

## Update on "Bourn Free" - rediscovering the Bourn Brook

Slipping through the countryside almost unnoticed, except for brief appearances at bridges and short sections of footpath, the Bourn Brook is a hidden treasure. It has many natural features other streams have lost, such as meandering bends and gravel shoals. The brook is home to numerous small fish, kingfisher, otter and water vole as well as forming part of barn owls' territories.

The Bourn Free project aims to tackle the various non-native invasive species which threaten the brook, particularly American mink, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed, and to allow the brook and its native ecology to function naturally.

In particular we rely on volunteers to help control Himalayan balsam. This plant forms dense stands where no other plants can grow, and dies back in winter leaving banks vulnerable to erosion. This year will be the 4th year of balsam control on the brook, and we are certainly having an impact. There's a lot to do though, and we will attempt to tackle the whole length of the brook (around 20km).

If you are interested in helping with control of Himalayan balsam, we would love to have your help. There are various events over the summer. Most involve wading the brook (waders can be provided) so volunteers need to be physically able to get up and down the banks, but some work can be done from the bank. It would be helpful to know if you plan to come, so we will be sure to wait for you and make sure we bring waders in the right size.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Meeting point</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Wednesday 24 <sup>th</sup> June	Bourn Golf Course	Golf club car park, 10am	Ruth Hawksley
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> July	Bourn village downstream	Abantu car park, 9am	Ruth Hawksley
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> July	Bourn village	Abantu car park, 10am	Ruth Hawksley
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> July	Caldecote / Toft	Layby west of Toft 10am	Vince Lea
Saturday 11 <sup>th</sup> July	Barton	Birds Farm, 9.30am	Vince Lea
Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> July	Bourn Golf Course	Golf club car park, 10am	Ruth Hawksley
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> July	Toft village (on dry land)	Toft bridge, 10am	Ruth Hawksley
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> August	Kingston Old Railway	Layby opposite nature reserve, 10am	Ruth Hawksley
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> August	Bourn Golf Course	Golf club car park, 10am	Ruth Hawksley
Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup> August	Barton	Birds Farm, 9.30am	Vince Lea
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> August	Toft Golf Course	Meridian car park, 10am	Vince Lea

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