



**YOUR RIVER**

**CHAMPIONS TOOLKIT**

Love **Essex** • Love **Wildlife**



**Essex**  
Wildlife Trust

# THANK YOU

## FOR CHOOSING TO BECOME

## A RIVER CHAMPION

You're helping to **protect**  
and **enhance Essex's rivers!**

We are so grateful for your incredible support and drive to create change, a Wilder Essex is only possible because of people like you and we are here to support you with your River Champion journey every step of the way.

- Be inspired by some of our incredible ideas, top tips and tricks
- Learn from current River Champions
- Co-create with the Wilder Communities Manager and Wilder Rivers Officer
- Involve and engage your local community
- Make a difference



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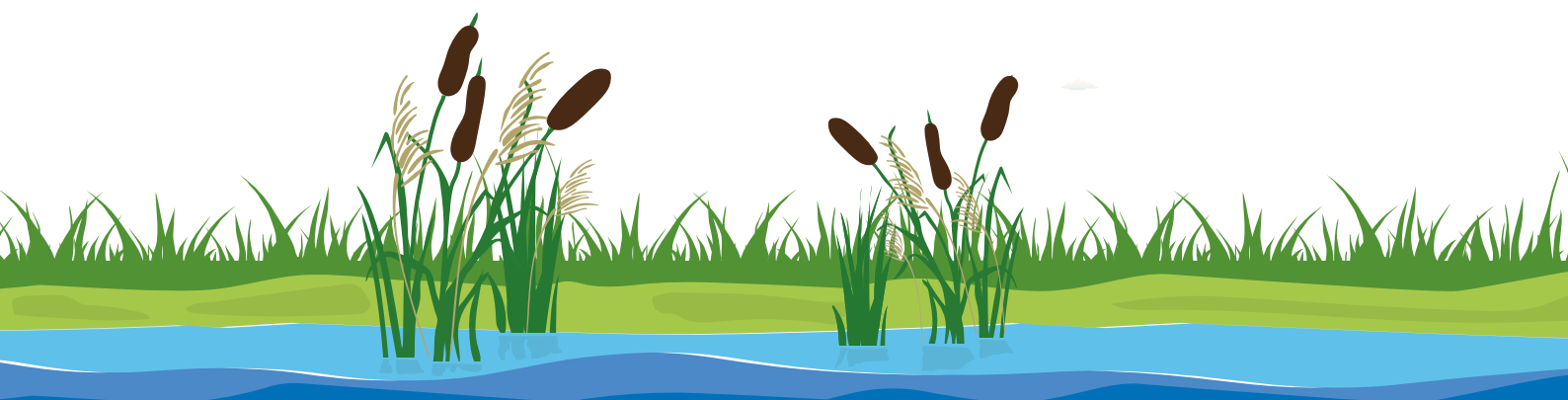
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Atlantic salmon photo: Linda Pitkin/2020VISION

# Next steps

Get involved and **make a difference** for our waterways.

1

## Book and attend an initial chat with the Wilder Communities Manager

We have lots of ideas to kick start your River Champion journey, but first we want to hear from you. We want to hear your ideas and find out how we can support you in your action. Whatever action you decide to take for rivers in your local community, by signing up and booking an initial chat you are already one step closer to protecting the wildlife in your community. Book your chat with our Wilder Communities Manager, Danielle, by emailing: [daniellec@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:daniellec@essexwt.org.uk).

2

## Plan an action for wildlife

In response to and with support from the Wilder Communities Manager make a plan of action. What action will you take? How will you get started? Who should be involved? Who do you need support from? Do you need funding? What do you want to achieve?

3

## Take part in webinars, training and workshops

Now you have decided on how you are going to monitor, protect and enhance Essex's rivers, you may want to up-level your skills or develop your knowledge. We offer a variety of webinars, workshops and training to help you succeed. Liaise with the Wilder Communities Manager to book these.

4

## Engage and involve your local community

You have a plan, but don't forget to involve your local community. Reach out to local groups, businesses, organisations, potential volunteers and high profile people in your community. Engage your community using local newspapers, posters, leaflets and social media posts. Share your plans via online meet ups and local events and explain why they are vital for the vision of a Wilder Essex.

You could even create your own constituted group or 'friends of' group. You can get further guidance on how to do this here: **'How To' Guides : Parks Community UK** or [www.mycommunity.org.uk/choosing-the-right-organisational-structure-for-your-group](http://www.mycommunity.org.uk/choosing-the-right-organisational-structure-for-your-group). We're here to support you as much as we can every step of the way, however you remain responsible for all your group's activities.

5

## Have fun and take action

You are doing a wonderful thing, so make sure you enjoy every moment of your River Champions journey. Don't forget to keep your local community and Essex Wildlife Trust up to date. Social media is a great tool to help you connect and celebrate your work. You can also write to your local newspaper, write a Team Wilder blog and contribute to the ArcGIS Storymaps so everyone can be part of your journey.



Emperor dragonfly photo: Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

# Actions for wildlife

**Every action you take makes a difference.**

1

## Pollution watch

As a River Champion you could keep an eye on your local river and report any pollution incidents e.g. sewage fungus, dead fish, discoloured water etc.

2

## Litter pick

You could also organise and lead litter pick walks along your riverside, helping to keep Essex's waterways tidy and healthy.

3

## Water vole project raft

By assembling simple rafts you could help to manage the invasive mink populations that are the leading cause of water vole decline.

4

## Eel ropes

Many of the structures in our rivers, such as weirs, are impassable for the European Eel, a critically endangered species. Using local barley straw you'll be able to create temporary solutions to help eels move upstream through our rivers.

5

## Riverside tree planting

Trees are not only great for wildlife, but they also act as a buffer during periods of heavy rain. Planting riverside trees reduces the amount of run-off that enters rivers directly, helping to mitigate flood risk.

6

## Helping to remove invasive species

Non-native species such as Himalayan Balsam and Floating Pennywort can crowd out native riverside vegetation and harm aquatic wildlife. Removing them helps our local ecosystems thrive.

7

## National water vole monitoring

Record sights and signs of water voles in your local river to help the national database and contribute to securing this wonderful mammal's future.

8

## Be a coordinator for your local community

As a River Champion you'll help others in your local community who want to learn more about their river and take action for their local environment.



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Kingfisher photo: Joshua Copping

# Citizen science projects

## Get hands on with rivers.

If you've enjoyed being a River Champion, why not take it to the next level and get hands on with some of our citizen science projects with our Wilder Rivers Officer. Take a look below at some of the projects we've run in the past.

Many of these projects will be running throughout the year. Bear in mind this is not an exclusive list – citizen science is dynamic and various opportunities will open up throughout the season.



### 1 Riverfly monitoring

### 1 Pollution surveys (e.g. outfall safaris)

### 3 eDNA water sampling



### 4 Water vole or otter surveying



### 5 River walkover surveys





Water vole photo: Terry Whittaker/2020VISION

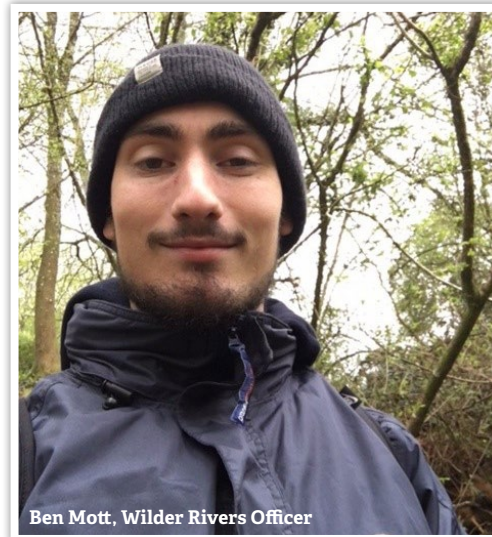
# Essex's rivers



## Local action counts.

**Ben Mott, our Wilder Rivers Officer explains why supporting and championing Essex's rivers is important.**

Our rivers might be struggling, but local action is one of the best ways to help them recover. As a River Champion, you'll be at the forefront of protecting our rivers and the wildlife that depends on them. Whether it be monitoring mammal activity, reporting pollution incidents and invasive species, or raising local awareness, River Champions are crucial to restoring the health of our Essex waterways. As well as getting outside and hands-on with your local environment, you'll also bring people together, helping to build Wilder Communities in which people and wildlife can thrive.



Ben Mott, Wilder Rivers Officer



Otter photo: Luke Massey/2020VISION



**30 by 30**

**Support our 30 by 30 campaign**  
Help us restore 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030:  
[www.essexwt.org.uk/donate](http://www.essexwt.org.uk/donate).





# Stay safe

A few things to ensure your **river champions support event** is **safe** and **legal** for everyone involved.

## Permission

If you are holding an event or taking action in a public space, please get permission first from the **property owner** or local authority.

## Photos

If you plan to take photos of other people during your actions and events, make sure your attendees are aware and you **gain their consent**.

## Insurance

It is important to have public liability insurance in place if your action or event involves the general public. Check first with the property owner or local authority to see if they have this in place. Please note that Essex Wildlife Trust cannot be held responsible.



## Data protection

Only collect the information you need, if any. Keep it safe, do not share it and only keep it as long as you need. You can find information about how we protect and use personal data in our privacy policy on our website: [www.essexwt.org.uk/privacy-policy](http://www.essexwt.org.uk/privacy-policy).





Eel photo: PIXATERRA – stock.adobe.com

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# Young River Champion

## The next generation of river protectors.

**A Young River Champion refers to someone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, but is between the ages of 14 to 17 years of age.**

To take part in the River Champions project, you will need to sign and return a young person agreement and consent form which includes details of your parent or guardian consent.

If you want to become a Young River Champion, please liaise with our Wilder Communities Manager through [daniellec@essexwt.org.uk](mailto:daniellec@essexwt.org.uk).



Carol Durrell - Hanningfield



Carol Durrell - Hanningfield



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