

Volunteer River Wardens fulfil a hugely valuable role for Essex Wildlife Trust, monitoring hundreds of miles of rivers and streams, to benefit wildlife and to help ensure Essex's wonderful waterways are valued and protected. We have close to 200 River Wardens, spread across the county; here, a few of them reveal more about this labour of love...



Down by the riverside

Jane Herbert, South Essex Project Officer

The Essex River Wardens Project was established in 2014 by the Essex Rivers Hub – an initiative hosted by Essex Wildlife Trust. The project is funded through the Combined Essex Catchment Partnership but has also been given £5,000 from Essex & Suffolk Water and further funding from Essex Wildlife Trust Brentwood and Billericay Local Group, to provide equipment and training to our volunteers.

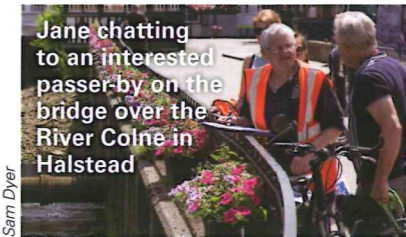


Being a River Warden is an active way to indulge a lifelong interest in wildlife
John Allen

for the Water Vole, which was an integral part of the river scene in my childhood. We're given great training, which means I learn more about the animals and plants where I live. The best moments so far are seeing signs that Water Voles and Otters are returning to the Stour."

"I enjoy river wardening because it provides a regular excuse to get the binoculars out, pack some sandwiches and spend time on the river bank. The seasons come and go and every time we go out, something will catch our attention and, once home, we pour over maps, the internet and identification books to find out more.

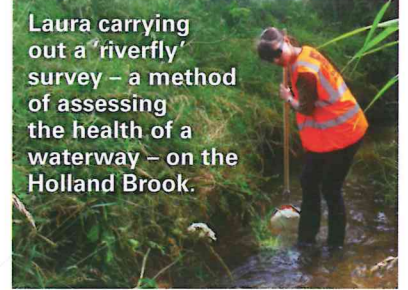
"Signs of Otter and Water Vole are exciting... and there's always the chance of a Kingfisher flashing by. We have a couple of patches of invasive species which we are monitoring and trying to reduce, to protect the river bank."
Joanna Browning



Jane Giffould is a retired teacher. She lives in Halstead, where she 'wardens' the River Colne, by bicycle.

"I've been a member of Essex Wildlife Trust for many years and attended a Trust volunteer day. I put my name down for "rivers" as I live just up the hill from the Colne.

"I really enjoy being a River Warden: I am contributing to the community, and I get to spend time outside, extending my own knowledge and skills and sharing the environment. It is important to explain to people, when they stop to ask, what I am doing. It's a good way of informally sharing the environment and hopefully sowing ideas that will benefit that environment."



Laura Millar, from Clacton, works for the Environment Agency. She is a River Warden along the Holland Brook on Tendring.

"I volunteered because I missed the fieldwork I did during my Geography degree but also because I am interested in an environmental career and want to gain as much experience as I can.

"I enjoy the beautiful river walk and seeing how the river changes – particularly the plants, wildlife and water levels. I particularly enjoy riverfly sampling, which is a fantastic insight into the health of the river. I have managed to pass this on to family members who also now find "river creepy crawlies" interesting! I also took a young family friend out with me and seeing her excitement was fantastic - she wrote a school report about being a River Warden."



Mary Tayler is a retired former NHS community matron, who lives in Thaxted. She 'wardens' the River Chelmer.

"I was interested in the river as I walked along it daily with my dogs and wanted to know more it and its environment. I enjoy being a river warden, both for interest and for social reasons. It has taught me to be much more observant and I have learnt about the river and its ecology. We have a great local team with varied knowledge.

"My most memorable moment so far was finding an Otter spraint under a bridge on the section of the Chelmer I regularly walk."

on the Essex/Suffolk border, with **Joanna Browning**, a medical secretary, who lives in Colchester.

"I've lived next to the Stour all my life; I spent much of my childhood in it, on it, or close beside it, and I still love it! Jo and I spent three years as part of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project team surveying the Stour and tributaries and were sad when it was completed. We felt we'd learnt a huge amount which we should continue to put to good use.

"Being a river warden allows me to connect with the river and the life it supports, and it gives me the opportunity to contribute to protect it and maybe to improve the diversity of its habitats, especially



John Allen is retired after working in farming, forestry, landscaping and gardening. He 'wardens' the River Wid, north of Brentwood, where he lives.

"Being a River Warden is an active way to indulge a lifelong interest in wildlife – I enjoy being outdoors, working in and for the environment in a constructive way. It is also a learning process and I get to meet like-minded people.

"Practically, I find Himalayan Balsam removal especially satisfying work. Emotionally the new sighting of a Kingfisher, a Mandarin Duck or a small stand of Coltsfoot is all I need for a day to be beautiful and uplifting."



Sally Bartrum is retired – she was formerly a public right of way officer for Essex County Council. She wardens the River Stour at Nayland,

