



© Danielle Engelbrecht, Snowdrops at UEA, Norwich

# Biodiversity News in Norfolk

## No 62 (February 2017)

## Welcome to our February e-bulletin!

As Spring rolls in, the landscape and species present is changing; why not try out one of our WildWalks and see what you can spot? To find out more and print off this month's WildWalk route map and description, check out **WildWalk of the month!**

In **Local NEWS**, Norfolk has played host to several migrating species, including an Arctic Seal! Meanwhile, research has been released that could help reduce the impact of development on bat populations, check out **National NEWS** to find out more.

There are lots of opportunities to take part in surveys this month, check out **GETTING INVOLVED** to find out more!

**We can announce in this issue that the 2017 Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards are open for nominations – who could you put forward, check out Local NEWS to find out more.**

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](mailto: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!

**Natural Environment Team  
Community and Environmental Services,  
Norfolk County Council**  
[nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk)

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-BulletinFeb2017.pdf> You can also download past e-bulletins as a pdf here: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/newsletterse-bulletins>

[Local NEWS](#) | [National NEWS](#) | [International NEWS](#) | [GETTING INVOLVED](#)  
[WildWalk of the Month](#) | [SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS](#) | [EVENTS](#) | [AND FINALLY](#)

[\[TOP\]](#)

## Local NEWS

### **Arctic seal spotted on Snettisham beach**

Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary were called to the beach after a member of the public made a rare sighting of a Harp seal. A flipper tag identified the seal as Summer; Summer is thought to be stopping off for a rest before migrating to the North Pole <http://tinyurl.com/zf5grcz>

### **Coastal Bioblitz: Conservationists organise Norfolk's largest wildlife survey**

The Norfolk Coast is a haven for hundreds of different species and attracts millions of visitors each year but the effects of a devastating Doris and hard winter are still unknown. It is hoped that this Bioblitz will provide a picture of our coastal biodiversity and ensure the long-term conservation of our fantastic coastline

<http://tinyurl.com/zzvd84j>

### **Safety measures save swans from flying into power lines**

Thousands of swans migrate to the Fens each winter to escape the snow and ice in their breeding grounds. One of the most important roosting sites for Bewick's swans and whooper swans is the Ouse Washes, a site surrounded by plentiful winter food in the arable landscape. WWT Welney Wetland Centre and UK Power Networks are identifying areas where birds are at risk from high-voltage power lines, installing flight diverters in priority areas to reduce collisions <http://tinyurl.com/hh5hjlf>

### **Curlew disappearing, scientists warn**

This iconic bird species tells us spring is on the way, but research warns that the species is at risk across the globe from habitat loss and climate change. Bird Conservation International reports that more than half of the world's curlews and godwits are species of conservation concern, while some are critically endangered

<http://tinyurl.com/hnw7gfy>

### **Visitors flock to Swaffham for starling murmurations**

An estimated 600,000 starlings have been causing a stir in the market town of Swaffham where the birds have been performing their acrobatics. A video of the formations can be found here <http://tinyurl.com/heodamb>

### **Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards 2017 are open for nominations**

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 who is 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://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/CBANomination>

[\[TOP\]](#)

## National NEWS

### **Research could help stop housing from impacting bat populations**

The BTO has released research which it hopes can inform decision makers nationwide. Findings suggest there would be a 60% reduction in negative effects on bat populations just by changing where developments are located <http://tinyurl.com/zpfrmag>

### **Urban butterflies decline by 69% compared to 45% drop in countryside populations**

A new study has shown that butterflies have vanished from towns and cities more rapidly than from the countryside over the past two decades. Species such as the small copper and small heath are particularly vulnerable to urban declines <http://tinyurl.com/jzz5nsx>

### **Understanding the UK's last killer whales**

The pod, which consists of 8 individuals has not produced a single new calf in the 25 years they have been scientifically monitored, nor have any new individuals joined the colony <http://tinyurl.com/hakuef5>

### **British hedgehog populations continue to decline**

Once a common sight in gardens, hedgehog populations have plummeted from 30 million in the 1950s to less than one million today. A third of the loss in hedgehogs is thought to have taken place in the last decade  
<http://tinyurl.com/zep9oc9>

[TOP]

## International NEWS

### Honeybees let out a 'whoop' when they bump into each other

A vibrational pulse produced by honeybees, long thought to be a signal to other bees to stop what they are doing, might actually be an expression of surprise. Bees produce vibrations with their wing muscles that are inaudible to humans, but scientists can detect the 'whooping' noises with accelerometers embedded in the honeycomb <http://tinyurl.com/h2k77bf>

### Seagrasses vital to coastal health

These underwater flowering plants have long been known to have anti-microbial properties, but a recent study demonstrates that their presence really does help to suppress pollution. The plants cycle nutrients, stabilise sediments, act as a carbon dioxide sink and provide nursery habitat for fisheries <http://tinyurl.com/hrhehl6>

### Restoring native plants can boost pollination

A new study suggests that removing invasive exotic plants from natural areas can act as a boost for wildlife. Bees, butterflies and birds returned to remote mountaintops in the Seychelles only six months after exotic plants were removed <http://tinyurl.com/htstggg>

### Individual ant behaviour may indicate different personalities

Differences in behaviour between individual ants can be likened to different personalities. Some ants are so different in personal preferences that they may act as the 'imagination' for the colony, helping it to expand into new habitats <http://tinyurl.com/z2rem17>

### New Zealand whales rescued at Farewell Spit

More than 200 pilot whales stranded on the remote beach in New Zealand were re-floated and returned to sea. One theory for the mass stranding is that they may have been driven to land by sharks after bite marks were found on some of the individuals. Once in shallower waters, the animals' use of echo location was impaired <http://tinyurl.com/zex6rly>

### More news here:

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Feb2017NationalNews>

[TOP]

## 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 introduction 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](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk)

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



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



To book onto an introductory session to *Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow* please go to <http://tinyurl.com/nek3zq7>

## PondNet Spawn Survey 2017

If you have a local park or garden pond with evidence of breeding frogs and toads, or you spot some spawn while out on a walk; record your findings and contribute to the national spawn survey. From now until the end of May this year, the Freshwater Habitats Trust will be running a new survey to collect important data on the location of ponds with breeding frogs and toads. For more information and to join in, visit <http://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/pondnet/spawnsurvey2017/>

## Calling all hedgehog carers

There are around 800 hedgehog rehabilitation centres in Britain, ranging from huge wildlife hospitals that handle hundreds of hedgehogs, to lone individuals taking in one or two. There is currently no centralised database to capture all of the valuable information that these dedicated volunteers generate, to help Hedgehog Street tackle this issue and to find out more visit <http://tinyurl.com/hxb2cu7>

## Winter gardening for hedgehogs

It's cold outside, but don't let that keep you from tinkering around in the garden. For more information on how to make your garden hedgehog friendly and not disturb these charismatic creatures visit here <http://tinyurl.com/zhs6rjs>

[TOP]

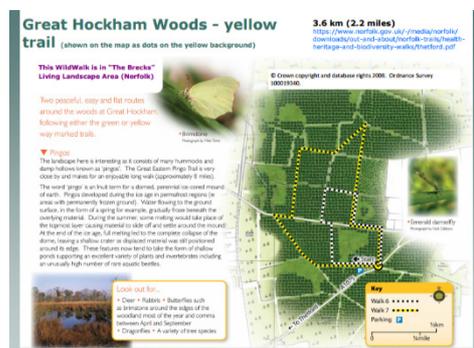
## WildWalk of the Month

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](http://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.

Our WildWalk of the Month is... **Great Hockham Woods!**

In the eastern area of the Brecklands, drier sandy soils are replaced by clays. Here, during the last Ice Age, retreating glaciers left damp hummocks and hollows, distinctive features of the landscape which are known as pingos. The northern part of the wood connects, through Cranberry Rough (an area of important wildlife value) into the Great Eastern Pingo Trail.. Find the official route description [here](#) and the recording sheet and route map to print off [here](#).



Jot down any wildlife you spot on your walk and log your sightings on the WildWalks website when you get home – find the link at [www.nbis.org.uk/breckswildwalks](http://www.nbis.org.uk/breckswildwalks)

*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.*

[TOP]

## SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

### Gecko eludes predators with tearaway skin

Many lizards can detach their tails when attacked, but the newly discovered *Geckolepis megalepis* have large scales that will tear away with ease if they come into contact with a predator. The species can grow the scales back within a matter of weeks <http://tinyurl.com/goaf7wf>

### New 'candy-striped' crab discovered

The new species of hermit crab has been named for the bright red stripes that run up its white claws and legs. Found off the coast of Venezuela, this species lives nearly 14 metres below water, hiding in crevices occupied by larger marine animals such as the moray eel <http://tinyurl.com/hygt6xa>

## Rare 'baby dragons' discovered in five new caves

Researchers have found rare blind cave salamanders in five new caves thanks to eDNA sampling, this extends the known range of the vulnerable salamanders and raises hope for their long term monitoring and conservation <http://tinyurl.com/jkjkfhy>

## Dormouse might be the first tree-climbing mammal shown to echolocate

The tree-climbing Vietnamese pygmy dormouse seems to make ultrasonic calls to guide its motion. Few mammals echolocate as vision is usually more efficient <http://tinyurl.com/ztj95vx>

## Elusive True's beaked whale filmed in wild

The first underwater footage of this elusive mammal was recorded in the deep coastal waters of the Azores and shows three of the whales surfacing. Just seven live sightings have been reported in Macaronesia, the southernmost part of their north Atlantic range <http://tinyurl.com/zt9auhu>

[\[TOP\]](#)

## EVENTS

### Volunteer Leadership Course, 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> April, Ketteringham

This course is a six hour long event. The day consists of discussions and group-based exercises covering the requirements of leading practical projects, including organisation and health & safety, and highlighting points of group dynamics. The day is designed to be both informal and fun. For further information and to book, please contact [m.webster@tcv.org.uk](mailto:m.webster@tcv.org.uk).

[\[TOP\]](#)

## AND FINALLY..

Meet the frog that can sit on a thumbnail <http://tinyurl.com/j4dqeqr>

If you wish to be removed from this mailing list, please email us: [nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk)

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)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NorfolkBiodiversityInformationService](https://www.facebook.com/NorfolkBiodiversityInformationService) ; [www.facebook.com/NorfolkInvasives](https://www.facebook.com/NorfolkInvasives)

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/NorfolkBIS>; <http://www.twitter.com/NorfolkNNSI>; <http://www.twitter.com/NorfolkBiod>

Please consider the environment before printing this email