshops and social events and are a great opportunity to network. Sometimes it really is who you know... And if you're studying in one place but living in another during the holidays, you can still go along since there's no commitment.

- And if you'd rather do something from the comfort of your sofa, there are loads of opportunities to be an armchair ecologist: Offer to write a piece for a community magazine or newsletter, or have a scroll through [www.environmentjob.co.uk/volunteering](http://www.environmentjob.co.uk/volunteering) to see if there's any research or admin that you could turn your hand to (possibly while still in your PJs).

*"When recruiting, 80% of employers value volunteering on a CV."*

## Keeping track

Don't forget to keep a record of everything you've been involved in. It's amazing how many little details you forget while juggling university, volunteering and attempting to have a life. We can help with that. Our online CPD Tool (in the Members' Area of our website) helps you record any professional development whilst building on what you learn at university. So, if you've read some relevant literature, taken part in a webinar, or been to an event (no matter how small), jot it down and smugly pull it out when you're inevitably quizzed about your extra curriculars by a potential employer!