



# Biodiversity News in Norfolk

## No 46 (July 2015)

Photo: Fragrant Orchid at Whitwell Common © Ed Stocker

## Welcome to our July e-bulletin

Another exciting species discovery this month, showing that Norfolk really is the place to be. Pip Collyer has found a spider species new to Britain at Winterton dunes (see SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS). Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership recently hosted the 2015 Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards, where fifteen awards were given out to outstanding Norfolk conservation projects (see Local NEWS). And the Norwich Bat Group has a number of bat walks organised over the summer (see EVENTS for more details).

After a lot of hard work, the 2014 and 2015 County Wildlife Site updates are now available. As of July 2015 there are 1326 County Wildlife Sites in Norfolk. Find out more about the County Wildlife Site system here <http://www.nbis.org.uk/CWS> and here <http://tinyurl.com/oqv4tql>, and see the updated Norfolk Local Sites Handbook here <http://tinyurl.com/pgpu9ow>.

In other news, people are being warned not to feed seagulls, following a number of highly publicised attacks on people and pets (see National NEWS) and the Big Butterfly Count 2015 has begun – find out how you can spend 15 minutes to help monitor Britain's butterflies in GETTING INVOLVED.

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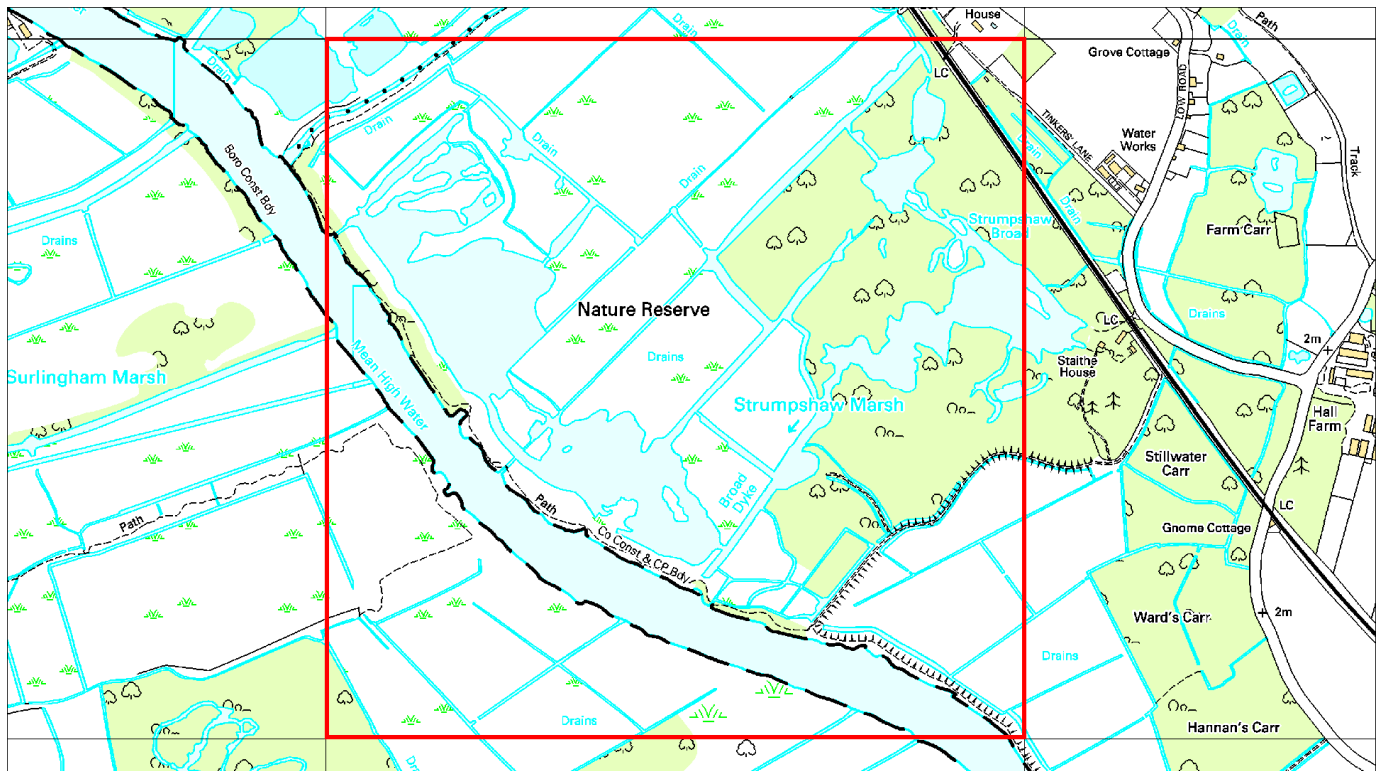
### GRID SQUARE OF THE MONTH

Many thanks to all of you who have submitted records of our Species of the Month over the last couple of years. We are trying something new for 2015 – grid square of the month. Each month we will highlight a 1km grid square somewhere in Norfolk, and ask you to help record as many species as possible from within that grid square. At the end of the year we will see which grid square has the highest number of records submitted. **Of course you can still submit records from other areas of Norfolk as usual on our All Species survey:** <http://nbis.org.uk/AllSpeciesSurvey>

Thanks to all of you who submitted records for our Grid Square of the Month from the June e-bulletin. The Norwich

square is still very much in the lead based on the number of species records – can any other square beat it?!

Our next Grid Square of the Month is **TG3306** in **Strumpshaw Fen**.



A popular RSPB Reserve, Strumpshaw Fen is home to a fantastic array of wildlife, including rarities such as swallowtail butterfly and bittern. This grid square includes much of the walk around the broads and marsh area, including the two main bird hides and also part of the River Yare. There is a small charge for non RSPB members to enter the reserve, which is open from dawn until dusk.

**You can submit your records at <http://nbis.org.uk/TG3306>**

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 within the grid square!

Remember, trespassing is a crime, so only go to areas accessible to the public.

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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-BulletinJul2015.pdf> You can also download past e-bulletins as a pdf here: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/newsletterse-bulletins>

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## AND FINALLY

### Local NEWS

#### **Wildlife heroes celebrated at Norfolk Community Biodiversity Awards**

Norfolk's "wildlife heroes" were celebrated at an annual awards scheme which recognises the county's most inspiring environmental and conservation projects <http://tinyurl.com/phkgw4f>. Read more about the nominees and winners here <http://tinyurl.com/oq85ba2> and here <http://tinyurl.com/nvbs42u>.

#### **Fencing agreed for Whitwell Common**

Norfolk County Council ecologist Ed Stocker and the Whitwell Common Trustees have successfully received permission from the Secretary of State to fence 5 hectares of Whitwell Common SSSI and enable grazing with local Highland cattle.

Norfolk County Council has worked closely with Natural England, The Hawk and Owl Trust, Whitwell Common Trustees and local contractors to submit the application which will provide sustainable long term management of the Fen vegetation on the site and promote the fantastic diversity of bog plants that already exist.

Whitwell Common SSSI is a Valley Mire habitat and is a wonderful place to visit in summer to see marsh helleborine, pyramidal & fragrant orchids, bog pimpernel, adders tongue and brook weed as well as a rich diversity of more common orchids and bog plants.

The next stage for the group is to find funding for the fencing work which when in place will allow us to spend the Higher Level Stewardship money on specific management to benefit the priority species rather than the majority being spent on scrub control.

Whitwell Common SSSI is located on the main road south of the town of Reepham and Whitwell Station. The main access point is in the layby next to the telephone box.

#### **Survey reveals the secret world of Norfolk's bats – and sheds light on continental visitors**

Renowned as bloodsuckers, vampires and creatures of the night, bats have long suffered from a deeply sinister and mysterious reputation <http://tinyurl.com/ojoliqs>

#### **Norfolk drone's pictures chart course of river projects**

A modern photo "drone" is helping chart the state of Norfolk's ancient rivers to help conservation work <http://tinyurl.com/q6v6sfh>

#### **Conservation efforts are underway near Diss to save the rare pool frog**

Blacksmiths Cottage Nursery, near Diss has become the temporary home for pool frog tadpoles as part of a reintroduction programme <http://tinyurl.com/pruhqzz>

#### **RSPB drive in Norfolk to get more children interested in wildlife**

Retired male birdwatchers are already a mainstay of the RSPB and the charity is now making a push to attract more families and children to its sites <http://tinyurl.com/nlec8h2>

#### **Tiny snails could hold up duelling of A47 Acle Straight**

<http://tinyurl.com/npwtrpw>

#### **Pulverising hundreds of bees to extract DNA only way to save species, says UEA professor**

This "bee soup" made from hundreds of crushed insects is the only way to provide accurate large-scale bee monitoring programmes based on DNA data, they claim <http://tinyurl.com/pqkxfay>

#### **Young of three vulnerable bird species among wildlife killed in Thetford Forest fire**

Experts at the BTO have raised fears that the chicks and eggs of nightjar, woodlark and tree pipit will almost certainly have been among the wildlife destroyed by fire in early July <http://tinyurl.com/nmabhdy>

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## National NEWS

### **Orchid spotters map shifting blooms**

A citizen science project to study when and where orchids bloom around the UK has already revealed 200 new flowering locations for particular species <http://tinyurl.com/qbt8h8u>

### **Do not feed seagulls, or they will attack, RSPB warns**

The RSPB calls on councils to introduce new bylaws to tackle the problem <http://tinyurl.com/qd87vxc>

### **Pine marten spotted in England for the first time in over 100 years**

Elusive cat-sized member of the stoat and weasel family believed to be extinct may have been living in the Shropshire hills for years <http://tinyurl.com/pq7a8e7>

### **Can Germany protect the wildlife havens on its former military bases?**

62 former military bases have been turned into nature conservation areas, but they face challenges from careless motocross bikers and unexploded ordnance <http://tinyurl.com/pk4chxj>

### **Girl, 10, suffers third degree burns after picking up giant hogweed**

<http://tinyurl.com/oovrjga>

### **More than 2000sq km of British countryside lost to development in six years**

Forests, farmland and wetlands are being cleared to make way for new housing, mineral extraction, golf courses and wind farms <http://tinyurl.com/qjlg2m>

### **Spanish town puts its pigeons on the pill in bid to reduce numbers**

Officials estimate the population will fall by up to 80 per cent within five years <http://tinyurl.com/nckpm2p>

### **Extend UK national park model across London, say campaigners**

<http://tinyurl.com/q4mxqjw>

### **Defra's 2015 England Natural Environment Indicators are now out**

<http://tinyurl.com/pouj5xq>

**More National news here:**

<http://www.nbis.org.uk/news#Jul2015NationalNews>

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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 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>



### Sign up now for the Norfolk Bat Survey

The Norfolk Bat Survey ([www.batsurvey.org](http://www.batsurvey.org)) returns this year for its third year running, with plans to be even bigger and better. The survey, which uses automated bat detectors to record the presence and activity of bats, needs the help of volunteers willing to put out detectors.

Over the past two years the project was able to survey 786 1-km squares (about 15% of Norfolk), and received over 600,000 high-quality recordings of bats, making this one of the largest projects of its type in the world. The aim is to increase survey coverage to 25% of Norfolk and add to existing knowledge in neighbouring Suffolk. With your help, we can do this.

Last year there were more people wanting to take part in some parts of the county than there were detectors to support, so you need to be quick in expressing interest, and reserving your 1-km square to survey. You can do this via [www.batsurvey.org/sign-up](http://www.batsurvey.org/sign-up). After selecting a 1-km square (or squares if interested in covering more than one square), you will be given a web link to a site where you can reserve a detector to use from the most convenient Bat Monitoring Centre to you. If in Suffolk, you can sign up through our Projects in Suffolk page [www.batsurvey.org/projects-in-suffolk/](http://www.batsurvey.org/projects-in-suffolk/). Please note that this survey requires three different points, ideally at least 200-metres apart, to be surveyed on consecutive nights within a 1-km square.

### The Big Butterfly Count is back

You have until the 9<sup>th</sup> August to get out and spend 15 minutes counting butterflies. Will the small tortoiseshell continue its remarkable recovery <http://tinyurl.com/otgcbkh>? Find out how to get involved and submit your sightings at <http://www.bigbutterflycount.org/>

## 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... **Happy Valley!**

A site comprising unimproved, dry acid grassland, with free draining sandy soils, Happy Valley forms a large natural hollow at the top of the cliff. It is managed for informal recreation and is crossed by a number of small paths.

The grassland sward is diverse in places, while bracken dominates the steep bank to the east of the site. Occasional patches of bare sand contain sand spurrey, buckshorn plantain and marram grass. Gorse is frequent along the cliff top and sea buckthorn is occasionally seen.

Access is from the cliff top path from Cromer, or along a path off Overstrand Road just before the Country Club and golf course. A

number of walks include Happy Valley - for example try <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC158023>

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

Photo: Happy Valley, Cromer © [Humphrey Bolton](#) and licensed for [reuse](#) under this [Creative Commons Licence](#)

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## SPECIES HIGHLIGHTS

### New spider species discovered in Norfolk

When Pip Collyer was searching Winterton dunes for spiders the last thing he expected to find was a new species for Britain. No dinner plate sized species this - at only 1.6mm in length it is hardly likely to generate fear in any arachnophobes.

“Neither I or several of my colleagues could initially identify the spider” said Pip. “That’s because it wasn’t in any of the British identification books” he went on to say. The tiny spider was eventually identified by Dr Peter Merrett of the British Arachnological Society.

The spider which does not have a common name and goes under the catchy title of *Syedra myrmicarum* is a central and northern European species and lives a life closely associated with ants. Pip continues the search for more specimens. <http://tinyurl.com/omy9n5d>

### Celebrations as cranes deliver rare trio of chicks at Suffolk nature reserve

Three young cranes have fledged, in the best breeding season yet <http://tinyurl.com/o9x4h65>

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## EVENTS

### Norwich Bat Group Events

Summer bat walks with the Norwich bat group <http://www.norwichbatgroup.co.uk/events/>

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## AND FINALLY..

Kestrel rescued in West Norfolk after getting stuck in grille of a sports car. (Don't worry, it's making a good recovery) <http://tinyurl.com/ou53ybn>

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