

## NBIS Annual Report 2019/20



## *Introduction and NBIS objectives*

The Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) is a Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) covering the county of Norfolk. NBIS is a member of the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) and operates within the framework of the National Biodiversity Network.

Thanks to its position and diverse range of habitats, over 16,200 different species have been recorded in Norfolk since 1600. The North Norfolk coast is a mecca for bird watchers, the Broads are a stronghold to the rare Norfolk Hawker dragonfly and Swallowtail butterfly, whilst the Brecks host several plant and invertebrate species unique to the area.

2857 of these species are classified as 'Species of Conservation Concern'. This means they are rare, threatened or protected by law. NBIS also holds 34681 records of 122 invasive non-native species.

Based at County Hall, Norwich the service sits within the Environment Team of Norfolk County Council, part of the Communities and Environmental Services Department.

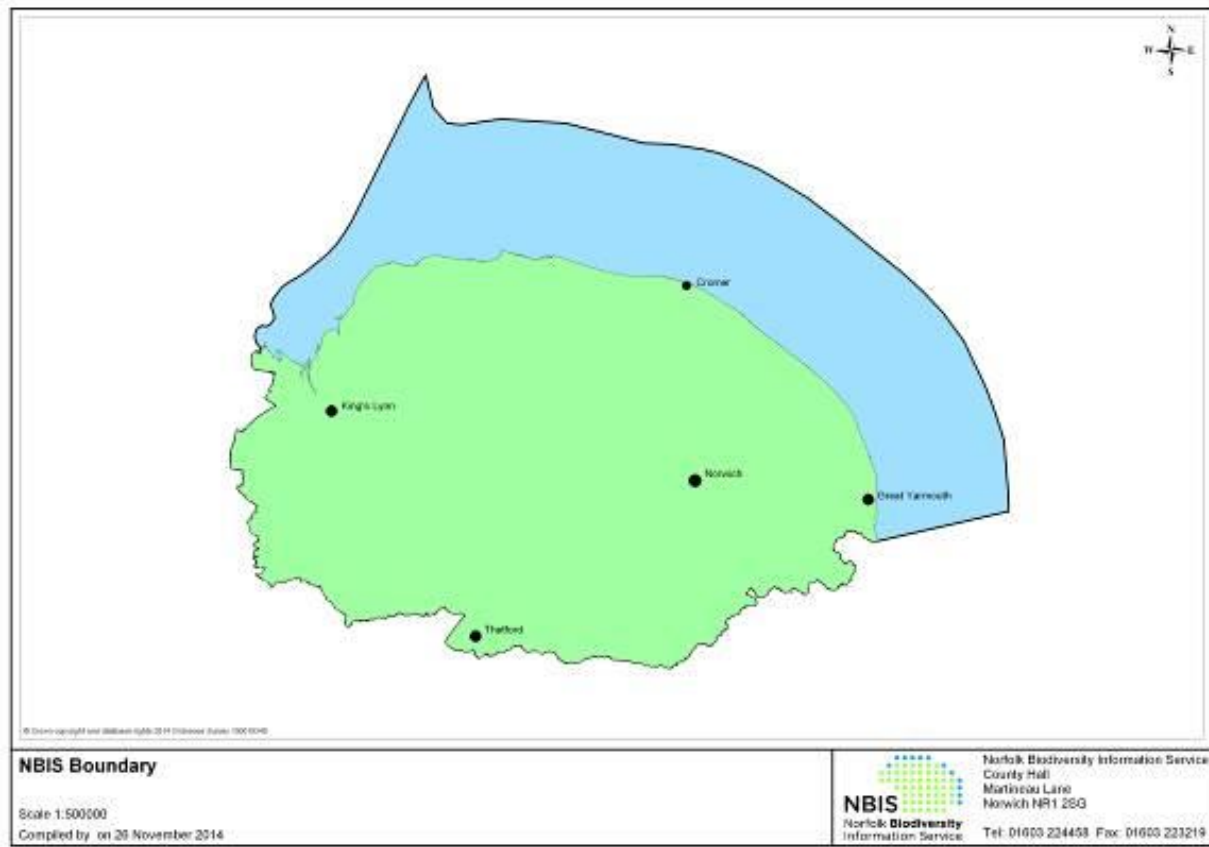
NBIS aims to be a single, central point for obtaining high quality environmental information for Norfolk, providing quick and easy access to information on species, geodiversity, habitats and protected sites.

To fulfil this aim NBIS operates under the principles set out in its [Operational Framework](#).

NBIS is guided and supported by a Steering Group that meets twice each year and is made up of representatives of its users. These include staff from County and District Councils, IDBs, Ecological Consultants, Environment Agency, Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the River Waveney Trust. We are very grateful for the time and commitment that our steering group members give in attending meetings and providing guidance. The steering group now works under a [Terms of Reference](#). These terms of reference are reviewed every 2 years and were reviewed and agreed in the January 2020 meeting.

Much of the species data held by NBIS and made available for planning and conservation decision making is provided by the voluntary network of County Recorders. These people are members of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society and are experts in their taxonomic fields. They provide or check all the records going on to the NBIS database to ensure high quality data, spending hours of their own time verifying the records for us each year. We would like to express our thanks to these recorders and all the volunteers who record and gather species records over the year. Without the dedication and support of the recorders, County Recorders and volunteers we would struggle to be able to function as an effective Local Environmental Record Centre.

Map showing the boundary of the NBIS area, including the marine component:



**Staff:**

- Martin Horlock – Environment Manager (Information & Partnerships) – Line manages NBIS staff.
- Sam Neal – Biodiversity Officer (Information) (1fte) – Manages the day-to-day running of NBIS and GIS and project work.
- Lizzy Oddy - Assistant Biodiversity Officer (Information) (0.61fte) - Data enquiries, data management and project work
- Nicola Dixon – Assistant Biodiversity Officer (Information) (1fte) – NBIS database cleaning and move to new system, data management and project work.
- Liam Dixon - Communities and Nature Assistant (1fte) – Public engagement and events, volunteer management, NBP assistance.

## *Funding and Data Partners*

Organisation	Type of Agreement
Norfolk County Council	Hosting Agreement
South Norfolk Council	Service Level Agreement
Broadland District Council	Service Level Agreement
Breckland Council	Service Level Agreement
Environment Agency	Service Level Agreement
Anglian Water	Service Level Agreement
British Trust for Ornithology	Data Agreement
Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Data Sharing Agreement

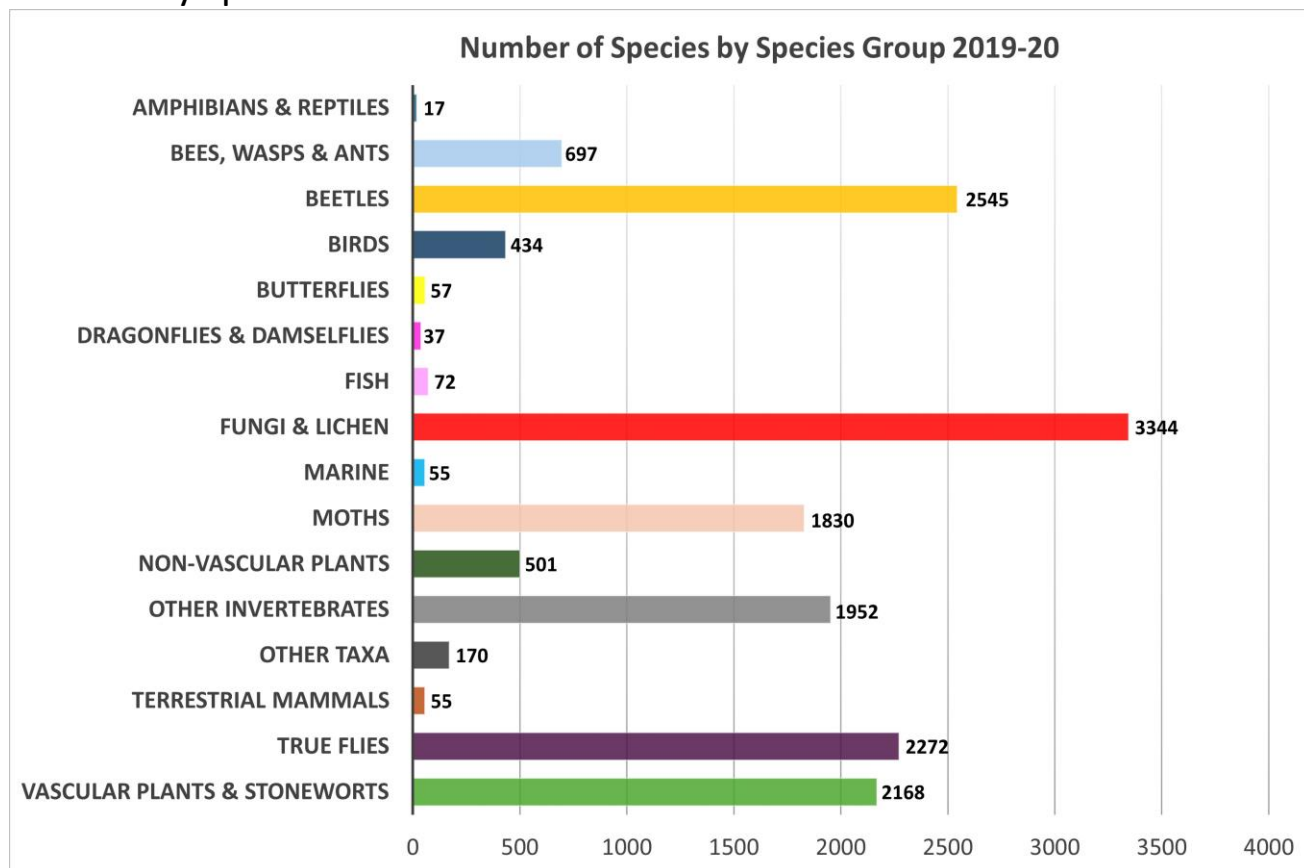
13 ecological consultancies had an SLA or bulk-buy agreement for data searches.

NBIS also has an important set of non-funding partners who provide essential support and encouragement. These include:

Association of Local Environmental Records Centres  
East of England Regional Local Records Centre Forum  
Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society.

## Data Holdings

How many species have been recorded in Norfolk?



Species diversity in Norfolk, by taxonomic group (based on data held by NBIS, March 2020)

The NBIS database currently contains **3,251,778 species records** (as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020, including a number from our neighbouring counties of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, collated as part of cross-county biodiversity audits).

## *Data Enquiries*

Responding to data enquiries is a core function for NBIS and is a daily task. Requests come in from ecological consultants, conservation bodies, local authorities, students and interested members of the public wanting to know about protected species and sites in a particular area. NBIS aims to respond to all enquiries within 5 working days and to enquiries from our funding partners within 3 working days.

NBIS continues to operate the Regional Standard Enquiry Service. This service was developed with ecological consultants to ensure that anyone requesting a data search for planning purposes from the region's LERCs receives a standard set of protected species and site data within 10 days.

Number of each enquiry type processed each year:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Commercial Searches	439	444	541	471
Non-commercial Searches	37	49	69	44
Partner Searches (Including Districts)	17	9	19	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>629</b>	<b>533</b>

## *NBIS Recorders Fund*

NBIS operates a fund to support wildlife recording in Norfolk. This fund consists of monies raised from commercial enquiries during the previous year and is designed to reinvest in our local recording network to provide the records we need to process these enquiries. The fund runs during the financial year with any remaining monies rolling over to the next.

In 2019-20, the projects funded were:

- An elm identification workshop run by Norfolk Flora Group.
- Specimen checking a museum collection of beetles to ensure accurate identification.
- Recording and studying barbastelle bat maternity colonies in County Wildlife Sites in South and West Norfolk.

## *Regional and National Collaboration*

NBIS joins other Local Environmental Record Centres within the East of England and staff attended two regional Record Centre meetings during the year. The meetings facilitate discussion about sharing best practice, joint-working options and provide a regional overview.

Staff also attended the ALERC Conference in Birmingham in October 2019 and the NBN Conference in Nottingham in November 2019.

NBIS has continued to maintain a presence on the CWS steering group, Geodiversity Partnership group, Norfolk Ponds Project, Brecks Biodiversity Delivery Group and the Communities and Nature Working Group.

The Biodiversity Officer (Information) represented NBIS on the council of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, and as a member of their Research Committee. Also, the officer represented NBIS on the advisory board for Orchards East and the Journal of Breckland Studies.

NBIS has continued membership of the Association of Local Environmental Records Centres (ALERC) and following the launch of the accreditation process in July 2012 NBIS began work to meet the necessary criteria in preparation for applying for accreditation in 2015. NBIS was assessed in August 2015 and following a successful result officially became an accredited LERC. This means that NBIS demonstrated that they were meeting or exceeding a set of criteria draw up by ALERC to ensure LERCs are providing a good service to their users and providers. Accreditation is valid for 5 years, NBIS will be re-assessed in summer 2020.

## *Local Sites Monitoring*

On behalf of Norfolk County Council, NBIS monitors Single Data List 160-01 (previously National Indicator 197) – percentage of Local Sites (Wildlife and Geodiversity) in Positive Conservation Management (PCM). NBIS undertakes the analysis of this indicator (with assistance from Norfolk Wildlife Trust) and reports the findings directly to Defra, as required under the SDL.

SDL 160 data was not requested by Defra for 2019-20.

## *County Wildlife Sites (CWS)*

NBIS works with staff at Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) and through the Local Sites Partnership to coordinate, create and provide to users the CWS annual update. Data and information for the 2019 update is available and downloadable to partners.

## *Event Attendance*

NBIS continues to promote its services through attending wildlife themed events.

In 2019/20 we attended the following:

- Wild About the Wensum
- World Oceans Day event
- Aldborough Village Fayre
- Norfolk Festival of Nature

## *Annual Recorders Event*

Unfortunately, due to Covid 19, the Annual Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society and NBIS Recorders Event, due to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 had to be cancelled.

## *Communications*

NBIS continues to have a presence on Facebook and Twitter.

NBIS produces, jointly with Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership and Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative, a monthly e-bulletin. This is distributed via email to a wide contacts list.



## *Projects*

### **ENDURE**

ENDURE was a €2.1 million project, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the INTERREG Two Seas Programme (2014–2020), and led by Norfolk County Council. It brought together partners from Belgium, France, and the Netherlands to explore the use of sand dunes as adaptive, living sea defences. NBIS supported project delivery through the organisation of a bioblitz event at Holkham, contributed technical support with mapping and data analysis and assisting with data collection at sites along the North Norfolk Coast.

### **Orchards East**

Digitising 2<sup>nd</sup> edition map orchard polygons for Norfolk was completed and the next phase of the project was implemented during 2019 and into 2020 survey season – the parish surveys by volunteers. These surveys involved checking whether a mapped orchard still exists to this day and what characteristics and wildlife it supports – ultimately with the aim of identifying more sites of the Traditional Orchards Priority Habitat.

Parish maps were provided to volunteers in the parishes coloured green in the below map. Not all parishes were surveyed in the end.



## Finance

The table below shows the budget for 2019-20 and the previous two years. It is essential that NBIS continues to secure external project funding to ensure the centre can continue to run as effectively when income is shorter. The below table does not include the contributing costs of Norfolk County Council to the hosting of NBIS.

Expenditure (in £)	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Staff salaries/training/travel/subsistence/conferences	-26548.86	-62446.20	-12846.39
IT hardware/software & general equipment purchase	-333.75	-765.84	-165.32
Subscriptions (e.g. ALERC)	-2103.79	-750.00	-800.00
Contractor costs	-6986.44	-2248.17	-1680.00
Venue hire/food costs etc	-1085.02	-100.00	-200.00
Printing/marketing/design	-32.49	0.00	-285.95
other/misc	-6.00	-6.00	-91.92
Publications/NBIS recorders fund/recorder support	-61.50	-2594.00	
Budget adjustments/financials	-25000.00	0.00	
Match Funding/project contributions/P&C contributions	0.00	-999.99	-12107.61
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>-62157.85</b>	<b>-69910.20</b>	<b>-28177.19</b>

Income (in £)	2016-17	2018-19	2019-20
Data Searches	41550.00	44285.00	40530.00
Project work/contracted works/other charges	8502.29	5000.00	1800.00
Service Level Agreements with Local Authorities/IDBs	10000.00	10050.00	2550.00
Service Level Agreements with utilities	2700.00	2825.00	3000.00
Service Level Agreements with Defra bodies	12600.00	12600.00	12062.00
Recharge (other departments)/refunds	0.00	0.00	
Match Funding	0.00	1200.00	
<b>Total income</b>	<b>75352.29</b>	<b>75960.00</b>	<b>59942.00</b>

<b>Balance (in £)</b>	<b>13194.44</b>	<b>6049.80</b>	<b>31764.81</b>
-----------------------	-----------------	----------------	-----------------

*The balance figures for each year do not represent profit – the figures of surplus are already assigned to projects or staff costs and the opposite figures mainly show debit due to project or staff cost spend or matching assigned, from monies received in previous financial years. Some SLA monies have been received in different financial years to which they should have been received.*