



SKÁLANES
Náttúru- og
Menningarstofnun



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Introduction

The following information should help you to prepare for working with us at Skálanes nature and heritage centre as a volunteer. Volunteer work on the reserve is highly valued for reaching many of our management aims, consequently as a volunteer you will be actively involved in practical site management and hopefully get to try your hand at a variety of tasks during your time with us. Volunteer groups to date have been involved in many projects including traditional turf wall construction, stone wall construction, reforestation, path building and maintenance and lupin control. As well as learning about the environment and culture of Iceland through working on the reserve the centre and its staff hold a wealth of information which will be available to you throughout your stay.

Site background

Skálanes is a private sector heritage and conservation centre with a vision to create a place where the Icelandic environment and cultural history can be researched and interpreted at the same time as being a model for sustainable tourism. The findings from the surveys and research work being carried out at Skálanes will be used for the education of all interested parties and will also feed into other research projects within Iceland and beyond.

The reserve is roughly 1250 ha in size. The site is bounded by the sea on the north and east and by a continuation of similar land to the south and west. The majority of the land slopes from the skyline (945m asl) in the south to the sea at the northern edge of the site. The coastline along the northern edge of the site makes up the southern side of the mouth of Seyðisfjörður whilst the eastern section of coastline consists of sheer sea cliffs reaching up to 600 meters in height.

Below is list of the main habitat types found on the reserve:

- Marine
- Intertidal- rocky sea shore and pebble beach
- Cliffs
- Riparian
- Fresh water wetlands- pools, scrapes, flushes, bogs
- Wet pasture
- Meadow
- Dwarf scrub/woodland communities
- Scree slopes
- Bare ground
- Various stages of successional habitats found upon eroded soils

This wealth of habitats provides niches for a rich biodiversity. There are at least 150 species of plants, 47 bird species and the four Icelandic mammals many of which you will see whilst working within the reserve.

On going volunteer work

There are many projects that need attention within the reserve and the following are currently of highest priority; there are of course many other areas of work which you may be involved with but these are long term projects that all volunteer groups are contributing towards at present.

Turf wall / turf building construction

The method of using turf for creating boundaries and structures can be seen in many places throughout Iceland and is being used at Skálanes due to its heritage significance and unobtrusiveness when placed in natural environments.

The work entails cutting and stacking turf in two lines and filling the centre with soil. The turf is overlapped in each layer similar to bricks in a house and tied together with pieces of turf which bridge the central cavity. The top is then capped with large pieces of turf.



Path work

Essential to present and future visitor management is the creation and upkeep of various paths within the reserve. We are currently designing a specification for path construction and starting to lay paths in the most heavily used areas of the reserve.

Re-forestation

Skálanes has an ambitious re-forestation plan covering 111 ha of the site. The tree species used in these plantings are predominately birch, rowan and willow all of which are icelandic native species. Various planting methods are being trialed and monitored so that planting efforts are well targeted and efficient. One of the largest areas of planting is located where many fragments of relic woodland and associated ground flora remain. Supplementary planting in this area will hopefully accelerate the process of natural re-generation and encourage the remaining scrubby trees to expand into a contiguous woodland.

Lupin control

In recent years there has been some debate surrounding the Nootka lupin (*Lupinus nootkatensis*) in Iceland. An introduced species used to combat soil erosion, lupin grows well on exposed, eroded soil areas however there is growing concern that in some places it is creeping away unchecked and out competing the native flora which consists of many delicate herbs, wild flowers, grasses and sedges.

The lupin at Skálanes is now being studied using various methods so as to help develop a landscape scale plan for the control \ removal of this plant. It appears from direct observation within the reserve that there is a considerable loss of biodiversity in the areas that surround the lupin as it encroaches upon and out competes other species.



Stone wall construction

Using a specification written by a Scottish volunteer from a previous group we use stone from the surroundings to create boundary walls and walls for various structures



Facilities

The centre is well equipped to cater to the needs of people staying for periods of time and working outdoors. Below is a list of the main facilities:

- Bunk beds - 4 people to a room
- Full kitchen
- Laundry machines and large drying room
- Library (ever growing)
- Computer - no internet
- All tools and equipment for work
- First aid kits
- Trained member of staff on site at all times

Kit List

The following list covers items that most volunteers bring

- Work clothes including water proofs
- Sturdy foot wear
- Binoculars
- Ruck sack
- Drink bottle
- Slippers \ sandals for wearing inside the house

All tools are provided as are gloves.

For more information concerning kit or anything else covered by this hand book dont hesitate to email us - skalanes@skalanes.com

We look forward to working with you.

Skálanes staff.