

Conserving 'Big Stuff' - lessons learnt

Alayne Alvis - Question and answer session

Chris Knapp: I noticed you said that with volunteers you found that you spend a lot of time training them and “not doing your job”.

Alayne Alvis: At the beginning especially, yes.

Chris Knapp: I get the same from my conservation staff. They will say “We’re training volunteers, we’re not doing our job”. I’m sorry, but if you’ve got a volunteer, your job is to train the volunteer as well.

Alayne Alvis: Oh, I don’t have a problem with that, it’s just that I think at one stage I was just running around in ever decreasing circles going “Oh my Lord, I’ve got all this stuff to do, oh my Lord, I’ve got all these people to deal with, what am I going to do next?” I’m really a big fan of training – Col will be pleased to know that until very recently I was at tech doing a metal-bashing course, so I can bend metal with the best of them! Sometimes you’ve just got to pick your moment as to when you want to teach somebody something. Sometimes you get your people who you know have a particular skill in an area, where you know they’re really very good at it, but unfortunately you don’t have work in that area for them, so you’ve got to wind them up and point them in a different direction. No, I don’t have a problem with teaching people or the transfer of skill, it’s just that sometimes I don’t want to do it at this very minute.

Chris Knapp: The other thing that we do with our volunteers is, my conservation officers have an assistant and they have anything up to 20 volunteers – fortunately not all in one go – but my volunteers don’t make mistakes, my conservation officers do. They are responsible for that project and if the volunteer gets it wrong it’s because the conservation officer hasn’t taught them properly or hasn’t supervised them.

Alayne Alvis: I agree.