

Launch of glow-worm survey

NBIS launched a glow-worm survey in June to find out where the hot-spots for these fascinating creatures are in the county.

Glow-worms aren't worms at all, but belong to a family of beetles called the Lampyridae. You can see them after dark during June and July. Just the adult female glows using a chemical called luciferin – the same chemical used by fireflies - to produce a pale green light to attract a mate. She has no wings and a segmented body.

Biodiversity Information Officer, Martin Horlock said: "We don't have many records of glow-worms in Norfolk – although we think they're out there. Only the adult females are easy to spot, and then only for a few hours over the course of a couple of weeks at night. If we have a better idea of where they are distributed, we will be able to investigate whether populations are stable

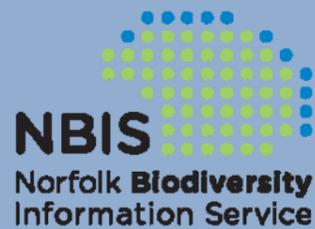
and what we can do to help them thrive."

Your best chances of seeing glow-worms are from mid June to mid July, on a moonless or overcast night. Wait until your eyes can no longer make out colours and look for them on heathland, grass verges, along disused railways lines, churchyards, woodland clearings, or rides. If you have spotted a glow-worm you can record your sightings on line, using the new on-line recording facility on the NBIS website www.nbis.org.uk. Or you can send us your record by email nbis@norfolk.gov.uk, or by post. Records should contain information about what you saw; when; where you saw it (grid reference and habitat and place name); how many glow-worms you saw; and who you are.

Download our leaflet at www.nbis.org.uk



Male (left) and female (right) glow-worms.
Photo credit: Roger Key



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News in Brief

Obituary

Inspirational entomologist, and County Recorder, Ken Durrant passed away in April this year, aged 90. Ken, originally from Cromer, became interested in insects at an early age and went on to become a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society. His remarkable, well-labelled collection of insects, which he donated in the last few months of his life to Norwich Castle Museum for the people of Norfolk, has been described as "invaluable" by Tony Irwin, Curator of Natural History. A remarkable man, who played a role in so much local natural history, Ken will be much missed by family and friends and the Norfolk Recording community.

Datasets now live on NBN

NBIS is pleased to announce that the following datasets are now live on the NBN Gateway: Norfolk beetle records; Norfolk bumble bee records; Norfolk amphibian and reptile records; Norfolk spider records. Many thanks to all those who helped make this possible.

Midwife toads

NBIS has received several calls reporting sightings of midwife toads in north Norfolk. These nocturnal amphibians which are not native to Britain, have a ringing call, likened to a car alarm! They are so-called because the males carry the fertilised eggs around with them on their backs. To report a sighting, please get in touch with NBIS at nbis@norfolk.gov.uk

OPAL water survey

The Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) initiative aims to bring a local context to environmental issues and brings scientists and the public closer together. The OPAL water survey which runs until July 2010, aims to encourage local groups to survey ponds and lakes to see how healthy the water is by finding out what creatures live there. For an information pack, tips on how to get started or to see what results have been collected so far, visit: www.opalexplornature.org

Our funding partners:



Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service

Newsletter

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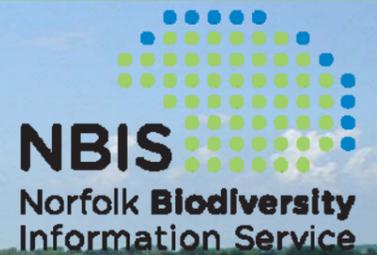


Photo credit: Keith Waldron

Welcome to the summer 2010 edition of the NBIS newsletter

In this issue we bring you news of the regional review of Local Records Centres and how NBIS was chosen to lead one of the ensuing projects.

Also in this issue:

- Staff changes;
- News of a rare ant in Breckland;
- NBIS involvement with the Brecks Biodiversity Audit;
- Events past and coming-up;
- Our glow-worm survey;
- News in Brief



www.biodiversityislife.net

NBIS is a partnership of organisations including Natural England, Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk Council and North Norfolk District Council. It is one of a number of Local Record Centres and operates a not-for-profit service, recording, managing and interpreting wildlife information for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in Norfolk.

NBIS launches new recording facility

A new on-line recording facility launched this summer by NBIS will encourage more public participation in recording across Norfolk.

The feature, which runs from the NBIS website, operates through a map window, allowing the user to pinpoint where they made their recording. An interactive window then allows the addition of further information – who, what, where, when – to generate a useable record. Sam Neal, Environmental Information Support Officer, has developed the new NBIS mapping capability, which uses flexible DRUPAL software. NBIS Biodiversity Information Officer, Martin Horlock said "This is an exciting development for NBIS. Not only will it help everyone to get involved in recording wildlife, but we also plan to develop the tool further to allow County Recorders to upload and access large datasets."

Launch of the recording tool coincides with the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB), a global United Nations initiative to draw attention to the alarming loss of global biodiversity. In the UK, a report from Natural England has highlighted that nearly 500 species

have been lost in England – the majority since 1800. More than ever, we need to chart the fortunes of our native biodiversity so we can more actively channel efforts into its protection.

NBIS welcomes all records – even those of species that are commonly found at the moment – and hopes that all those who love the Norfolk countryside will send in their wildlife sightings. Visit www.nbis.org.uk to find out more.

NBIS is also the beneficiary of records generated through the Natural Connections Parish Survey Project. This exciting joint initiative led by Norfolk Wildlife Trust with NBIS involvement, seeks to enthuse and empower local communities to get involved with recording wildlife in their parishes. Through a comprehensive "toolkit" of instructions and information, communities can make detailed surveys of what's in their "patch". Find out more at www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

Staff update

NBIS was very sorry to say “goodbye” to Biological Records Officer, Pat Lorber when she retired in April.

Pat moved to Norfolk from South Africa in 2000, having taken early retirement from the Botany Department at the University of Cape Town, and was appointed to the Norfolk Biological Records Centre (NBRC) in January 2001. Pat reflects on her time with NBRC (which became NBIS in 2008):

“I feel very grateful to have been given the opportunity of making a contribution to my new county and country (I became a British citizen in 2005) and feel privileged to have worked with that fine band of dedicated naturalists, Norfolk’s County Recorders. Almost without exception, they were generous with their time, knowledge and records, and the Service is still dependent on their expertise if sensible decisions are to be made regarding planning, conservation and management of Norfolk’s wildlife. I hope you will continue to support Martin and Sam, Lizzy and Su to provide just that.

Giving up the day job means I continue to learn about hedgehogs by night (I have 17+ marked individuals), and bumblebees and solitary bees by day, with Tim Strudwick’s patient help and I have pictures to prove it!

Good wishes and thanks to you all, and I hope to see you from time to time.”

Pat Lorber

Read Pat’s thoughts in full at www.nbis.org.uk



Red-tailed bumblebee Photo credit: Pat Lorber

Rare ant found in the Brecks

***Myrmica karavajevi* (RDB 3), a very rare social parasitic ant, has now been identified from five sites in the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks, as part of research being carried out in the School of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia in collaboration with the Forestry Commission.** This is a first for East Anglia and these records provide the most northerly and easterly records for this species in Britain. It is an exciting find, as not a great deal is known about this ant in Britain. Now we have found it in Norfolk, we have the opportunity to undertake future research into its habitat preferences and host species. This ant is found in Finland in wet bogs, so it may not be confined to heathland. The social organisation of this ant is amazing! This queen ant is just 3.5 mm in length. After her mating flight, she does not form a colony on her own, but enters the nest of another ant species: *Myrmica sabuleti* or *Myrmica scabrinodis*. Although she is much smaller than the host queen (about the same size as the workers) somehow she is accepted by the colony as the primary queen. From that day forward, both queens live together, but the host queen produces only workers and the parasitic queen only sexuals: queens and males. The nest continues for many years as a dual colony until one of the queens dies.

Doreen Wells, Norfolk County Ant Recorder



Myrmica karavajevi
Photo credit: Doreen Wells

NBIS was delighted to welcome Lizzy Carroll who started as Assistant Biodiversity Information Officer in April 2010.

Lizzy has post-graduate qualifications in Ecology and Conservation, and has worked as a volunteer at Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre. She will be responsible for a project identified by the Regional Review of Local Records’ Centres (LRCs) to standardise LRC services and will also be involved with various NBIS mapping projects and assisting with enquiries.

LRC review

A regional review of Local Record Centres (LRCs), which is now in final draft form, has commended NBIS for its innovative “recording fund”, which uses monies generated through commercial enquiries to fund recording projects across the county.

The review, conducted by consultants RPS for Natural England, concluded that the other LRCs should explore the approach – which could operate on a county or even regional level.

NBIS was also successful in securing funding to host a new post, which will lead one of 3 projects that emerged from the review. This work will

investigate improvements to data request services provided for consultants and public bodies. Lizzy Carroll was appointed to this post in April 2010. This exciting project which is funded through the Defra fund for local biodiversity recording, will work across the region to establish a standard service for the supply of data. Lizzy will also work closely with another post hosted by Cambridge and Peterborough Biological Records Centre (CPBRC) working on communications and advocacy for the region’s LRCs. This latter post will seek to secure funding for LRCs through long term agreements with public bodies such as local authorities and conservation organisations, particularly those who have not previously provided funding. In addition, the project will seek to improve the supply of data to the NBN gateway.

The Review, which sought to identify actions to secure sustainable funding and to address gaps in coverage or consistency of biodiversity data collation and management, revealed that:

- all LRCs in the region suffer from a lack of secure funding;
- support and use of LRCs by District Councils is very variable across the region;
- some recording groups do not provide records to their LRC;
- it would be very helpful for LRCs to receive data collected for statutory purposes, for instance that collected during the planning process.

You can read the draft final report of the regional review of LRCs on the NBIS website: www.nbis.org.uk

Brecks Biodiversity Audit

The NBIS Recording fund has sponsored a project to support the Brecks Biodiversity Audit, an ambitious initiative led by the University of East Anglia to collate information about the wealth of biodiversity found in Breckland.

The project, which explores the response of Lepidoptera to temperature, site-orientation and edge-effect on Breckland Forestry re-stock areas, will generate new records for moths and bats and has been match-funded by Defra. Chris Jones is conducting the survey as part of an MSc by research at UEA.

The Brecks Biodiversity Audit is a collaborative project, which draws on the knowledge and expertise of many specialists. NBIS and the Suffolk Biological Records Centre have both contributed records and assistance with recording software, and will be further involved with GIS mapping to help with investigations on the potential for habitat linkage.

Further information about the Brecks Biodiversity Audit is available from www.norfolk-biodiversity.org/

If you are interested in applying for money for a recording project in Norfolk, please contact Martin Horlock on 01603 224458 or at martin.horlock@norfolk.gov.uk

Events round-up

NBIS staff have been busy over the past few months spreading the word about the service. We have:

- Held an event on behalf of the Region’s LRCs, for regional environmental consultants, to explore ways in which we can work more closely together;
- Helped to organise a Norfolk “Bat Workers’ Conference” led by Norfolk County Mammal Recorder, Dave Leech;
- Attended 3 events launching the Natural Connections Parish Toolkit to raise awareness of our role;
- Celebrated the International Day of Biodiversity at an event at the Norwich Forum, joining forces with the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership;
- Attended popular Wild About the Wensum to launch our glow-worm survey;
- Taken part in Norfolk Wildlife Trust’s “Big Biodiversity Watch” a public wildlife-watching event held at NWT reserves in June, at which a total of 1365 unique species were recorded.

Events >>

6th October 2010 (tbc) - Annual Biodiversity Forum
“Economics and Biodiversity”
scott.perkin@norfolk.gov.uk

9th October 2010 - Wild About Norfolk, Neatherd
High School, Dereham
Needham_t@sky.com