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## Michelle Reader, freelance artist working with recycled materials, [www.michelle-reader.co.uk](http://www.michelle-reader.co.uk)

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### *How did you get where you are today?*

After graduating from a Fine Art degree in 1997, I started to develop my work using reclaimed materials, and over the years have built up my practice as a sculptor. I use art as a means of raising awareness of environmental issues such as waste and pollution through exhibitions, demonstrations and educational workshops.

### *What tips would you give someone starting out in your field?*

Research your area of interest thoroughly and practice your skills to ensure that what you have to offer is of the highest quality. Take every opportunity to learn from others.

### *What inspires you? Or who?*

Principally the materials themselves - it's very exciting finding shapes and colours within waste materials and bringing new life to them. I also take inspiration from the natural world, and from the people (children as well as collaborators) that I work with.

### *What is a significant memory of being in nature as a child?*

At my grandparents' place in rural Sussex, exploring the forest with my siblings and cousins - building dens and playing games amongst the trees and around the pond.

### *What project are you most proud of?*

*Wildlife Reworked*, a project I ran for families in Summer 2013, taking inspiration from wildlife in and around Walthamstow to create sculptures that toured local venues. Parents and children worked together to create high quality sculptures from recycled and natural materials.

### *What's your favourite game or activity?*

Sculpture tag. In teams, people randomly select six objects from a pile then have ten minutes to create something from the items they've chosen. It's a great ice-breaker and loosens people up, starts them thinking creatively.

### *What's your favourite eco-place in London, and why?*

Epping forest: I live near Highams Park lake, and love seeing the changes in the forest throughout the year.

### *Do you have a recommendation to LEEF members?*

Visit Organiclea's Hawkswood growing site in North Chingford on one of their open days, it's a fascinating place to visit. Organiclea run lots of courses such as permaculture design, gardening and beekeeping, and support community gardens.

### *What are you working on at the moment?*

At this time of year (March/April) I'm very busy with projects in schools. I'm currently building a plastic bottle installation inspired by the River Thames in Richmond, and a constructing a giant weaver bird nest from willow, scrap fabric, beads and buttons.

*How would you like to see Environmental or Sustainability Education develop in the next 10 years?* Environmental education becoming more embedded into school curriculum; underused green spaces being brought into regular use for education.



### **Profile of a LEEF Fellow**

This fellowship was awarded on;

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Isis Education Centre

The LookOut

Hyde Park

London

LEEF fellowships are awarded to recognise excellence in Environmental and Sustainability Education

To find out more about LEEF;

[www.leef.org.uk](http://www.leef.org.uk)



*Bombus Locurum* (detail)

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