



# Biodiversity News in Norfolk

No 50  
(January 2016)



Photo: A Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) for our golden edition! These beautiful birds are common winter visitors to Norfolk and can often be seen both at the coast and inland © [Ómar Runólfsson](#) and licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic](#) license.

## Welcome to our January e-bulletin

A Happy New Year to you all and welcome to our golden 50<sup>th</sup> edition of Biodiversity News in Norfolk!

Our first edition of Biodiversity News in Norfolk was written back in April 2011 and reported on the new East of England standard service for Local Environmental Record Centres, a Bats and Trees conference and the 'Check, Clean, Dry' campaign promoted by NNNSI. Written by a number of different people over the years, the e-bulletin has grown and evolved and is hopefully still a useful and interesting read. If you'd like to let us know what you think of the e-bulletin in its current form, please do fill in our short survey at <http://www.nbis.org.uk/e-bulletin-survey>.

We've had a great end to 2015 and start of 2016.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Planning and Biodiversity Forum, organised by the Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnerships was a great success and had some good coverage in the East Anglian Daily Times (<http://tinyurl.com/hn6ohgu>).

The Breaking New Ground 'Recorders of Tomorrow' project is going well. Last December, 32 people attended a 'Birds of the Brecks' training day at the offices of the BTO and learnt skills to help them identify birds by sight and sound. Unfortunately there weren't many birds to be seen on the afternoon walk – they'd all been blown away by the high winds – but the small mammal trapping taster session did produce a field vole! Then, in early January, the classroom at Santon Downham was packed out for the weekend as enthusiastic volunteers sorted through invertebrates caught in pitfall traps in the Brecks. Not only did they learn new invertebrate ID skills (and enjoy a free pizza lunch!) they were also contributing to important research into the effects of different site management techniques on invertebrates. See some photos from the event at <http://tinyurl.com/hq8ly3p>

Included in this edition, daffodils blooming in January (see National NEWS), a drop in seal pupping at Blakeney (local NEWS) and the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch is back (see GETTING INVOLVED).

Finally, if you still have a few spare pennies left after Christmas, a new book documents the wildlife of Waveney Forest in east Norfolk near Great Yarmouth. Survey work has revealed that the Forest and the surrounding marshland and reedbed provide habitat for many legally protected species such as the Norfolk Hawker dragonfly and Water Vole. The open heathland is a rare habitat in east Norfolk, as is the birch carr and Sphagnum bog. The book (ISBN-13: 9780956469250), published by Forrest Text, is available from the

Natural History Book Service: <http://www.nhbs.com/title/204056/the-natural-history-of-waveney-forest>. The book can also be purchased at a reduced rate (40% discount) from the author by sending a cheque (made payable to Mr T.A. Gardiner) for £15 (p&p included) to 45 Maltings Wharf, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 1XE. Any queries please email Tim at: [timgardiner134@btinternet.com](mailto:timgardiner134@btinternet.com)

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## GRID SQUARE OF THE MONTH

Many thanks to all of you who have submitted records to our Grid Square of the Month surveys throughout 2015. We had a varied response to each square and can now reveal that the top three squares with the highest number of records submitted were:

1. TG1807 (Norwich)	273 records
2. TG1101 (Wymondham)	147 records
3. TL8683 (Thetford)	32 records

We hope you enjoyed getting out and about in these grid squares and recording the wildlife you saw. We'd love it if you'd like to continue recording in these squares (or elsewhere in Norfolk). You can submit your records online at <http://nbis.org.uk/AllSpeciesSurvey> or email them to us at [nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto: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](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-BulletinJan2016.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

Local NEWS stories over the past 49 editions have included the Norfolk Bat Survey; a seal pupping boom at Blakeney; following the travels of Chris the cuckoo between Norfolk and Africa; the Norwich cathedral peregrines; fen raft spiders being released into the Broads; and the NBP Community Biodiversity Awards. Less favourable stories covered include the spread of killer shrimp in the Broads and the ash dieback crisis.

You can find all of the back issues of the e-bulletin at <http://www.nbis.org.uk/newsletterse-bulletins>

### **Pigs roam free to help clear the forest floor in Holt**

Seven pigs have been released to munch through the dense bracken and bramble on the ground of Holt Country Park <http://tinyurl.com/zxltus7>

### **Blakeney seal pup drop is 'good news' for reserve**

The number of seals born at England's largest colony has dropped for the first time after nine years of

growth <http://tinyurl.com/hvghmyt>

### **Hunt for eco-heroes extends across Norfolk**

An awards scheme which gives recognition to the greenest groups and most environmentally aware organisations is expanding beyond Norwich this year – to cover the whole of Norfolk <http://tinyurl.com/gt7hzc2>

### **Spectacular sunset means double delight for Norfolk photographer**

A spectacular sunset and a starry night have been picked as the winner and runner-up of a competition capturing the beauty of Norfolk <http://tinyurl.com/znoff6x>

### **Study to help solve mystery of seal deaths in Norfolk**

Scientists are to conduct research into the deaths of seals living on our shores, to better understand the threats facing them <http://tinyurl.com/o3kdqkr>

### **Octopuses left high and dry at Heacham, west Norfolk**

Astonished marine experts at Hunstanton Sea Life Sanctuary raced to the rescue of two beached octopuses yesterday <http://tinyurl.com/zbm8b7o>

### **White storks study aims to re-introduce breeding in the UK**

A study of white storks in the UK is being carried out with a view to encouraging them to breed in the wild for the first time in centuries <http://tinyurl.com/gwh64dd>

### **River Waveney restoration project helps fish population**

The work focused on a 1.5 mile section of the river between Scole and Billingford, and aimed to help the fish population and improve surrounding habitat for other species <http://tinyurl.com/j2fks4d>

### **Norfolk Broads and Cley Marshes nominated for prestigious wildlife awards**

<http://tinyurl.com/hyuoscl>

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## **National NEWS**

National NEWS stories covered over the past 49 editions have included the Natural Environment White Paper, the launch of the PlantTracker app, Marine Conservation Zones, the positive impact of biodiversity on wellbeing, the Big Butterfly Count and the result of a poll to find Britain's favourite insect (it was the buff-tailed bumblebee!)

### **Daffodils bloom across UK during unseasonal December weather**

Flowers usually more associated with Easter than Christmas seen around the country in a week of above-average seasonal temperatures <http://tinyurl.com/hlextf5>

### **Surge in acute cases of Lyme disease in Britain spurs ministers to act**

The spread of Lyme disease could be due to a growing number of ticks, more wild mammals that host them, and an increase in visitors to areas where they live <http://tinyurl.com/hvzxv8s>

### **Migratory birds 'lack world protection'**

More than 90% of migratory birds are poorly protected on their marathon journeys around the world, according to research <http://tinyurl.com/znfer5v>

### **Conservation first as rehabilitated Siberian tiger gives birth in the wild**

Orphaned tiger who was rehabilitated and released back into the wild has given birth to two cubs in Russia, raising hopes for the species' survival <http://tinyurl.com/hrjyung>

### **Researchers name new whale species after mythic creature from Moby Dick**

Whale named 'Albicetus', meaning white whale, after cetacean in Herman Melville's novel after 15m-year-old fossil is re-examined <http://tinyurl.com/jrmzpmx>

### **Poachers using science papers to target newly discovered species**

Journals begin withholding locations after warnings the data is helping smugglers drive lizards, snakes and frogs to 'near-extinction' <http://tinyurl.com/hvh7e4b>

## What does the Paris agreement mean for the world's other 8 million species?

In December, the world's nations agreed on an aggressive plan to combat climate change. But what, if anything, will the landmark Paris agreement do for thousands of species already under threat from global warming?

<http://tinyurl.com/jn9oxus>

**More National news here:**

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Jan2016NationalNews>

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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 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>

**To book onto an introductory session to Wildlife Recorders of Tomorrow please go to <http://tinyurl.com/nek3zg7>**



### How to take part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch

This year the survey will take place over the weekend of the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January <http://tinyurl.com/z4fh9fn>

Photo: Goldfinch © [Oliver Dixon](#) and licensed for [reuse](#) under this [Creative Commons Licence](#).

Will you spot one of these in your garden during the Big Garden Birdwatch?

## Wildlife Trust wants public to keep their eyes open for special local flora and fauna

Their winter survey is asking for sightings of tree sparrows, mistletoe and stoats <http://tinyurl.com/zmkzqfo>

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## SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past 49 editions we've reported on over 35 species that are new to Norfolk, new to a part of Norfolk, rediscovered in Norfolk after many years or, in one case, discovered in Norfolk and new to science (the earthstar *Gaestrum britannicum*). These species have included (amongst others) a number of mosses, liverworts, fungi and moths, an ant, a spider and the now regularly appearing humpback whale! Norfolk is definitely the place to be!

## Kingfishers making a comeback in the Fens of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire

Kingfishers are becoming increasingly common thanks to a helping hand digging their burrows

<http://tinyurl.com/zzvrpa4>

## **The threat to bittern's survival is downgraded following new study**

While more than a quarter of the UK's bird species are in need of urgent help, there has been some good news for some of Eastern England's most recognisable wildlife <http://tinyurl.com/grpp89n>

## **Thousands of godwits migrate to Norfolk**

They come from the frozen far north to our – currently – not so frozen east <http://tinyurl.com/gsupu4x>

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## **EVENTS**

### **Lichens of the Brecks – Churchyard Lichens, 30 January, 10:30 start, St Peters Church, Brandon**

Learn about churchyard lichens with Peter Lambley, County Recorder for Lichens, Norfolk. This field meeting will provide an introduction to identifying and recording lichens. This is a taster session and if you're keen to develop your skills, there will be further workshops in 2016. All skill levels are welcome, as training will be provided. All you need is an enthusiasm for conservation and the Brecks! This event is FREE but booking is essential.

Email [nbis@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:nbis@norfolk.gov.uk) for more information and book at <http://tinyurl.com/nbs4s7w>

### **Lunar Yellow Underwing in the Brecks, 4<sup>th</sup> February, Time TBC, Weeting Heath (*backup date 11<sup>th</sup> Feb\**) and 18<sup>th</sup> February, Time TBC, Brandon Country Park (*backup date 25<sup>th</sup> Feb\**)**

These evening field meetings provide an introduction to identifying and recording the larvae of the rare yellow lunar underwing. This attractive moth is found only 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.

*\*Backup dates in case the weather is inclement. Attendees need to be available for both dates*

More details at <http://tinyurl.com/h338agc> Booking is **essential**. Book for the Weeting Heath event here:

<http://tinyurl.com/glczocu>. Book for the Brandon Country Park event here: <http://tinyurl.com/hp3f2cr>

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## **AND FINALLY..**

**Why did the elephant seal cross the road?** <http://tinyurl.com/zzuav7j>

**And you think YOU ate too much over Christmas...?** <http://tinyurl.com/hjl4j5g>

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