



 **YOUTH**

YOUNG LEADERS COURSE



A COURSE IN CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP SKILLS
FOR YOUNG CONSERVATIONISTS AGED 18-25



ABOUT BTO YOUTH

BTO Youth is the youth branch of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). BTO is a UK charity focusing on understanding birds and, in particular, how and why bird populations are changing. Our vision is of a world where people are inspired by birds and informed by science. Our Youth programme aims to engage young people with nature and science in a safe, inclusive and accessible way.



ABOUT CAMERON'S COTTAGE

Cameron's Cottage is located in RSPB reserve Franchises Lodge, a dramatic woodland in the New Forest National Park. It is a unique activity centre designed for teenagers and young adults to create lasting memories in nature. Cameron's Cottage has been created as a legacy to Cameron Bespolka who died in 2013 aged sixteen. Cameron had a deep passion for nature, which began as a young child and developed further as he got older and the Cottage exists to help young people find that passion.



WHY TAKE THE COURSE?

The Young Leaders Course is aimed at those young people who want to make a difference for the natural world and for people. The course focuses on skills that will help you advance as a leader. These include practical skills, such as how to run successful guided activities or meetings, but also theoretical skills such as management styles and partnership working.

The programme will see you meet a variety of leaders from across the conservation sector.

The course will be hosted by a mixture of staff from BTO Youth and guest speakers with leadership backgrounds. The programme may change depending on weather, but will aim to include sessions on:

Negotiating and influencing; how to use a leadership position to affect positive change.

Guiding events; from bird walks to debates, how do you run and organise a safe and inclusive event?

Building a community; how do you bring together a variety of stakeholders for the greater good?

Working in partnership; understanding the importance of working together in the sector.

Practical skills; such as running successful meetings, making presentations, networking and writing CVs.

Importance of self-care; looking after yourself as a leader, and normalising the importance of mental health in the workspace.

HOW TO APPLY

Just make sure to read this information pack carefully and then **submit your application online [here](#)**. The online form will ask you about yourself and why you'd like to come on the course. **You can't save your answers and return, so make sure to have them ready!** You can find the three main questions we'll ask on page 7.

WHO CAN APPLY?

The course is open to young people resident in the UK, who are:

- At the time of the course, 18 to 25 (inclusive) years old.
- Passionate about making a positive difference in the conservation and/or environmental sector.



WHERE AND WHEN IS THE COURSE?

The course will take place at the brilliant Cameron's Cottage, located in RSPB reserve Franchises Lodge in the New Forest. The course will start on **Monday 27 July at 15:00**. We advise that you arrive a bit before then and staff will be available from 14:00 onwards to welcome you on-site. The programme will run until **11:00 on Friday 31 July**. After this it's time for everyone to head home. We can provide pick-ups and drop-offs at Southampton train station if needed.

If you are travelling from further afield to attend the course, we may be able to help you find hostel accommodation in Southampton for the evening of the 26th of July, before the course starts the following day.



Cameron's Cottage

27-31 July

New Forest

Cameron's Cottage



COST + EQUIPMENT

The course is completely **free of charge**. It is important to us that anyone can access the resources they need to develop their leadership skills. We do ask that, by applying, you commit to taking your place if you are successful with your application as we will have fewer spaces than applicants.

You do not need to bring much to the course; you may find it helpful to bring a **laptop** if you have one, and **binoculars** for birdwatching. We will provide notebooks, pens, and spare binoculars as well.

Please note this is not a birdwatching course, and so this will not be the focus of the activities.

GETTING THERE

Cameron's Cottage is reachable by public transport via Southampton, from where we will arrange a pick-up. There is also ample parking for those driving.

If travel expenses are a barrier to you, please indicate this on your application. We have a limited number of travel bursaries available.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation will be at Cameron's Cottage, which has shared dormitories. You will be required to share with up to five other course members. We will share the food preparation and cleaning responsibilities. The Cottage is in the middle of the New Forest so we'll have lots of outdoor time.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding participants is of paramount importance to us. All of our core staff will have completed safeguarding training and will be DBS checked and cleared. A Designated Safeguarding Lead will be present. BTO's Safeguarding Policy can be found on our website or by emailing our team at youth@bto.org. We will also complete a full risk assessment before the start of course.



ACCESSIBILITY

We are committed to making this course as accessible as possible. Our ambition is to support all aspiring young leaders to participate in the course if they wish to. If you have any accessibility requirements or concerns you would like to discuss, please email us at youth@bto.org.



INCLUSIVITY

We want our course to be a safe space for all participants, and so we ask everyone to abide by our Code of Conduct which will be shared in advance. **You do not need to be an experienced "birder"** or have spent lots of time in nature to apply, nor do you need leadership experience. **We especially welcome applications from young women, and young people from underrepresented groups.**





YOUR APPLICATION

For your application, you just need to **fill in the form online [here](#)**. You can't save your progress so you will need to complete the application in one go. We will ask you questions about yourself and your travel plans, and three questions to find out more about why you want to come on the course. Those questions are:

Tell us what you hope to learn on the course, and how you would apply this in your daily life.

Max 2,500 characters.

Who is a leader who inspires you, and why?

Max 1,500 characters

Have you been in a position of leadership before? If yes, what did you enjoy and what did you find challenging?

Max 2,000 characters. If you have not been in a position of leadership before, that's OK; just say so!

If you'd rather record a video of yourself answering these questions, you can do so and email the video to **youth@bto.org**. You will still need to fill in the rest of the application form online.

The deadline for applications is 11:59pm on Monday 22nd June 2026



MADE POSSIBLE BY

This course and its contents are made possible by the generous support of the Cameron Bespolka Trust.

Cameron Bespolka Trust

The Cameron Bespolka Trust is a charity that has been set up in Cameron's memory to inspire young people to love and appreciate animals, in particular birds, nature, and our environment. By experiencing the outdoors first hand, teenagers can connect with nature and make a difference to our planet.



www.cameronbespolka.com

The travel bursaries for the course are funded by:

Raptor Aid

Raptor Aid CIO aims to help educate, support and carry out bird of prey conservation in the UK and abroad. Birds of prey around the world have interested man for decades; whether it was through religion, society, literature or cultures; they have had some influence on humanity. We hope to help more people understand birds of prey, including how they live and how we as the human race can live cooperatively with these incredible birds.



www.raptoraid.com