

NBIS Annual Report 2022/23



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 16,800 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.

2901 of these species are classified as 'Species of Conservation Concern'. This means they are rare, threatened or protected by law. NBIS also holds 118344 records of 139 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.

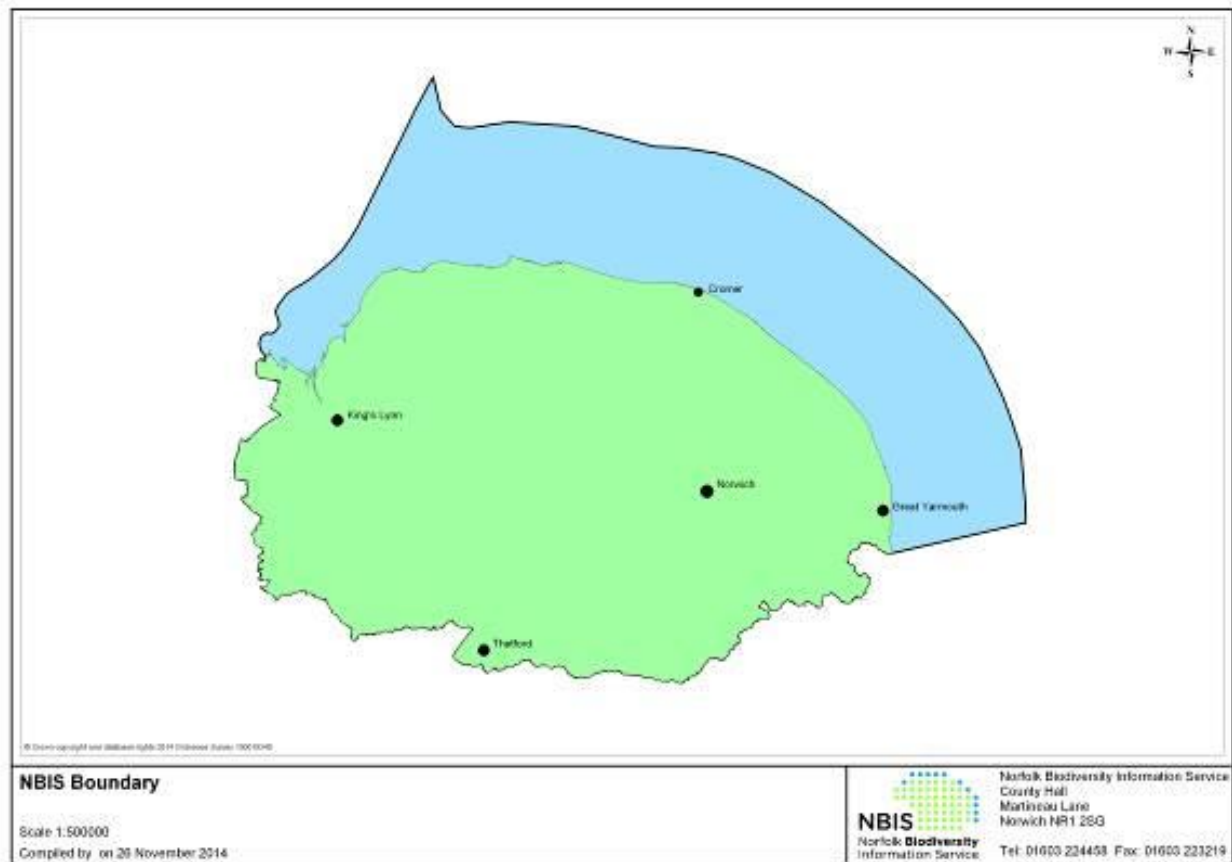
To fulfil this aim NBIS operates under the principles set out in its [Operational Framework](#).

NBIS is guided and supported by a Steering Group that usually 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, Anglian Water and Norfolk FWAG. 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](#).

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 (*until Sep 2022*).
- Cherry Harper-Jones – Natural Norfolk Manager (1fte) – Line manages NBIS staff (*from Sep 2022*).
- Sam Neal – Biodiversity Officer (Information) (1fte) – Manages the day-to-day running of NBIS, 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.

Funding and Data Partners

Organisation	Type of Agreement
Norfolk County Council	Hosting Agreement
Environment Agency	Service Level Agreement
Anglian Water	Service Level Agreement
Norfolk Internal Drainage Board	Service Level Agreement
British Trust for Ornithology	Data Agreement
Norfolk Wildlife Trust	Data Exchange Agreement
People's Trust for Endangered Species	Data Exchange Agreement

7 ecological consultancies had an Ecological Consultant SLA for data searches.

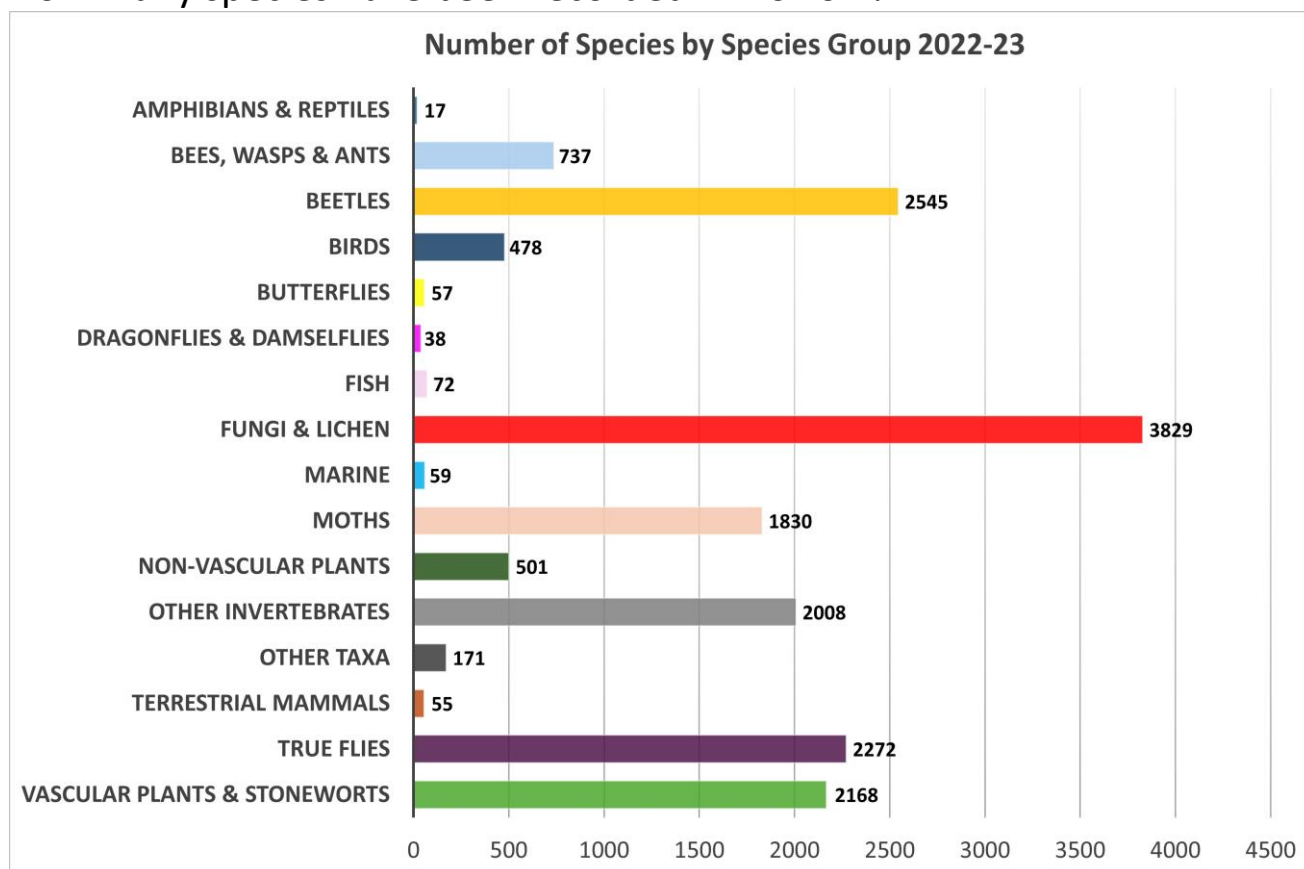
NBIS also has an important set of non-funding partners who provide essential support and encouragement. These include:

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

Data Holdings

The NBIS database currently contains **9,485,914 species records** (as of 31st March 2023, including a number from our neighbouring counties of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, collated as part of cross-county biodiversity audits).

How many species have been recorded in Norfolk?



Species diversity in Norfolk, by taxonomic group (based on data held by NBIS, March 2023)

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 East of England 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 minimum of a standard set of protected species and site data within 10 days.

Number of each enquiry type processed each year:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Commercial Searches	471	539	595	617
Non-commercial Searches	44	64	50	63
Partner Searches (Including Districts)	18	5	3	16
TOTAL	533	608	648	696

NBIS Recorders Fund

NBIS operates a fund to support wildlife recording in Norfolk. This fund consists of the 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 2022-23 there were two successful applications:

- Acoustic recording of shrill carder bee in South Norfolk
- Supporting a Bioblitz at the Ken Hill Estate

Regional and National Collaboration

NBIS joins other Record Centres within the East of England and staff attended two online 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 online ALERC Conference in October 2022 and the NBN Conference in London in November 2022.

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.

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 we were meeting or exceeding a set of criteria draw up by ALERC to ensure LERC's are providing a good service to their users and providers. NBIS was reaccredited in 2020 for a further five years and will be re-assessed in 2025.

Local Sites Monitoring

NBIS has historically provided Norfolk data to Defra for SDL-160 on behalf of the Local Authority. SDL-160 is a national indicator for Local Sites in Positive Conservation Management. However it is no longer statutory. This lack of statutory status means it is of lower priority, but NBIS still plan to provide this indicator when resources allow, and this will then be made available to District Councils.

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 2022 update is available and downloadable to partners.

Event Attendance

Due to staff capacity, NBIS are currently not attending wildlife events to promote its work. Promotional material is made available to colleagues in the Natural Norfolk and Environment Service Teams when they attend appropriate events. It is hoped that event attendance will restart when capacity allows.

Annual Recorders Event

The Annual Joint NBIS and Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society Recorders' Event was held at the John Innes Centre at Norwich Research Park on the 19th November 2022. The theme of the event was 'Recording biodiversity through partnerships'. Posters and table top displays were enjoyed during registration, followed by a buffet lunch with plenty of networking and catching up with friends and colleagues. Presentations included the importance of biological recording on reserves, in development planning and in agriculture, using DNA barcoding to record species, and recording at Broadland Country Park and Buckenham Carrs. Keynote speaker Andrea Kelly presented on how biological recording contributes to the strategies and programmes of the Broads Authority. Feedback from the event was very positive with attendees finding the presentations interesting and informative, and appreciating the opportunity to meet together face to face after a few years hiatus.

Projects

New ORCA Enquiry Service

Following customer testing, the new ORCA and My LERC enquiry system went live on 13th October 2022. We have not experienced any major problems in running the system. Enquiries now take up less time. The packages we set up seem to be working as we only have a small number of custom search requests. From the small amount of feedback we have received so far, customers seem happy with the new service, which is faster, more efficient and has an interactive output. The service will be reviewed after 6 months and then yearly.

Ancient Woodland Inventory Update

Work on the Ancient Woodland Inventory Project is continuing. The University of East Anglia (UEA) have done lots of work on the historic landscape aspect. Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) have a new Woodland Assistant who will be doing woodland County Wildlife Site (CWS) surveys. They will be focussing on Ancient Woodland CWS sites to contribute to this project. NBIS staff will soon be involved in mapping areas of Long Established woodland in the county, by comparing Epoch 1 maps with current aerial photos.

Biodiversity Baseline Study

Work on the Biodiversity Baseline Project for Norwich City Council is continuing. The project involves a review of the current biodiversity data we hold for the City, analysing the gaps in that data and filling them where possible, engagement with stakeholders followed by opportunity and Character Area mapping.

Finance

The table below shows the budget for 2022-23 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 £)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Staff salaries/training/travel/subsistence/conferences	-222737.76	-108044.83	-102716.40
IT hardware/software & general equipment purchase	-4345.88	-4345.88	-4095.88
Subscriptions (e.g. ALERC)	-800.00	-820.00	-500.00
Contractor costs	-2355.00	-38.00	-3,511.57
Venue hire/food costs etc			
Printing/marketing/design			
other/misc			
Publications/NBIS recorders fund/recorder support	-1649.60	-2115.00	-1606.22
Budget adjustments/financials			-2101.00
Match Funding/project contributions/P&C contributions	-27019.50		
Total expenditure	-258907.74	-115363.71	-114531.07

Income (in £)	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Data Searches	50900.00	62705.00	68167.31
Project work/contracted works/other charges	10113.84	38990.87	23263.99
Service Level Agreements with Local Authorities/IDBs			3750.00
Service Level Agreements with utilities	4250.00	4288.25	4554.12
Service Level Agreements with Defra bodies	12062.00	12062.00	12062.00
Recharge (other departments)/refunds	720.10		
Match Funding			
Total income	78045.94	118046.12	111797.42

Balance (in £)	-180861.80	2682.41	-2733.65
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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.