



Biodiversity News in Norfolk



No 41 (Jan 2015)

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Welcome to our January e-bulletin

A belated Happy New Year from all of us here in the Biodiversity Team! I hope that 2015 has started well for you.

We've hit the ground running here in the office, with lots of project work, data sorting and admin to keep us busy. To top it off, we're going to be moving offices (up to the sixth floor in County Hall) in just over a week, so we've been packing up boxes, scanning documents and de-cluttering the office in preparation. The transition should be seamless, but do bear with us (particularly on the week of the 9th February) in case of problems!

Norfolk has a new county bird recorder as of 1st January 2015. Chris Allen takes over from the brilliant work of Dave and Jacquie Bridges – many thanks to them for all of their hard work. Chris' contact details are available on the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society website <http://tinyurl.com/lyl2gbk>.

It seems that an unprecedented number of plant species were found to be flowering at the New Year, according to BSBI (see National NEWS), while garden birds don't seem to be faring so well. We'll have to see what the results of last weekend's RSBP Big Garden Birdwatch can tell us. Locally, a prehistoric forest has been found off the coast of Cley and there's a new Bird Club in North East Norfolk (see Local NEWS).

Don't forget to check out the Biodiversity Blog if you've not yet had a read:
<http://norfolkbiodiversity.wordpress.com/>

SPECIES OF THE MONTH

Many thanks to those of you who have submitted records of Chinese water deer. **Please submit any more sightings of Chinese water deer here:** <http://nbis.org.uk/ChineseWaterDeer>



For February, all species are our Species of the Month!

If you go out and about in Norfolk during February, we'd love you to make a note of what species you see – be they birds, plants, mammals, fish, invertebrates, fungi, rare or common... absolutely anything – and let NBIS know about it!

To make your record count, you need to make a note of WHAT you saw (species), WHEN you saw it (date), WHERE you saw it (location) and WHO saw it (recorder). Any further details such as how many individuals you saw, whether there were males, females, juveniles or eggs present, if a plant was flowering etc are also useful.

You can record your Norfolk sightings of any species online at www.nbis.org.uk/AllSpeciesSurvey

Photos: Fungi © Adele Southall; Green Tiger Beetles © Martin Horlock; Hedgehog and Slow Worm © Ed Stocker; Oak Apple and Swans © Lizzy Oddy

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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-BulletinJan2015.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

'You don't expect to go out for a quick dive and find a forest'

Norfolk diver discovers prehistoric forest off the coast of Cley-next-the-Sea: <http://tinyurl.com/mfw885c>

Pup numbers boom at English seal colony

Blakeney Point saw 2426 seals born this year, almost double the number born there a year ago <http://tinyurl.com/qdoc4j4>. And the BBCs Winterwatch filmed the seals at night for the first time <http://tinyurl.com/m94szun>.

North East Norfolk gets a new bird club

<http://tinyurl.com/n992kjk>

Filming by night to discover the secret life of the knot at Snettisham

Crews used low light thermal imaging cameras to capture ground-breaking footage of thousands of the tiny waders <http://tinyurl.com/qx85ulc>

A year in the life of a magical place in west Norfolk

People living around, or visiting, the Great Ouse wetlands are being asked to help chronicle a year in the life of its wondrous wild inhabitants <http://tinyurl.com/ledc9ej>

Farm Conservation changes its name

The organisation is now known as Norfolk FWAG and they have a new website: <http://www.norfolkfwag.org/>

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National NEWS

Hundreds more plant species in flower after warmest year on record

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland finds an unprecedented 15 per cent of wild plants are in flower during its New Year Plant Hunt <http://tinyurl.com/p9ptvuh>

Local wildlife sites not protected by statute are being ruined by development

A tenth of 'secret spaces' have been lost or damaged in the past five years <http://tinyurl.com/n39sme3>

Should we reintroduce the lynx?

<http://tinyurl.com/ndsz6ug>

Relocation of animals could drive some species towards extinction

Scientists have found the number of animals moved to make way for building projects far outnumber science-led relocations to recover populations <http://tinyurl.com/m53wkb9>

Dwindling numbers of common bird species revealed in report

House sparrows, starlings and spotted flycatchers are among three species of garden birds that are experiencing severe declines, a new report has revealed <http://tinyurl.com/oaank5a>

Fingerprints 'breakthrough' for wildlife crime investigators

<http://tinyurl.com/kyqsgml>

Rare European duck doing twice as well in protected areas

<http://tinyurl.com/oqe3msh>

More National news here:

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Jan2015NationalNews>

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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>

Stop the Aliens Campaign

The Norfolk Rivers Trust has launched a Crowdfunding campaign to raise £1000 to buy traps and equipment to capture and eradicate non-native species in our chalk rivers. Pledging money can earn rewards! See their Crowdfunder page for more details: <http://tinyurl.com/qdefxq8>

Slugs of Britain and Ireland key available

If you need some help in identifying your slimy garden visitors, the Field Studies Council have the guide for you!

<http://tinyurl.com/nted3g4>



County Wildlife Site of the Month

County Wildlife Sites are often little-known sites of importance to wildlife. While not protected by law they are taken into account during the planning process. Some of them are privately owned and do not allow public access. However there are many which you can go and visit.

The County Wildlife Site for this month is... **Mousehold Heath!**

Located in the north east of Norwich, and within walking distance of the city centre, Mousehold Heath is a large area of former heathland which is now mainly covered by deciduous woodland. However some patches of acid grassland and heathland remain - see if you can find the patches of gorse and heather. Vinegar pond on the site is a great place to spot frogs, particularly in the spring when they breed there in abundance! And if geology is your thing, you can follow the Mousehold Heath Earth Heritage Trail and discover some of the fascinating history of the site. Find the details of the trail online at <http://tinyurl.com/ls6yfp6>.

Find more details about Mousehold Heath here: <http://tinyurl.com/n39cq7m>.

If you visit Mousehold Heath, NBIS would love to know what species you spot there – let us know at <http://www.nbis.org.uk/AllSpeciesSurvey>

Photo: Frogs in Vinegar Pond, Mousehold Heath © Lizzy Oddy

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SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

Another First for Norfolk

During May 2014, ants of the species *Formica cunicularia* were recorded for the first time in Norfolk, bringing the total ant species recorded in Norfolk to 27. This species has been recorded before in other parts of East Anglia, but never before in Norfolk, so it was a very exciting find. These ants were discovered nesting in St. Mary's Churchyard, Haddiscoe by the County Recorder, Doreen Wells and confirmation of their identification was made by Mike Fox, BWARS (Bees, Wasps & Ants Recording Society).

Five species of ant were recorded on this site: *Formica cunicularia*, *Formica fusca*, *Lasius flavus*, *Lasius niger* and *Myrmica scabrinodis*. The two *Formica* species are similar, but *F. fusca* is entirely black, whereas *F. cunicularia* has reddish areas on the body of varying degrees, such as red cheeks, thorax and legs.

Blue Fungi Spotted

A bright blue fungus has been spotted by Alistair Milner at Kettlewell Lane in King's Lynn, growing on dead silver birch. It has been identified by experts as Cobalt Crust, *Terana caenolea*. According to county fungi recorder Tony Leech, there have been several other recent records of this striking and unusual species in Briston, Bungay and Strumpshaw. So keep your eyes peeled when you're out and about!

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EVENTS

Wild Wednesday, Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth, 18th Feb, 11am-4pm

Take part in fun activities led by wildlife experts. Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service and Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative will be there, along with other wildlife organisations!

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

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AND FINALLY..

Thrown to the lions - a purrrfect use for old Christmas trees: <http://tinyurl.com/o66k7cr>

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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; www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/nonnativespecies

Facebook: www.facebook.com/NorfolkBiodiversityInformationService ; www.facebook.com/NorfolkInvasives

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