



# Biodiversity News in Norfolk

**No 40**  
**(Dec 2014)**

Photo: Grey seal at Blakeney Point (© Lizzy Oddy)

## Welcome to our December e-bulletin

Hello and welcome to another bumper e-bulletin edition! Preparations for Christmas are hotting up in the Biodiversity Team office, mainly with lots of yummy food. We hope you're all looking forward to Christmas as much as we are!

Of course, the run up to Christmas doesn't mean we've been any less busy. In November five of the team attended the NBN Conference which this year was looking at the theme of Climate, Collaboration and Collection. There were some interesting and inspiring presentations and plenty of time for networking with the highest number of delegates attending to date.

There has also been lots of project work going on and future project bids being put together. In particular the Non-native Species Initiative team have just found out that their SEFINS (Safeguarding the Environment From Invasive Non-Native Species) Phase 2 bid has been successful - well done for all of their hard work.

NBIS have applied for accreditation from the Association of Local Environment Record Centres (ALERC). Achieving accreditation will demonstrate that NBIS are providing a high quality service to their clients, partners and stakeholders. Documentation is already being brought together and the assessment will take place in July 2015.

And we are due to move offices within County Hall as part of the refurbishment in mid-January!

It's been a good couple of months for coastal wildlife enthusiasts - the humpback whale reappeared off the Norfolk coast for the second year running, swiftly followed by a pod of pilot whales, and it's been a record breaking year for Norfolk's seal colonies (see SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS).

And if you've not yet checked out the Biodiversity Blog you're missing out! Have a read here:  
<http://norfolkbiodiversity.wordpress.com/>

Have a very Merry Christmas and a fantastic New Year!

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## SPECIES OF THE MONTH

Many thanks to those of you who have submitted records of Marsh Harrier. **Please submit any more sightings of marsh harriers here:** <http://nbis.org.uk/MarshHarrier>



Our Species of the Month for December and January is the **Chinese Water Deer (*Hydropotes inermis*)** .

A cousin of Rudolph, as its name suggests the Chinese water deer is not originally from around these parts. However the UK population of the species now forms more than 10% of the world population - more than in their native China, where they are declining.

Unlike other deer species, male Chinese water deer don't grow antlers, instead having tusks (modified canine teeth) which are used for fighting. They stand 50-55cm tall at the shoulder and have large round ears.

Less often seen than our other small non-native deer the muntjac, Chinese water deer like wet, marshy habitat and shy away from more populated areas. They are best seen at dawn and dusk in the Norfolk Broads. The height of the rutting season is November and December, where males use their tusks to fight for mates and territories.

You can read more about the Chinese water deer on the Biodiversity Team Blog at

<http://norfolkbiodiversity.wordpress.com/2014/12/12/and-if-you-ever-saw-him/>

If you spot a Chinese water deer we would like to know about it! You can submit your records at [www.nbis.org.uk/ChineseWaterDeer](http://www.nbis.org.uk/ChineseWaterDeer).

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Please do email us at [nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk) if you have any news or events that you would like us to feature in the next or coming issues. And do feel free to forward to anyone you feel would also be interested.

You can download this e-bulletin as a pdf here: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/E-BulletinDec2014.pdf> You can also download past e-bulletins as a pdf here: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/newsletterse-bulletins>

[top]

[Local NEWS](#)  
[National NEWS](#)  
[GETTING INVOLVED](#)  
[SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS](#)  
[EVENTS](#)  
[AND FINALLY](#)

[Local NEWS](#)

**Chris the cuckoo clocks up 60,000 miles of travel between the UK and Africa**

Satellite tagged by the BTO four years ago, Chris has since travelled the equivalent of twice around the world! Read more about Chris' travels here: <http://tinyurl.com/nlsoylg> & <http://tinyurl.com/l3hbhfz>

### **Norfolk's Kett's Oak loses out to Robin Hood in Tree of the Year contest**

Kett's Oak which stands by the side of the B1172 near Hethersett was one of 10 trees shortlisted: <http://tinyurl.com/og3nvjz> However the prize went to a 1000 year old hollow oak, reputed to have hidden Robin Hood from the Sheriff of Nottingham <http://tinyurl.com/p732dum>.

### **Blakeney Point seals to star in BBC Winterwatch**

<http://tinyurl.com/lzjc73m>

### **Norfolk Trails photo competition winners presented with prizes at Norwich ceremony**

Launched at the start of the summer holidays, the competition invited people to submit pictures which encapsulated what they loved about the Norfolk Trails.

<http://tinyurl.com/m48crhc>

### **Meadow site to be turned into a nature reserve**

A four-acre site between Brundall and Blofield has been bought by a parish council and is to become a community nature reserve.

<http://tinyurl.com/orh96wj>

### **Thornham war veteran and conservationist gets award from PM**

<http://tinyurl.com/nbjosl8>

### **Improvements are being made to Norfolk's precious chalk streams**

Community engagement has been key as steps are taken to bring Norfolk's chalk rivers back to good health <http://tinyurl.com/k8spf9t> You can also read Charles Rangeley-Wilson's blog about restoration on the River Nar here: <http://tinyurl.com/lk2rubn>

[[TOP](#)]

## **National NEWS**

### **Grey seals kill porpoises - could they be a threat to humans?**

Swimmers have been warned to keep clear of grey seals after scientists discovered that they attack and kill porpoises <http://tinyurl.com/q4k3ho8>. Scientists concluded that there was no reason why they wouldn't use this learned behaviour on human swimmers, although there have been no known cases of this happening. The take home message seems to be to observe from a safe distance - for the seals' sake and our own

<http://tinyurl.com/ljoknrx>.

### **Hundreds of millions of birds have disappeared in 30 years**

The growth of agriculture and urbanisation has cut suitable habitat

<http://tinyurl.com/nhmkpsv>

### **Meeting the 'Bees' Needs' - environment secretary launches national pollinator strategy**

Conservationists have welcomed the government's new strategy to help bees and other pollinating insects as a "major step forward"

<http://tinyurl.com/nmdozao>

### **Next year could be most exciting for butterflies for a generation**

<http://tinyurl.com/qfv7k6t>

### **Selfie-help for conservation areas**

Images uploaded to social media sites may hold valuable data that could be used to help protect or manage natural spaces

<http://tinyurl.com/otp9tjv>

### **Red List: the world's most threatened species - interactive**

Now in its 50th year, the Red List contains over 22,000 threatened species

<http://tinyurl.com/nwa5pfo>

## Frogs breeding in November due to mild weather

Frogspawn spotted in Cornwall is the earliest sighting in almost a decade

<http://tinyurl.com/nffxn4m>

## Years of marine research sunk - because seals ate the evidence

<http://tinyurl.com/ohwfhng>

## Government to issue Asbos to those who fail to deal with Japanese Knotweed

<http://tinyurl.com/mnmjfs5>

## Warm weather leads to a surge in 2014 bird-breeding numbers

<http://tinyurl.com/o7md2r7>

## This year's Single Data List is now published

<http://tinyurl.com/og6zsse>

## More National news here:

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Dec2014NationalNews>

[\[TOP\]](#)

## GETTING INVOLVED

### NBIS needs YOU!

NBIS are continuing to develop their Multi-taxon species monitoring initiative known as the Norfolk Species Surveillance Network (NSSN), launched in 2013.

They are expanding this network of reference sites and the recording on them, hence needing as many of you as possible to volunteer to monitor species change across Norfolk. They are looking for individuals or local parish/conservation groups to get involved. No previous experience of the methodology is necessary, just a passion for wildlife.

Each volunteer/group will adopt an important local site for wildlife, either from our list of sites or a site of their own, if they have landowner permission. Volunteers will be expected to visit the site several times throughout the year and record as many or as few species groups as they can. Some species groups are typically under recorded and NBIS would like to target these.

They will provide equipment, support and training in the methods.

Develop your ID skills with wildlife identification training days for specific species groups, running throughout the summer to boost your skills and confidence.

To sign up to the initiative, please click here: [Sign up to Volunteer for the Norfolk Species Surveillance Network](#)

Or visit our website: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/SpeciesSurveillanceNetwork>



## Scientists call on public to help solve the mystery of starlings' aerial displays

Do starlings flock together to keep warm, for safety or to share roosting tips? A Society of Biology murmuration survey hopes to find the answer and help stem their decline

<http://tinyurl.com/qb4ypup>

[\[TOP\]](#)

## SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

### New liverwort for East Norfolk

Mary Ghullam (moss and liverwort recorder for East Norfolk) has let us know of a new liverwort found in East Norfolk for the first time. She says "The tiny thalloid liverwort, *Fossombronia incurva* (Weedy Frillwort), was

recently found in the vice county of East Norfolk for the first time. This species, which looks very much like a miniature lettuce, can only be identified from its ripe spores. An immature sample was collected from a track on Winterton Dunes NNR in September and grown on until the capsule was ripe. This species is dioecious and the male plants, looking like fringed green baskets full of orange 'eggs', were observed on site."

## Whales Galore!

The humpback whale first spotted off the Norfolk coast last winter was back again this November

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-29953454>

It was closely followed by a pod of pilot whales, seen off north Norfolk, which thankfully moved off safely without beaching (as this species is prone to doing) <http://tinyurl.com/nyhck4p>

One of the whales was later found dead on mudflats in Essex but the rest of the pod moved off to deeper waters

<http://tinyurl.com/kqaklqb>

## Blakeney Point seal pup numbers may break records

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-30211766>

[\[TOP\]](#)

## EVENTS

### Water Ways, Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth

Art and Nature on the Broads. Various events and exhibitions Nov 2014 - Apr 2015.

<http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC159188>

### Norfolk Wildlife Trust Autumn - Winter Events in the Bure Valley

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/NWTBureTaskProgrammNov-Jan14.pdf>

[\[TOP\]](#)

## AND FINALLY..

What's in a name?: <http://tinyurl.com/qzmt7fh>

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Your comments about this bulletin are appreciated - please complete our survey at:

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/e-bulletin-survey>

Webpages: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/> ; [www.norfolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org); [www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/nonnativespecies](http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/nonnativespecies)

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