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Biodiversity News in Norfolk

No 61 (January 2017)

Welcome to our January e-bulletin!

January has been a busy month for wildlife, with old and new species appearing all over East Anglia; visit **Local NEWS** to find out more!

In **National NEWS**, beavers have officially been given native species status; whilst in **International NEWS**, the oldest recorded seabird has laid an egg!

There are lots of opportunities to take part in surveys or help out at wildlife sanctuaries this winter, check out **GETTING INVOLVED** to find out more!

We can announce this issue that the 2017 Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards are open for nominations soon – who could you put forward (it could even be yourself!)? Keep an eye on next month's e-bulletin and our social media for further updates! Contact su.waldron@norfolk.gov.uk for further information.

Why not try out one of our WildWalks and see if you can spot anything? To find out more and print off this month's WildWalk route map and description, check out **WildWalk of the Month!**

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!

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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-BulletinJan2017.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

Rare beetles discovered in the Brecks

Volunteers working on the Pine Lines and Pine Connections part of the HLF funded Breaking New Ground Project have discovered new sites for rare beetles in the Brecks. *Harpalus froelichi*, the brush-thighed seed eater beetle and *Ophonus laticollis*, the set-aside downy back beetle have both been recorded at new sites <http://tinyurl.com/zkbwugo>

Children 'go wild' to protect Norfolk Coast's AONB

The Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty's Sustainable Development Fund is supporting five projects to transform and protect the coast. The funding has been used to help schools build sensory gardens, community wild spaces, vegetable gardens and even a 'sea sanctuary' for their students <http://tinyurl.com/gsu64jq>

Piece of Steppe Bison unearthed in Sheringham

A fossil hunter believes he may have found part of an animal which last roamed the earth more than 10,000 years ago. This find was made less than 10 miles from sites where parts of mammoth, rhino and hippo have been unearthed in the last 3 decades <http://tinyurl.com/hzegsh9>

Tidal surges and record breeding season: trouble for Norfolk coast seals?

This year has seen a record number of seal pups born on Norfolk Coast, with over 2,300 pups born at Blakeney alone <http://tinyurl.com/hya9nm5>. Unfortunately the news is not all good, with this increase in births comes a reduction in monitoring <http://tinyurl.com/hyopgr9>; a strain on the pup rescue service <http://tinyurl.com/jgco79w>; more disturbance from visitors <http://tinyurl.com/h3l3zru> and increased exposure to extreme weather <http://tinyurl.com/j3rnhty>

Final Norwich peregrine of 2016 dies after surgery

Following a dramatic series of events at the top of Norwich Cathedral over the summer, the last of four siblings, YY, has passed. YY recently became injured during a hunt and sadly failed to recover after corrective surgery <http://tinyurl.com/j9p6lz>

Planning ahead to save biodiversity

The Suffolk and Norfolk Planning and Biodiversity seminar provides people responsible for making decisions about the natural and built environment with ideal opportunities to discuss some of today's most important biodiversity issues. Speakers from the planning and wildlife sectors told the seminar about the latest ideas from the practical, hands-on stages of development to strategic, long-term spatial planning

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National NEWS

Seasonal wetlands face uncertain future

Seasonal wetlands are ecologically important habitats that become visible during rainy seasons. These ecosystems support unique flora and fauna species that do not occur in permanent wetlands. Poor land management practice is one of the biggest threats to these unique habitats <http://tinyurl.com/jkz3mab>

Beavers given native species status

After being hunted to extinction in the British Isles 300 years ago, large populations of wild beavers can now be found living in the southern and western Highlands of Scotland. Subsequently, beavers have been designated as a native British species. This is the first formal reintroduction of a native mammal in the UK, a significant milestone in the process of rewilding parts of the British Isles <http://tinyurl.com/ho7vs2a>

More urban foxes than previously thought, study finds

Red foxes are flourishing in urban areas; in the UK alone, populations have risen from an estimated 33,000 in the 1990s to 150,000 today. Reports suggest that this may be caused by foxes expanding into new habitat <http://tinyurl.com/jp43shn>

A 'city of trees' to be planted

A project aims to plant three million trees, one for every person in Greater Manchester over the next 25 years. The project hopes to not only 'green' the region, but also to improve an understanding of the benefits that trees provide to society <http://tinyurl.com/zwqwwky>

Pesticides may stop bees buzzing and releasing pollen, say scientists

Preliminary results in a new study find that insecticides harm the ability of bees to vibrate flowers and shake out the pollen to fertilise crops. These results are consistent with previous work that has shown neonicotinoid pesticides to reduce learning and memory in bees <http://tinyurl.com/z6yc4om>

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International NEWS

Giraffes facing 'silent extinction' as populations plunge

A dramatic drop in giraffe populations over the past 30 years has seen the world's tallest land mammal classified as vulnerable to extinction. Numbers have gone from around 155,000 in 1985 to 97,000 in 2015 according to the IUCN <http://tinyurl.com/znuumgs>

Great Barrier Reef suffered worst bleaching in 2016, report finds

Higher water temperatures in 2016 caused the worst destruction of corals ever recorded on Australia's Great Barrier Reef. 67% of corals died in the reef's Northern section and scientists warn recovery could be difficult if climate change continues <http://tinyurl.com/hzkuwpp>

Ants use the Sun and memories to navigate

Experiments suggest ants can navigate by plotting the Sun's position in the sky combined with visual information about their surroundings <http://tinyurl.com/hujcsgt>

World's oldest known seabird lays egg

Wisdom, a Laysan albatross, is the world's oldest known breeding bird in the wild. Wisdom has laid an egg at the age of 66 after returning to a wildlife refuge in the Pacific Ocean. Laysan albatrosses typically live for 12 to 40 years and spend the majority of their lives in the air <http://tinyurl.com/grnuwj4>

Tiny crustaceans pollinate underwater plants

Seagrass pollen swirls around on currents and tides, but new research suggests that underwater invertebrates can move pollen between flowers in the same way that bees pollinate plants on land <http://tinyurl.com/hh2q5mu>

More news here:

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Jan2017NationalNews>

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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

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>



Take part in the Wildlife Recording Ethics Survey

Breaking New Ground and NBIS are carrying out research into the ethics of recording Brecks' wildlife as part of a paper for the Journal of Breckland Studies. The paper will investigate key concerns regarding the ethics of wildlife recording. To take part in the survey, visit <http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/M0YX8/>

Flagship Pond Photo Competition

Help the Freshwater Habitats Trust celebrate 70 Flagship Pond sites across England! The Flagship Pond mission is to protect these places by supporting the dedicated teams of people who care for them. To celebrate these Flagship Pond sites, you are invited to take photos that revel in the landscape and habitats, the plants and animals, the people and the heritage, through the seasons. Find out more here <http://tinyurl.com/z2yw2xq>

The Norfolk Ponds Project would like to know what you think of farmland ponds

As part of the Norfolk Ponds Project the Pond Restoration Research Group at UCL is studying the role of agricultural ponds in supporting wildlife conservation. In agricultural areas, ponds can provide important habitats for wild animals and plants. However, it is not known what people think about farmland ponds in general. They are also trying to find out the willingness of farmers and land managers to restore overgrown ponds. This will help focus the aims of the Norfolk Ponds Project which was launched in 2014 to try and reverse the decline of Norfolk's ponds in our agricultural landscapes.

NPP are aiming to collect data from 200 anonymous participants. To say thank you for your support NPP have a £75 Amazon voucher for one lucky winner who will be announced as soon as the survey closes. Visit <https://opinio.ucl.ac.uk/s?s=ponds> to find out more and take part in the survey.

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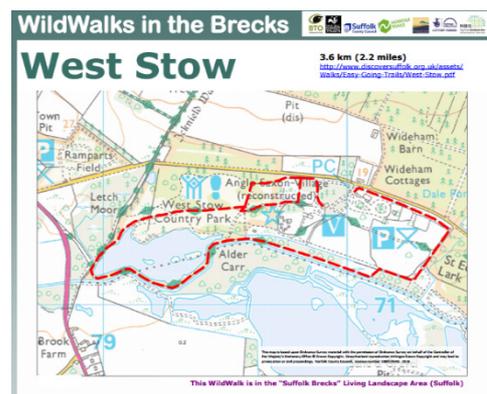
WildWalk of the Month

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.

Our WildWalk of the Month is... **West Stow!**

West Stow Country Park is located alongside the River Lark and adjacent to lakes and heathland providing a varied and fascinating day out. With plenty to do for the whole family, the park contains 3 marked trails along the river, over the heath and through the woods. Each uses natural paths with benches along the routes. Find the official route description here (<http://tinyurl.com/gtofxbo>) and the recording sheet and route map to print off here (<http://tinyurl.com/h245r5r>).



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

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

Antelope revived in Sahara years after going extinct in the wild

Scimitar-horned oryx have been reintroduced in the wild after a two-decade absence. The desert antelopes were once widespread across northern Africa, but were hunted to extinction in their natural habitat in the 1990s <http://tinyurl.com/gtm9cla>

How baby flatfish grow into the wonkiest animals in the world

When Japanese flounder are newly hatched, they have eyes on opposite sides of their heads like most other fish. After three weeks, one eye migrates over the top of the skull to the other side. At this point the fish tips sideways and swims flat against the ground <http://tinyurl.com/hvba9kl>

Concerns over first snow and common leopards found in same area

Video footage showing snow leopards and common leopards sharing the same habitat on the Tebetan plateau has caused concern amongst conservationists. It is estimated that 30-50% of the current snow leopard habitat in the Himalayas will be lost because of the shifting tree line and shrinking of the alpine zone. Changing habitat and increased competition from the more ecologically flexible common leopard may cause population decline <http://tinyurl.com/hfphcdk>

A new species of gibbon has been found in China

The animal has been studied for some time, but new research confirms it is different from all other gibbons. The species has been named the Skywalker hoolock gibbon <http://tinyurl.com/j42tz3s>

Elusive new ruby seadragon filmed in wild

Ruby seadragons, spiny fish that live in the deep waters off Western Australia, have been recorded alive and swimming for the first time. First described as a species in 2015, the seadragon lives more than 50 meters below water <http://tinyurl.com/hef3zso>

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EVENTS

Thank you from the Environment Team!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who joined us at our events in 2016 and the recent bug sorting marathon! We have run many events in the last 12 months, looking at dragonflies, fungi, riverside mammals, bees, hoverflies, plants, hedgerows, birds and lichen; none of which would be possible without you! Events will start to pick up again in March, watch this space!

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AND FINALLY..

Lost seal shocks Blakeney resident with surprise visit to her home <http://tinyurl.com/jn2ggkn>

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