URSULA JUTA

Senior project officer and Ecologist

DESCRIBE YOUR JOB IN FIVE WORDS...

Varied | Adventurous | Satisfying | Worthwhile | Panoptic

WHERE DO YOU WORK?

AT A CHARITY CALLED NORFOLK RIVERS TRUST WHICH COVERS ALL OF NORFOLK'S WATERWAYS

WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE?

It varies across the year and across projects but usually in winter I am in the office writing permits and getting quotes for works. In the Spring and Summer, I am in the river doing ecological surveys for fish, water voles, breeding birds, crayfish, and invertebrates. In the Autumn I am usually on construction sites delivering projects such as fish passes and river restoration. I also do some public events on evenings and weekends, delivering talks and river dipping, and I also work with schools to teach them all about the amazing flora and fauna of the U.K.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Convincing landowners and the public to embrace natural river processes like water sitting on floodplains and vegetation growing in river channels – unfortunately, many people still think land should be drained and channels should be cleared – which is not natural. Changing outdated views and opinions can be very tricky, especially as we have no authority and we don't own or manage any land.

WHAT DO YOU GENERALLY WEAR TO WORK?

When I'm in the office I wear jeans and polo shirt. When I'm surveying I'm usually in wellies or waders and long sleeves to avoid nettles and brambles. When I'm doing site work I have to wear full reflective shirt and trousers, steel toe capped boots, a hard hat, and eye protection.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

For me the best bit is wading through rivers looking for signs of wildlife. It's often very peaceful and I never get bored of seeing animals. The most satisfying part of the role is finishing a restoration site.

What is a general career route for this job?

Most of my colleagues have completed science-based A levels and Geography, Natural Sciences, Environmental Sciences or Ecology degrees.

What qualifications and skills did you need to get the job?

A science-based background with a good understanding of natural river processes and land use. It is also really important to work under pressure when deadlines for permits are tight. It is also beneficial to be able to work with a range of people, including difficult landowners and contractors in all weathers, outside and inside.

What advice would you give someone interested in this type of job or career?

It's quite a difficult sector to get into so my advice is to think about side stepping into organisations that have opportunities. For example I started working for the council because I knew that they had environmental roles and when one came up I was able to move into it.