NVC’s have become the standard classification system in Britain for describing vegetation since they were devised in the 1980’s. As such, skills in using this tool may increase employability in the conservation and ecology sector. The system is species-based, and subsequent statistical analysis generates relevant information on community and sub-community types within the survey area. The final description of the NVC is given as an alpha-numeric code. On this course we will develop and practice these skills in 3 different woodland types, covering identification skills, data collection, analysis and reporting.

The Woodland NVC is based on collecting floristic data from the survey area that comprises the tree species, herbaceous plants, grasses, sedges, rushes and bryophytes that are present, and their abundance, using prescribed recording methodologies. For the NVC to be accurate to the sub-community level, precise identification of difficult flora such as the sedges and bryophytes is required as these commonly form part of the sub-community descriptors. Subsequent statistical analysis of floristic data provides the NVC parameters.

Course Overview

Surrounded by the Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve, Slapton Ley Field Centre offers a variety of manmade and natural sites to study, such as a beautiful coastline and resort towns.

Course Description
There will be a course overview and safety briefing in the evening from 7.15pm. Saturday is a full day’s surveying in the Slapton Ancient Woodland followed, back in the lab, with identification of species not classified in the field, plus we will start to collate the data, then have a briefing on the next day’s survey. Sunday we will go off site to Andrew’s Wood – a wet woodland where we will carry out another full day’s surveying honing our skills in survey techniques and identification, then back to the lab where we will continue identification, compare and contrast these two woodland types and further collate the data, followed by a briefing for the next day’s work. Monday, we will spend a half-day surveying the coppiced woodland at Slapton, returning to the lab at lunchtime after which we will collate the remaining data and discuss methods for statistical analysis and reporting. After a short debrief and discussion, participants leave at 4.00pm.

### About the Tutors

**Dr Stephen Burchett**

Stephen grew up in rural Kent on a traditional mixed farm where he developed a keen interest in the natural world. After witnessing a dramatic decline in rural biodiversity Stephen decided to study for a degree in Biology and Ecology as a mature student, where he eventually gained a PhD from Seale Hayne Faculty, Plymouth University in 2000. Since then Stephen has worked as an environmental consultant and educator for a number of years and in 2005 he started working as a lecturer at the Plymouth University, and has a number of publications under his belt. Stephen has headed up many major field trips, (both in the UK and overseas), focusing on both forest and agricultural research and training.

**Sarah Burchett (MRes)**

Sarah studied for a degree in Biological Sciences at Plymouth as a mature student. After her degree she maintained an active interest in all things habitat-related, and started to develop an interest in the ecology of woodlands and farmlands. Sarah returned to university in 2003 and gained a Master of Research degree, since then she has worked part time at Plymouth University as an associate lecturer and demonstrator on a number of natural history courses, she has also supervised a range of honours project students in forest ecology and forest restoration studies. Sarah has also been involved in UK and overseas field trips where the focus has been on ecology and habitat conservation. More recently she worked at Duchy College as module Leader for the Habitat & Species Management module and now also works at Bicton College running two habitat-related modules. Sarah was a co-author, with Stephen, of an academic text book entitled ‘Introduction to Wildlife Conservation in Farming’ and is currently co-authoring a book on Plant Pathology – due for release in 2017.

Sarah and Stephen work as a team, and have recently set up a company specialising in short courses. CREST – Conservation, Rural Education and Skills Training.
What to Bring

- Clothing suitable for all weathers, including warm clothes for night-time mothing
- Waterproofs and wellies (can be borrowed from the centre if necessary)
- Lunch box, salad box and flask/drink bottle
- Notebook and pencil
- Hand lens (though some will be available)
- Laptop (optional)
- Binoculars (optional)
- Camera (optional)

Start and Finish Times

Participants are requested to arrive at the centre on Friday 4th August for registration between 2:00pm and 5:00pm; after this time self-directed arrival information will be posted on the front door. There will be an introductory talk with the Head of Centre typically at 5:30pm. Supper is usually at 6:30pm. Breakfast, for resident participants, will be from 8:00am. The course will finish at 4pm on Monday 7th August. On the final day please vacate your room by 9:00am, storage will be provided for your luggage.

How to Book

You can check availability and make a provisional booking by telephoning the Centre on 01548 580466.

To confirm your booking please complete the form found in the FSC brochure or online at www.field-studies-council.org