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# Welcome to the BFER newsletter

Welcome to the June newsletter!

This month we're delighted to welcome back Alexandra, our BFER Project Officer, from maternity leave. As Alexandra is back on a part time basis, we will be interviewing for the other part of that role later this month, so look out for further staffing updates in next month's newsletter.

Tom, our Project Support Officer has been busy filming lots of new film clips, guided walks and river tours with our partners – keep an eye on our social media and YouTube Channel for more info.

I'm also delighted to say that lots of engagement events and activities have taken place in May.
School's engagement is also well underway with SWT and NWT both delivering schools education projects, Norfolk Rivers Trust starting on the Eels in Schools project, and Rojo Arts working with Nicole our Engagement Officer to deliver arts activities at various schools in the scheme area.

The ground-breaking environmental DNA (eDNA) citizen science survey project is also now fully underway with 70 test kits issued to volunteers and schools in order to create a record of vertebrate species interacting with freshwater bodies in the scheme area.

A recent visit from Deputy Cabinet Member Cllr Vigo Di Gallidoro to a nature reserve in the Scheme area highlighted the value of the schools' engagement and pond restoration elements of the scheme to local biodiversity, as well as both pupils and students.

BFER Scheme Manager

# Project Focus

### 1.2 - Sea to Chalk: Restoring Sea Trout and Eels

Our eels in the classroom side of the project is starting to get underway and last month our project lead has been busy installing an eel tank in 6 schools across the Brecks. We will be collecting elvers this week and delivering them to the schools. Make sure to check our social media pages for updates and photos of the eels. https://linktr.ee/TheBrecksLP

Read more about the project here

### 2.2 - Tales from the River

Thetford Library and the Tales from the River project held a drop in event on Tuesday 3 May, when local people came and shared their photos and stories about earlier days in Thetford, about the river and how they played and swam in places like the Bridge Tavern, the swimming baths, Barnham common, and about fishing and messing about in belly tank boats or paddling in the vegetable-coloured and scented warm waters below the cannery.

We had a display about the project and old photos of Thetford kindly shared by Ancient House Museum. Volunteers chatted to visitors and recorded some of their wonderful stories.

Do get in touch if you have memories to share, https://tinyurl.com/TalesRiverStoriesShare

Read more about the project here

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### 3.4 - Watery Wildlife Education

We had a very exciting trip to NWT Thompson Common in May, joined by SCC Councillor Melanie Vigo Di Gallidoro and we met up with NWT Site Manager Jonathan Preston who gave us a tour of the Pingo Trail. During our walk we met school children from Caston Primary School who were on a school trip to view the pingo ponds and learn about their local wildlife. The school children took part in 'Nature Art' activities and bug and insect identification. As part of our Water Wildlife Education project we are funding Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trust to take schools in the Brecks to their local wildlife spot and have some outdoor lessons.

We spoke to teachers and school children who all said they really enjoyed being outdoors and learning about all different types of wildlife. We also spotted a Four-Spotted Chaser dragonfly which we showed to the school children, who were fascinated by it.

Read more about the project here

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### 4.4 - Healing Waters: Breathe in the Brecks

At this year's first outdoor swimming event we introduced another 60 people to outdoor swimming on Sunday 29 May. Although the water was cool and the weather threw everything at us including wind, rain and sun, we had a warm welcome at Mildenhall from the Mayor Ian Ship and Deputy Mayor Russell Leaman. Those who took part said afterwards that it was amazing, a wonderful experience, and that it gave them confidence and a taste for more! As one of the local volunteers, June, said "It was lovely to see the smiles on people's faces."

Volunteers and lifeguards briefed participants with tips to stay safe while having fun, and many practised being a 'starfish' so that if they fell in or panicked, they would know how to float. Essential to the days' success were the 20 volunteers, many local, and five lifeguards we trained in the project, three on their first outing as part of David Ebbs' lifeguard team. A week earlier we ran a morning of open water lifeguard refresher training for 10 enthusiastic lifeguards trained by the project and independently, all of whom will be working and volunteering to support the Healing Waters project promoting safe swimming in the Brecks throughout the year.

Link to photos from Imogen Radford (project lead) can be found below:

https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjzS6Tj Outdoor Swimming Event

https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjzR9SE Open Water Lifeguard Training

Click here to learn more about the projects

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## 4.5 - Volunteer and Engagement Programme

Over the last month, we have been engaging families from local communities across the Brecks and surrounding areas. In May, we were invited by the Bury Water Meadows Group to attend a Bio Blitz in the Bury St Edmunds Abbey Gardens. We invited children to help us to fill a big paper river with drawings and collages of local freshwater wildlife.

Over the Jubilee bank holiday weekend, we have been hosting a river crafting event on Butten Island, Thetford. Local wild-crafts maker Jon Tyler led natural craft activities, creating miniature rafts using natural materials. On Sunday 5th July, we rounded off the Jubilee celebrations by attending Mildenhall's *Lark in the Park,* inviting families to decorate nature crowns and bunting, and celebrating our Healing Waters outdoor swimming project.

**Upcoming Events**
Join BFER and wild-crafts maker Jon Tyler to make badges and miniature models using natural materials, at the Festival of the Fens, an event celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Little Ouse Headwater Project.
Thelnetham Windmill, Sunday 3rd July, 11 am- 4 pm
https://www.visit-burystedmunds.co.uk/events/thelnetham-windmill-festival-on-the-fens-open-day

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In May, BFER supported the pupils of Drake Primary School, Thetford, to learn about the unique plants that grow within

the freshwater habitats on the Brecks. Over a two-week period, local artist Jacquie Campbell from Rojo Arts worked with each year group, engaging the entire school from 0–5-year-olds in the Little Pirate nursery, up to Year 6. Each year group learnt about different local freshwater plants, which they then depicted through collages, while the young Little Pirates experimented with painting, using paint brushes made from natural materials.

The art works created by the pupils were entered into a special Jubilee art competition hosted by the Norfolk Gardens Trust, which was judged by the Lord-Lieutenant of Norfolk, Lady Dannatt. A Drake Primary pupil received a highly commended award for her artwork, while the school was awarded overall best school, receiving £200 prize money. Drake Primary will use this prize money to support future arts projects.

To find out more about the competition, visit: https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/education/norfolk-garden-trust-primary-school-jubilee-competition-8997090

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# HOLD THE DATE -

# BFER Volunteer Celebration Day

**July 10th**
**11 am – 2pm**

Have you volunteered on a BFER supported project?
Join BFER at West Stow Country Park for a Volunteer Celebration Day, an opportunity to celebrate the wonderful achievements of volunteers across the Brecks.
This will be a relaxed event, with a chance to take part in nature inspired activities, meet likeminded volunteers, and spend time in the wonderful surrounds of West Stow Country Park.

For more information or to register your interest in attending, contact: bfer.admin@suffolk.gov.uk

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# BFER Volunteer Opportunities

**Become a BFER Events Volunteer:**

We are looking for volunteers to assist us at our exciting range of BFER events!
As an Events Volunteer, you will be helping the BFER team to celebrate the fascinating freshwater habitats of the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks. Whether it's the history, the unique biodiversity, natural tranquillity, or activity opportunities, we are looking for volunteers to assist us in advocating the Brecks and the work of the BFER scheme to wide audiences. As an Events Volunteer, you be given opportunities to assist at BFER events, from setting up, greeting and talking to the public, and running activities. These could include community events, children's activities, outdoor swimming events, and information stalls.
**Location**: Various (dependent on the event). Reasonable out of pocket expenses will be offered.
**Required skills and abilities**: No required skills but volunteers should enjoy engaging with the public.
**Dates/times**: Various (This is a flexible volunteer offer. Dates of events will be circulated to all events volunteer to choose from).
Contact details: bfer.admin@suffolk.gov.uk

**Join our new team of BFER Blog Writers:**

BFER is setting up a blog, on which we will be sharing articles and features that celebrate the fascinating freshwater habitats of the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks. From what makes the natural biodiversity of the Brecks to special, to uncovering the history of the area, sharing the joys of paddle sports or outdoor swimming, to exploring how the tranquil landscapes can positively benefit a sense of wellbeing, the blog will be a space for advocating the BFER scheme. We are seeking volunteers to write blog posts to be featured on the blog. Whether a personal account of what makes the Brecks special to you, or a researched insight into a particular area or subject, blogging volunteers will be given the flexibility to choose topics based on their own interests.
**Location**: Remote
**Required skills and abilities**: No prior experience required. Introductory training will be provided.
**Dates/times**: Flexible. Volunteers will be asked to produce at least one blog post.
Contact details: bfer.admin@suffolk.gov.uk

# Other Volunteer Opportunities

Norfolk Wildlife Trust are looking for a Water Level/ Monitor volunteer for the Ghost Pingo Project. The volunteer will need to regularly record water levels and undertake periodic fixed point photography on sites being targeted by the 'Ghost Pingo' project, all in the Breckland area. Collating records and submitting to project lead. Sites need to be checked on a minimum monthly basis. Between 1 and 4 sites will need to be visited (all of which lie within 10 miles of each other, located in the eastern Brecks)

If you are interested, get in touch: BFER.admin@suffolk.gov.uk

Our Partners below are recruiting volunteers for a variety of exciting projects in the Brecks:

**Bush Adventures UK** - Events Volunteers and Garden Volunteers

**Charles Burrell Museum** - Front of House Volunteer, Main Display Area Guide, Café Staff and Engine Specific Volunteer

**Tales from the River** - Research Volunteer

**Run Breckland** - Volunteer Marshals

**Little Ouse Headwaters Project (LOHP)** – Practical Conservation Volunteer

For more information on the opportunities visit: https://brecks.org/bfer/resources/volunteer-hub/

If you are recruiting volunteers in the Brecks area and would like to advertise your opportunities here, please email: bfer.admin@suffolk.gov.uk

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# Upcoming Events

We are really excited to share with you some of the wonderful outdoor events and activities that are in the pipeline.

# BFER Events

**Youth Photography Workshop: 9th July**
**10am - 4pm**
An opportunity for children aged 10-16 years to join us at West Stow Country Park and develop their photography skills and explore the beautiful landscape in this seasonal photography workshop

with local photographer; Phil Morley.

**Photography Workshop for Adults: 10th July 10am - 4pm**
Photography Workshop for Adults at West Stow Country Park. Develop your photography skills and explore the beautiful landscape in this seasonal photography workshop with local photographer, Phil Morley.

**Volunteer Celebration Day: 10th July 11am - 2pm**
Have you volunteered on a BFER supported project? Join BFER at West Stow Country Park for a Volunteer Celebration Day, an opportunity to celebrate the wonderful achievements of volunteers across the Brecks.

**Thetford River Day: 16th July (SAVE THE DATE)**
confirmed Thetford 5km River-Run in partnership with Run Breckland
Craft events and activities including mini raft crafts

**Festival of the Fens - Celebrating 20 years of LOHP event - 3rd July 11am to 4pm**
We will be supporting our friends at LOHP at Parkers Piece, opposite Thelnetham Windmill with a stall and hopefully various craft activities, so add this date to your diary and we hope to see lots of you there!

Do you have an event you would like us to promote on our newsletter, on our website, or across our social media pages?

Please complete the form for us to share your event:

Event detail form

Check out our latest video of a drone flight over the newly restored pingo ponds at NWT Thompson Common

# Social Media

Are you following us on social media? Click the icons below to follow us!

**Twitter** **Facebook** **Instagram**

**Are you subscribed to us on YouTube?**

We will be creating more video content this year so make sure to subscribe to us on YouTube and hit the notification bell!

While we are out filming videos for you, you can watch our latest video here:

Tales from the River - Interview 'Mary'

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