

## NEWS RELEASE

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Written by: Lisa Clayton, Visitor Centre Coordinator



### Winning words

#### Congratulations

To Ethan Cutler, aged 16, who has written and edited this beautiful piece of creative writing, inspired by his connection with nature at Stour Valley.

#### Nature and me: my journey along the River Stour

Dawn breaks over the horizon with a cacophony of bird sounds harmoniously ringing in the air, all in unison. The bitter, icy wind bites my fingers. The sun glistens, reflecting off the surface of the water. It is May, late spring and I am on my early morning walk down the river, poised with my camera ready to grab a shot of a sapphire blue kingfisher plunging down into the water like a spear, sending great showers of icy particles of water everywhere.

I love the long tailed tits that flit between the trees and how they precariously balance on the thinnest of branches, like acrobats on a tightrope. I also love the great spotted woodpecker that clings onto almost any tree with ease. I watch in amazement as the woodpeckers dart in and out of their nest feeding their ravenous young.

As I walk further along the river I spot a heron gracefully gliding in to the reeds. It then stood motionless waiting for a fish to swim close by, preparing to spear it with its razor sharp beak. Then I spot an egret elegantly soaring above me its wings fanned out.

I continued my journey along the riverbank where I came across two majestic swans and their 9 fluffy cygnets sat on their nest. It was such a gorgeous sight to see, like watching a Disney film.

Moving on from the cygnets I come across an old gnarled oak tree. Tucked away in a tiny little crevice in the bark is a nest. A nest of a very peculiar bird. As I watch, I see a tiny bird creep up the tree. It is a tree creeper camouflaged against the bark. I watch as it quietly goes in and out of the nest feeding its young.

As I make my way back, I hear rustling in the bushes. I suddenly see a flash of red dart between the trees, silhouetted against the dazzling sun. It is a male bullfinch. This is one remarkable, stunning bird that you would not want to miss.

My search still continues for the elusive otter hoping that one day I might catch a glimpse of it.

I notice that a lot of people carry on walking, oblivious to what is going on around them. People don't appreciate the wonders and the spectacles of nature. If they were to just stand still and listen, good things come to those who wait and they would get to see so much more.

Trying to take pictures of nature really makes me feel involved with it and it makes me feel special and inspired. It makes me feel ecstatic when I get a spectacular shot to my advantage. It's a real sense of achievement. If I don't get the shot I've been waiting for, there's always next time. Nature is a waiting game. It is just out there waiting to be discovered.

Written and Edited by Ethan Cutler aged 16