

Challenges of environmental volunteering

Submitted by F Pere Tarrés on DII, 24/03/2014 - 18:38

Environmental volunteering is an interesting initiative for environmental conservation and promotion of sustainability, which allows to collaborate in solving many environmental problems in a practical and solid way, as well as to increase environmental knowledge within the organization. It is obvious that volunteering cannot by itself cope with many environmental shortcomings, but it still is **an attractive contribution to, at least, prevent people from turning their back to their natural heritage**; a tool with a huge potential that shows that environmental protection is not only a governmental or corporate cause but also a collective one.

Appropriating nature -as long as we make it ours, learning how it works, and cherishing it through direct interventions for improvement- makes us realize **that we cannot only demand the others to take action to protect it, but also we can take a first step**. It is an active participation strategy that gathers anyone around: non-militant or with a partial commitment conservationists who want to take responsibility for something they consider important in a certain way, whereas they obtain a huge personal satisfaction, or they access to practical knowledge, otherwise difficult to acquire.

Sometimes **people do not recognize themselves as volunteers but as militants fighting for a cause to defend**, and they want to be part of the solution and not just part of problem. They are often true artisans of conservation. In general, environmental volunteering focuses on direct intervention, improvement and manipulation of the environment and the creatures that inhabit it. **Most of the work of nature conservation is based on the volunteers' work**. Although it is a remarkably important, it is unperceived socially. These volunteers also collaborate on awareness raising activities, training and education. As a matter of fact, all environmental volunteering action has these two components: intervention and awareness.

Environmental volunteering organizations have the same challenges as any other institution these days in order to continue its associative work as well as to give continuity to their activities; but also, they have to be able to convey the importance of their mission, to maintain broad range of participation and **to ensure a balance between active militancy and volunteerism management in order to improve their performance**. Environmental volunteering organizations should convey the message that environmental issues cannot be left exclusively in the hands of others.

[Return to the main page](#)

Originally published by Bloc de xarxanet.org, 08 november 2011

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