



Biodiversity News in Norfolk

No 71 (December 2017)

Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) - perched on bramble
cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Evelyn Simak - geograph.org.uk/p/1112481

Welcome to our December e-bulletin!

Less than a week to go before Christmas, but just enough time for the final e-bulletin of 2017. How this year has flown!

In **Local NEWS** rare bats have been discovered in Whitlingham Country park and in **National NEWS** planned release of Golden Eagles in Scotland. However in **International NEWS** there are worries over plastic pollution in the oceans.

Its pupping season on the Norfolk coast. The protection of our grey seals is of international conservation importance and at this time of year they are very vulnerable to disturbance. If you do visit a seal colony this year, please respect the seals!

- Stay a good distance away
- Look out for seals in the dunes and give them a wide berth
- Keep dogs on a lead
- Keep to marked viewing areas and respect the fencing

More information can be found at: <http://friendsofhorseyseals.co.uk/>

Not enough to hear from us once a month? Follow us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/NorfolkBiodiversityInformationService/>) and Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/NorfolkBIS>).

Keep in mind our NBIS office will be closed from the 20th December 2017 and will resume back on Monday 8th January 2018.

Happy reading and season's greetings from us all!

Don't forget, you can submit your wildlife records online at <http://nbis.org.uk/AllSpeciesSurvey> or email them to us at nbis@norfolk.gov.uk. Our data protection policy can be found on our website at <http://www.nbis.org.uk/privacy-policy>.

It doesn't have to be a rare or unusual species – recording common and widespread species are just as important. From blackbirds to oak trees, hedgehogs to ladybirds, let's see how many species can be recorded in 2017 before the year ends!

**Natural Environment Team
Community and Environmental Services,
Norfolk County Council**

nbis@norfolk.gov.uk

Please do email us at 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-BulletinDec2017.pdf> You can also download past e-bulletins as a pdf here: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/newsletterse-bulletins>

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Local NEWS

Why now is it a great time to observe the little-seen hawfinch?

There has been an unusual mass arrival this autumn of Hawfinches. Nationally there has been a noticed increase particularly in Norfolk, one of the best known sites is Lynford Arboretum in the Brecks.

<https://tinyurl.com/yapelyze#>

Rare bats discovered at Whitlingham Country Park

The Norwich Bat Group joined the National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project trapping and ringing the Nathusius' pipistrelle around Norfolk including 13 bats at Whitlingham Country Park. Each year the data will contribute to our understanding of this migratory bat and protecting them into the future. <https://tinyurl.com/yc6phwml>

Record-breaking year for grey seal pups at Blakeney Point in north Norfolk

The number of Grey seal pups has already broken the highest record, currently at 2493 pups and the season isn't even over! <https://tinyurl.com/ycwffsan>

Seal colony at Horsey heading for another location record

Horsey has a new record of 1643 Grey seal pups, exceeding 1500 in 2016. This year they were distributed from Waxham to Winterton. <https://tinyurl.com/y7w4dykq>

Wensum comes out worst for neonicotinoids testing

The results obtained by BugLife show the Wensum and Waveney having acute and chronic levels of neonicotinoid insecticides. Evidence has indicated the neonicotinoids are linked to the drop in insect numbers and bird numbers.

<https://tinyurl.com/y9p2losq>

Research paper: looking at the relationship between different apple cultivars and moss communities they support.

This study is an important example of involving citizen and professional scientists with the data mainly being collected in Norfolk. Few studies having been done on the importance of trees genetics on associated biodiversity.

Thank you to Robin Stevenson for this paper. Full paper: <https://tinyurl.com/y78faq4b>

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National NEWS

The **State of the UK's Birds 2017 report** is out with a particular focus on the impact of climate change.

Download: <https://tinyurl.com/ya9qwhyz>

Britain's coral reefs and marine wildlife are equal to anything on Blue Planet

The UK has our own rich coastal ecosystems and they are under threat. Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean said there has been a 10% increase in litter on our beaches.

<https://tinyurl.com/y6u2956d>

Golden eagles released in Scotland with hope they will fly south

A £1.5 million project plan, by conservationists and landowners, to release 10 eagles into southern Scotland. It is hoped that the eagles will then spread down into northern England in search of food and territories.

<https://tinyurl.com/yd5e8lmk>

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International NEWS

'Zero tolerance' plan eyed for plastic pollution

Currently there is no international law in putting plastic into the sea from land. <https://tinyurl.com/yavung7z>

'Worrying alarm call' for world's birds

Overfishing and changing sea temperatures are putting pressure on seabirds. <https://tinyurl.com/y8alhfgg>

Lost species of bee-mimicking moth rediscovered after 130 years

Rare blue clearwing spotted in Malaysia. <https://tinyurl.com/yc84r6b3>

More news here:

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Dec2017NationalNews>

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GETTING INVOLVED

Call for 'eagle eyed' spotters to assist Norfolk Wildlife Trust this winter

The winter season is often a great time to spot birds of prey. The NWT are looking for more local recordings of kestrels, little owls and Tawney owls.

To fill out their survey: <https://tinyurl.com/yc489hf6>

How did birds become so colourful?

Help the Natural History Museum to work out how the colours in bird plumages evolve with a new citizen science initiative called Project Plumage.

<https://tinyurl.com/ybnflf0g>

Hedgehog hibernation

As hedgehogs are hibernating, visit Hedgehog Street for help in supporting hedgehogs in your own garden:

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/>

Help record parasitical mistletoe on oaks

Mistletoe has a wide range of hosts including oaks. Oaks with parasitical mistletoe are still quite rare. Can you help collect the records for Norfolk? If you find any mistletoe, contact NBIS at nbis@norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk's Freshwater Study Group Meetings

Are you keen to learn more about freshwater life?

If you are an enthusiastic beginner or have some experience of investigating the wealth of freshwater life in the county, then the Norfolk Freshwater Study Group meetings could be for you. Meetings take place every third Thursday of the month in the study centre at the Wheatfen Nature Reserve, Surlingham from 19:00 onwards. The focus is typically on invertebrate samples from ponds, dykes, broads and rivers, though they are happy to be side-tracked by anything aquatic! There is a range of microscopes, equipment, identification guides and a vast store of knowledge available to share and use. These meetings are an ideal opportunity to increase your identification skills and understand more about freshwaters.

If you would like to come along and see what is available, please contact Dan Hoare: daniel.j.hoare@gmail.com

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SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

In a flap over Parrot Crossbills



Parrot Crossbills in a puddle, © Simon Gillings

Crossbills are a group of finches that specialise in extracting the seeds from conifer cones and have evolved distinctive 'crossed' upper and lower mandibles of the bill with which to do so. The bills of Parrot Crossbills are particularly large and powerful compared to those of Common Crossbills. Males are a deep red colour with the females and immatures being green, but all can easily be overlooked whilst they feed quietly high in the tree tops. More often than not, birders notice crossbills when they fly over giving a distinctive 'chip-chip' call – although for the larger Parrot Crossbill, this is a deeper 'chup-chup'.

Many thanks to Andy Musgrove for writing this piece.

On 23rd November, a small flock of crossbills was found by a birder near Santon Downham in the heart of Thetford Forest. Not all that unusual, but subsequent closer examination confirmed the initial suspicion that these were Parrot Crossbills, a rare visitor from Scandinavia. This species has not been easy to see in Britain in recent years and, as a result, many birders have travelled to the Brecks to enjoy the opportunity to see the birds. The flock built up to at least 40 birds and was often in the vicinity of St Helen's car park. The flock was last seen on 9th December, but may well not have moved far within the extensive pines of Thetford Forest.



Parrot Crossbill, 4th December 2017, © James Parry

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EVENTS

Wildlife of the Holkham National Nature Reserve, 19:30, Tuesday 9 January 2018, St. Andrew's Hall, Eaton

Illustrated talk by Andrew Bloomfield, Reserve Warden <http://www.nnns.org.uk/event/list>

Wildlife through the Lens, 19:30, Tuesday 23 January 2018, St. Andrew's Hall, Eaton

Illustrated talk by Peter Mallett <http://www.nnns.org.uk/event/list>

Hanging by a thread - Norfolk's threatened spiders, 19:30, Tuesday 13 February 2018, St. Andrew's Hall, Eaton

Presidential Address by Dr Helen Smith <http://www.nnns.org.uk/event/list>

Wildlife of Cuba, 19:30, Tuesday, 27 February 2018, St. Andrew's Hall, Eaton

Illustrated talk by Hans Watson <http://www.nnns.org.uk/event/list>

Orchards East Winter Workshop Program (events Jan-Feb): Majority are FREE!

Pruning Workshop, 9:45 - 15:30, Saturday 20th January 2018, Waldringfield, Newbourne and Hemley Scattered Orchard, Suffolk

Learn how to prune fruit trees. This in-depth course focusses on restorative pruning of older trees with a brief section looking at pruning of young trees. Led by Anna Baldwin, orchard specialist and experienced trainer.

<https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

Reformative Pruning Workshop: Cressing Temple Barns, 9.45 - 15:30, Sunday 28th January 2018, Witham Rd, Cressing, Braintree CM77 8PD.

Learn how to prune and re-shape fruit trees (apples and pears) that have been neglected in their early years. Plan for future pruning work and how to manage growth resulting from previous pruning work. Tree age 6- 30 years. Led by Anna Baldwin, orchard specialist and experienced trainer. <https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

Reformative Pruning Workshop, 10:00 - 15:00, Saturday 3rd February 2018, Wandlebury Country Park, Stapleford, Cambridge, CB22 3AE

Learn how to prune and re-shape fruit trees (apples and pears) that have been neglected in their early years. Plan for future pruning work and how to manage growth resulting from previous pruning work. Tree age 6- 30 years. Led by Bob Lever, orchard enthusiast and experienced trainer. <https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

Restorative Pruning Workshop, 10:00 - 15:00, Sunday 4th February 2018, Tewin Orchard, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Tewin, AL6 0LY

Learn how to renovate and prune old apple trees to encourage longevity, improve stability, and encourage growth in the right place. Tree age 50 years and upwards. Led by Bob Lever, orchard enthusiast and experienced trainer. Open to people with some understanding of pruning apple and pear trees. <https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

Formative Pruning Workshop, 10:00 - 13:30, Saturday 10th February 2018, Metfield Community Orchard, Metfield Suffolk, IP20 0JY

Learn how to prune to create specific tree forms – standard, half-standard, bush, multi-stem. Problem solving: tree predators and sward management, and how they might determine your tree form and advanced techniques (eg. Tying down, Bud nicking and notching.) Tree age 1 – 5 years. Led by Bob Lever, orchard enthusiast and experienced trainer. <https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

Grafting Workshop, 10.00 - 16:00, Saturday 10th February 2018, Foxburrow Farm, Saddlemakers Lane, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1NA

Led by Paul Read, of Suffolk Traditional Orchard Group and Orchards East. Following a talk on the propagation of fruit trees and demonstrations of grafting, participants will be able to try “bench grafting” for several hours. Paul will demonstrate other methods, and other propagation techniques will be discussed. <https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

Restorative Pruning Workshop, 10:00 - 15:00, Sunday 11th February 2018, Rummer’s Lane orchard, Wisbech St. Mary, Cambridgeshire

Learn how to renovate and prune old apple trees to encourage longevity, improve stability, and encourage growth in the right place. Tree age 50 years and upwards. Led by Bob Lever, orchard enthusiast and experienced trainer. Open to people with some understanding of pruning apple and pear trees. <https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

For the workshops in March 2018 or more details and to book download the programme:
<https://tinyurl.com/y87ukv9u>

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AND FINALLY.. Choose your favourite in the 2017 comedy wildlife photography awards:
<https://tinyurl.com/ycop9ec7>

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