The Brecks biodiversity audit also generated much media interest when the project report was launched in November. The audit, which benefited from NBIS funding and assistance with the collation of species information, has drawn attention to the immense diversity of life in Breckland. Over 12,000 species were recorded with 2,149 a priority for conservation and 317 listed on the UK’s Biodiversity Action Plan. The report has highlighted the need for physical land disturbance - putting “the Brecks back into Breckland” - to create mosaics of different conditions benefiting many insects and plants to maintain this remarkable biodiversity.

A survey of a marine habitat off the north Norfolk coast by Seasearch East generated some important wildlife records including three species which had never before been recorded off the East Anglian coast - the leopard spotted goby, the strawberry anemone and a new sponge. The chalk-reef habitat, which lies within half a mile of the shore was discovered to be more extensive than expected, covering 20 miles between Cley and Trimingham. Stunning photographs of the reef and its wildlife by Marine County Recorder, Rob Spray, who led the survey, were widely reported in the national media, and were also used in the recent NWT ‘Living Seas’ presentation in the Fusion studio at the Norwich Forum (see also our cover photograph).

**News in Brief**

**Obituaries**

Superb naturalist and Norfolk Wildlife Trust Conservation Officer, Steve Henson passed away suddenly in August this year. Involved with a diversity of conservation projects and groups in the county such as Water for Wildlife, the Otters and Rivers project, and the Glaven Conservation Group to name but a few, Steve earned great respect with the organisations and individuals he was involved with. He will be much missed, but leaves a rich legacy of achievements and inspiration.

The Norfolk recording community was also saddened by the loss of Dick Hamond. County Marine Recorder in July, at the age of 80. As well as researching and recording the marine life of Norfolk’s inshore waters, Dick was passionate about microscopy, playing a significant role in the Microscopy Group of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists’ Society (NNNS). He was also President of the NNNS from 1991-1992.

**IYB - UK**

The UK IYB programme has been commenced by the Convention for Biological Diversity for its efforts during 2010 to raise the profile of biodiversity. IYB-UK now involves more than 500 partners (including NBIS and NBP). Bob Bloomfield, IYB-UK Director is now calling for a “better core narrative which is simpler and less confusing” in addition to “new levels of innovation in engagement” to get across messages about biodiversity. www.biodiversityislife.net

**New population of rare water plant discovered**

A substantial new population of the rare aquatic plant, Najas marina or holly-leaved-naiaid was discovered recently on a lake in north Norfolk. This is the first reported find of the plant outside the Norfolk Broads and demonstrates how dynamic aquatic plant communities can be, given the right conditions including good water quality.

**Sustainable Urban Fringes**

NBIS is helping with habitat mapping for the Gaywood Valley Project – one of a number of pilot projects receiving funding through a transnational project called SURF (Sustainable Urban Fringes). The £500,000 project will link urban areas to the open countryside around King’s Lynn, create habitats for the enhancement of biodiversity, and develop outdoor classrooms for community and school use. For further information see www.sustainablefringes.eu or contact Project Officer Gemma Cousins gemma.cousins@norfolk.gov.uk

**NBIS and the Big Society**

NBIS was delighted with enthusiasm for two recent projects which called for help from members of the public.

The NBIS glow-worm survey generated over 160 new records, giving us a better understanding of where these elusive and iconic creatures are found in the county.

This first ‘citizen science’ survey organised by NBIS was quickly followed with another, looking for records of three species of fungus. Once again, the Norfolk public were keen to help, leading to more records for the NBIS database.

By working with the County Recorders – Norfolk’s experts in the field of recording – to choose species that are easy to spot and that are unlikely to be confused with any others, NBIS is reaching out to the public to raise awareness of Norfolk’s wildlife and biodiversity, and help fill information gaps.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust’s practical guide for volunteers, parish projects and community groups on recording wildlife “Putting local wildlife on the map” – has also raised awareness of the important role that local citizens can play in recording. Local wildlife needs help: if we don’t note down what’s there, it’s not easy to spot losses or declines.

**Seasearch East**

Seasearch East - the eastern arm of a national project for divers who are interested in helping to protect the marine environment - is looking for volunteers this coming summer to help survey the shore and sea on the East Coast.

In Norfolk, surveys are planned for the 3rd and 4th of August, during Marine Week, and will involve both underwater surveying and shoreline recording for seaweeds on the north Norfolk coast. Public participation is welcomed. For further details, please contact Norfolk County Marine Recorder, Rob Spray at rob@1townhouses.co.uk
A good number of County Recorders braved snow and ice to attend the 3rd Annual Recorders meeting on the 25 November. NBIS was delighted with presentations from Doreen Wells, County Ant Recorder; Andy Brazil, County Butterfly Recorder; John Goldsmith, County Bat Recorder, and Tim Holt-Wilson from the Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership.

The meeting also heard from Biodiversity Information Officer, Martin Horlock, how NBIS has gone from strength to strength over the past two years, with 1.6 million records now held, representing 15,750 species and 60 taxon groups. An impressive 300 enquiries for biological information are now dealt with annually and the service is involved with many local and regional mapping projects supporting conservation initiatives. Public awareness of the service is higher following attendance at many events, and the development of citizen surveys has led to greater direct local involvement with recording.

The weather this summer in Norfolk seems to have suited a number of rare liverworts. For the first time in the vice county of East Norfolk, Cavernous Crystalwort Riccia cavernosa has been recorded, not once, but twice in the space of three days! Known colloquially as the Swiss cheese liverwort, for obvious reasons, it is part of a specialised group of tiny ephemeral species, favouring the draw-down zones of the exposed edges of ponds. Before this August its nearest known location was Syderstone Common in West Norfolk. Then it was found by Francis Farrow en masse round the edge of the Top Common pond in Beeston Regis. This is the recently restored dewpond where Mudwort Limosula aquatica was found in 2008 (the first Norfolk record since 1914). Previously the pond had not been dug out since the 1950s. It is quite possible that the Riccia spores had lain undisturbed until management work and this summer’s weather provided ideal conditions for the liverwort. On 10 August a few more thallii were spotted on mud in the corner of a field on the NT Felbrigg estate. Had the spores come from Beeston or had they been lying low for years?

In September the tiny summer ephemeral leafy liverwort Pitted Frillwort Fossombronia foveolata was found growing in profusion on a bare, peaty track on Buxton Heath. This UK BAP species, resembling tiny green lettuces, can only be identified microscopically by the reticulations on its spores. Luckily it was fruiting freely. A few weeks before there had been no sign of it on the track. Its last known location in East Norfolk was in the nearby Horsford Woods in 1936. Perhaps it is still there?

Good summer for liverwort records

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Mary Ghullam Bryophyte Recorder for East Norfolk, VC 27.