



Biodiversity News in Norfolk

No 51 (February 2016)

Photo: The polecat (*Mustela putorius*) has even been spotted in Norfolk! Read about its comeback in National NEWS © [Peter Trimming](#) and licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic](#) license.

Welcome to our February e-bulletin

With a winter chill definitely in evidence, now is a great time to make a cuppa, relax and enjoy this edition of Biodiversity News in Norfolk!

We can announce this issue that the 2016 Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards are open for nominations – who could you put forward (it could even be yourself!)? See Local NEWS for more details and how to submit your nominations.

Also in Local NEWS, the Norwich peregrines are back, so we look forward to the excitement (though hopefully not *too* much excitement!) of the breeding season ahead.

Nationally, plant diseases are still in the headlines, with a possible way of helping ash trees resist Chalara, while 'phony peach' disease threatens to do even more harm (see National NEWS).

We've highlighted a number of ways you can get involved in helping the environment this month, including responding to the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative survey and Call for Data (See GETTING INVOLVED).

SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS include a rare moss rediscovered in the county, and the comeback of the polecat.

Happy reading!

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

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 2016!

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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-BulletinFeb2016.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

Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards 2016 are open for nominations

Do you know someone who deserves recognition for their voluntary efforts to improve their local patch for wildlife? If so, why not enter them for a Community Biodiversity Award?

Nominations are welcome from enthusiastic community groups and individuals who are making a difference for wildlife in their local patch – such as town and parish councils, groups, individuals, schools and businesses.

Entries are open to anyone working in a voluntary capacity at a local level to improve their local environment for biodiversity and to widen knowledge of, and participation in, the natural world.

Winners will be celebrated at a wonderful summer Awards Evening and take away a framed certificate.

You can find all the details of this years' categories and how to submit your nomination here:

<http://tinyurl.com/oq85ba2>

Whale strandings in Norfolk

In late January and early February we were all saddened by pictures of six stranded and dead sperm whales, washed up in Norfolk and Lincolnshire, as well as others in France, Germany and the Netherlands. Crowds flocked to see them and to speculate why the strandings might have happened. It is thought that the whales were hunting for squid and got disorientated in the shallow waters of the North Sea <http://tinyurl.com/jghf288> Separately, the body of a minke whale has also ended up on Norfolk shores. First seen at Salthouse, the badly decomposing whale ended up on the beach at Sheringham <http://tinyurl.com/zsxxmkt>

Breeding season begins for Norwich Cathedral peregrines

They have survived the winter, and now the breeding season has begun in earnest for Norwich Cathedral's spectacular peregrine falcons <http://tinyurl.com/gtt35y2>. See a video of the male on the Hawk and Owl Trusts' Facebook page <http://tinyurl.com/hq6sx53>

Thousands of toads at risk as migration starts early

Thousands of toads risk being killed on our county's roads after starting their migration earlier than ever before <http://tinyurl.com/zuhd6v2>

Hedgehogs, beetles and birds on curriculum at Norwich schools

Youngsters have been learning about the wildlife that shares their playground <http://tinyurl.com/hnpakly>

Farming partnership seeks landscape-scale nature benefits for the upper Wensum Valley

A ground-breaking new partnership will see farmers and landowners across the Wensum Valley working together to provide environmental benefits on a landscape scale <http://tinyurl.com/jhsnabr>

Warden patrols will protect rare birds in the Wensum Valley from egg thieves

Last year marsh harrier, kestrel and wagtail nests were raided along the river between Sculthorpe and Guist <http://tinyurl.com/zq6r7je>

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National NEWS

'Extinct' crane fly declared alive after landing on insect expert

Basilewsky's crane fly which was thought to be extinct, was declared alive after flying onto the hand of insect expert Liza Fowler <http://tinyurl.com/zmo34ex>

'Phony peach': the disease that threatens to devastate Britain's trees and plants

Xylella fastidiosa has wreaked havoc in the US and Europe and could dwarf the impact of ash dieback in the UK <http://tinyurl.com/zzp43sl>

Natural soil treatment 'could help trees resist ash dieback'

A newly developed "enriched biochar" could help ash trees resist the Chalara disease, according to research <http://tinyurl.com/j4t7y8h>

Wacky and ornamental nest boxes dangerous for young birds, warns RSPB

People unwittingly picking up non-wooden and brightly coloured boxes that could make baby birds more conspicuous to predators <http://tinyurl.com/gw6jh5m>

Climate stirring change beneath the waves

Human-induced climate change is triggering changes beneath the waves that could have a long-term effect on marine food webs, a study suggests <http://tinyurl.com/hmaolpu>

RSPB plans 'bat-friendly' wind turbines at Bedfordshire HQ

The charity, known for its opposition to turbines, claims to have commissioned a model that will not threaten local pipistrelle and noctule bats <http://tinyurl.com/gvyq524>

Record year for fish releases in England's rivers

A record number of captive-bred fish were released in 2015 to boost populations in England's rivers, says the Environment Agency <http://tinyurl.com/hgfkcs7>

More National news here:

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Feb2016NationalNews>

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GETTING INVOLVED

Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow

There's a piece missing... we need your help to build up a picture of The Brecks' wildlife!

The Brecks is an important area for wildlife both in a UK and international context. However, many of the species records come from a few well recorded designated sites, with recording often done on an ad hoc basis making detecting changes over time difficult.

Led by NBIS, this project will establish a network of volunteers recording wildlife throughout the Breaking New Ground Landscape Partnership Scheme area (a project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund).

Whether you're a complete beginner or a seasoned surveyor, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved, with lots of support and training.

Pop along to an introductory session to find out more about the project. There will also be a variety of species ID courses and photography workshops on offer.

The project will operate at 3 levels:

- Beginner: provide training and encouragement to those new to recording wildlife.
- Species surveillance: help people take the next step into more serious recording of sites. This will allow a number of important sites in the Brecks to be monitored and will also help to ensure sustainable long-term monitoring of sites where work is taking place as part of other Breaking New Ground projects. Data collected will feed into the Norfolk Species Surveillance Network.
- River corridor survey – Little Ouse headwaters to Brandon: A non-native species survey of the Little Ouse river, from its headwaters at Redgrave and Lopham Fens to Brandon.

Whether you are an individual or part of a community group, if you are interested in getting involved, please email nbis@norfolk.gov.uk

More details at <http://tinyurl.com/ppr7mdq>

To book onto an introductory session to Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow please go to

<http://tinyurl.com/nek3zq7>



Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative Survey and Call For Data

The Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative (NNNSI) is issuing a call for data on freshwater invasive species. These data will help inform freshwater Biosecurity Plans for the western catchments of Norfolk and Suffolk, including sections of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. New records will also be added to the NBIS database.

For more information including a list of priority species and how to submit your records go to <http://tinyurl.com/z9fesyw>

Alongside the call for data, NNNSI are also running a survey on invasive non-native species. If you have 10 minutes to spare, the survey is available at www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/BiosecuritySurvey

Get involved in your local wildlife sites

Norfolk County Wildlife Action is a new two year project run by Norfolk Wildlife Trust and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund to encourage local communities to visit, enjoy and learn about the wildlife on their local sites, encouraging more people to get involved in wildlife surveying.

If you have:

- An enthusiasm for wildlife conservation in Norfolk
- A basic knowledge of plant identification
- An interest in learning how to carry out a plant or habitat survey on a county wildlife site or churchyard

then a role as a volunteer **Community Wildflower Surveyor** may just be what you are looking for.

Volunteers will receive free training, advice and support. More information at <http://tinyurl.com/h4n2msl>. If you would like to know more or to be kept informed about events and activities being run throughout the project email wild@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk or phone 01603 625540 and ask to speak to Gemma Walker.

Public asked to help against deadly algal blooms on Norfolk Broads

Scientists will be inviting people to help with collecting water samples from the Broads later this year <http://tinyurl.com/hlgbkwx>

Volunteer plea from Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Suffolk Wildlife Trust is on the hunt for volunteers to offer their services to a range of activities at Redgrave and Lopham Fen, near Diss, and Knettishall Heath, near Thetford <http://tinyurl.com/zoqhnv>

WildWalk of the Month

WildWalks are new way to record local wildlife. Enjoy a WildWalk in your local landscape and make a note of the wildlife you spot to upload afterwards to the WildWalks website (www.wild-walks.org).

There are a good variety of walks on offer to encourage you to explore the local countryside or urban green space, with a range of distances and formats from circular strolls to longer distance trails. And you can even create your own.

Over the next few months we'll be highlighting a different WildWalk each issue to inspire you to explore somewhere new and record wildlife while you do it!

We'll be kicking off next month, so in preparation, why not check out the WildWalks website and get yourself registered so you're ready to go?

WildWalks in the Brecks has been organised by NBIS working with Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trusts and British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). All of the WildWalks for the Brecks can be found under The Brecks (for Norfolk) and Suffolk Brecks (for Suffolk) living landscape drop downs.

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SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

Rare moss rediscovered in Norfolk

The first record from lowland Britain of the rare moss *Nyholmiella obtusifolia* (Blunt-leaved Bristle-moss) was made in 1990. Since then, several other records have been made in lowland Britain, but its main centre of distribution remains the Scottish Highlands. Although it was found in Cambridge fairly recently, no other record had been made in Norfolk – until now. This Red Data Book species was found on a branch of Field Maple growing on the side of a road cutting near King's Lynn. It wasn't recognised in the field, but a couple of strands were found in a tuft of another species collected for checking. Thanks to Robin Stevenson for this record and photograph.



Endangered orchid could be saved on Norfolk Broads

It may not necessarily look anything special, but this is one of the country's rarest and most endangered species <http://tinyurl.com/heh5o9v>

Polecats 'spreading across Britain'

Polecats, which were almost wiped out in Britain in the last century, have made a remarkable comeback, conservationists say <http://tinyurl.com/z9zqt6b>

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EVENTS

Lunar Yellow Underwing in the Brecks, 10th March 2016 (provisional date), 17.30, Brandon Country Park

Due to inclement weather, the second Lunar Yellow Underwing field meeting was postponed to this date.

This rescheduled field meeting will provide an introduction to identifying and recording the larvae of the rare yellow lunar underwing moth. This attractive moth is only found in the Brecks and a few other heathland sites in lowland Britain. The caterpillars overwinter feeding on grasses and are best searched for after dark.

There are still spaces available. Booking is **essential** at <http://tinyurl.com/hp3f2cr>

Big Brecks Fest, 27th – 28th March 2016, 10.00 – 4.00, West Stow Anglo Saxon Village

A family fun day out with a Breckland Theme. Come and find out more about our Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow project and have a go at our games!

<http://tinyurl.com/h3sq8le>

Spring Fling, 5th April 2016, 9.30 – 3.30, Royal Norfolk Showground

Loads of interactive fun for families! The NCC Natural Environment Team will be there, so come and say hi, learn about how you can get more involved in Norfolk's environment and have a go at our games!

<http://springfling.rnaa.org.uk/>

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AND FINALLY..

Police come to rescue 'Ollie the Otter'... <http://tinyurl.com/zad3qts>

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

Webpages: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/>; www.norfolkbiodiversity.org; www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/nonnativespecies

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