

In 2022, the RSPB teamed up with Black Girls Hike to create career pathways for black women in conservation by launching the Greener Thames Traineeship

Second, to farming, conservation is the least diverse sector in the UK with only 4.81% of environment professionals identifying as people of colour – with black and brown women making up a fraction of that total.

Racial and ethnic minority groups are most at risk from the effects of climate change whilst simultaneously being forced to disconnect from nature by the use of physical barriers, social engineering and the realities of direct racism.

The Greener Thames Traineeship gave young people from underrepresented communities access to skills and training in order to kick start their careers, without higher education or a science background.



'It was important for us that the trainees were not exploited, paid a living wage and not expected to be internal race experts who would be asked to fix conservation problems. This partnership with the RSPB was about giving black women the deserved opportunity to gain qualifications that will benefit our community and create opportunities for younger people who don't see themselves in nature. and we are really happy with Amelias journey and excited to witness her future.'

Rhiane Fatinikun, Founder of Black Girls Hike





IN AMELIA'S WORDS...

'We have had the privilege to learn from so many amazing people, upskilling ourselves in the practical tickets we couldn't otherwise afford, from brushcutter training to 4x4 driving, livestock handling and an RYA powerboat course; in addition to those transferrable soft skills, we never had the chance to learn because of the pandemic; public speaking, Microsoft Excel, structuring emails, surveying, leadership and mental health first aid.

I've grown greatly in confidence over this program, and am grateful for this opportunity, I hope the RSPB has realised that we have so much to bring to the table, that investing in the future of young people, who traditionally have been excluded from these spaces, can create a new future full of accountability, community and belonging in the natural world for all people and this is how we can fight the climate and biodiversity crises.

I am thankful to Rhiane and Black Girls Hike for creating a partnership that gave me this experience. Without it, I don't think women like me would even get close to a job like this. I hope to see more organisations connect and support communities like BGH, as the sector needs to go to the people and not the other way around.'

Just some of the skills and qualifications Amelia gained over the year

NPTC Brush cutter & Trimmer
4x4 Off Road Vehicle Operation (Lantra accredited)
Scientific Scuba Diving (BSAC Sports Diver)
First Aid At Work (British Red Cross)
Livestock Handling
Leadership Programme with the Osprey Leadership Foundation
BTO Young Leaders Course
Manual Handling & Risk Assessments
Category 2 Laboratory experience including Cloning Identification Course
Mental Health First Aider at Work (Mental Health England)
Powerboat Level 2 (RYA)
All – Terrain Vehicle – Site Astride (Lantra accredited)
Presentation training
Microsoft Office (Excel, PowerPoint, Word)



Rhiane Fatinikun & Amelia Hursham

'We need to do more to unlearn the colonial messaging that has disconnected people of colour from a very recent and longstanding deep connection with nature. Think of the places our grandparents come from; Jamaica, Guyana, Ghana and Gujarat – lush green, where communities live hand in hand with their environment. Yet, British society told our grandparents to stick to the cities and that has just continued.'

Equal partnerships between ENGOs and community groups like this with Black Girls Hike is the only way we will authentically engage our society, leaving no one behind. This was such a refreshing partnership, which focused on people first, then the nature part. BGH is about the community of which it serves, they are the experts, and it's our job to follow their lead and not try and mould something into a familiar RSPB shape.'

Creator of the traineeship programme
Ryan Cooper Henniker, Youth Development Manager, RSPB

