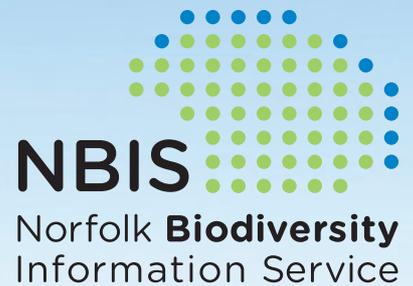


Newsletter

Issue No 1 | winter 2009 | www.nbis.org.uk | Email: nbis@norfolk.gov.uk



Welcome to the NBIS newsletter

Welcome to this first edition of the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) newsletter which introduces our re-launched service. We are very keen for your feedback and any potential news we could include in our next issue (which will be in Summer 09) - we would like to include stories from Recorders and our partners. [Can you help us find a name for our newsletter?](#)

Please contact Su Waldron if you can help with stories: su.waldron@norfolk.gov.uk
Would you be interested in getting involved with our work? If so, please contact nbis@norfolk.gov.uk

Features inside

- Successful workshop clarifies gaps in data
- New initiative to tackle invasive species
- Coming up – new NBIS services and projects
- Biodiversity Action Plan audit
- Staff at NBIS

New era for Records Centre

We are launching a new service which will deliver high-quality information on Norfolk's biodiversity

Our Vision

Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) is working to make available high quality information on Norfolk habitats, sites and species to allow people to make informed decisions. The need for an accurate picture of the county's biological diversity - biodiversity - has never been greater, to ensure that decisions on topical issues such as growth and climate change take full account of our precious environmental resources.

Building on the successes of the Gressenhall-based Norfolk Biological Records Centre (NBRC), the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) will work to make data available – often in electronic map-based format - on Norfolk's habitats, sites and species. NBIS is set to operate through a partnership of organisations and is hosted by Norfolk County Council (NCC).

Rural Environment Manager at NCC, John Jones, said "The service brings together the energies of professionals and volunteers, and will fulfil a growing need for biodiversity information across all sectors. It will strengthen existing systems, build on existing networks and provide easier access to information."

NBIS was launched following a review of the NBRC, which involved input from many partners. NBIS builds upon the sound records base historically provided by the NBRC, expanding and modernising the services with access to electronic mapping and a larger staff complement. Data from the network of skilled Norfolk recording specialists, primarily the County Recorders who undertake much field work, mostly on a voluntary basis, continues to be essential.

Norfolk Biological Records Officer, Pat Lorber said, "Our new mapping capabilities mean that we will be able to use our substantial records data more proactively with huge benefits for Norfolk."

Continued on back page

Successful 'gaps' workshop shows the way forward

NBIS hosted a meeting this November to identify priorities for work planned to fill gaps in the datasets held by the service.

Over 20 people from conservation organisations across Norfolk were involved in a workshop with NBIS staff at Gressenhall to help clarify the way forward.

NBIS Biodiversity Information Officer Martin Horlock explains, "We want NBIS to provide a first rate, modern service to all users - from planners and developers to conservation organisations and County Recorders. We need to be sure to direct our efforts to plug gaps in our knowledge towards those areas that will add greatest value to our service."

One of the pressing needs is for improved access to digitised habitat mapping which is becoming

increasingly significant as many users seek information on Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats.

Although there are one million species records on the main database, other needs reflect gaps for particular species (including amphibians and reptiles, molluscs, dragonflies, fish and all marine species) or within specific areas of the country (west Norfolk and The Wash were identified). Other priorities are species that were previously common but are now included on the latest BAP list, such as house-sparrow and hedgehog. Further records to support the Norfolk Non-Native Species Initiative (NNSI) are also needed.



Hedgehog (David Gittens).

We hold over one million electronic records but some BAP species such as hedgehogs are under recorded.

Through round table discussions, potential sources of further habitat and species information were identified which will help NBIS fill some data gaps. Working with County Recorders and initiating new targeted surveys will help address other information needs.

New Records for Norfolk

Norfolk is very fortunate to have an energetic and expert community of voluntary recorders and specialists known as the County Recorder Network. NBIS is greatly indebted to this fine group of naturalists who generously share their specialist knowledge. Latest records include:

- Two new macro moths - the tree-lichen beauty and the cloaked-pug which were recorded this summer (at Weybourne and Sheringham respectively) by the Norfolk Moths Survey (www.norfolkmoths.org.uk).
- New sightings at Earlham Cemetery in Norwich of a bee, *Andrena hattorfiana*, previously recorded in the distant past in Norfolk.
- New sightings of the red-tailed cuckoo bumblebee, *Bombus rupestris* at Natural England-managed Dersingham Bog National Nature Reserve. Like many other bumblebee species, pressures from intensive agriculture have led to wholesale declines over the past 70 years.



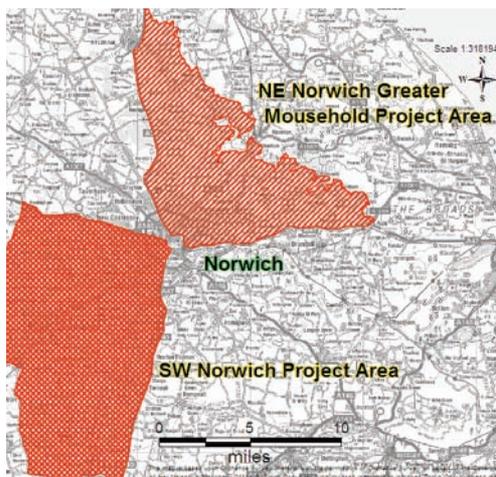
Cuckoo bumblebee (Ted Benton)

- Sightings of the first black lark in Norfolk at Winterton Dunes National Nature Reserve this April. Easterly winds probably accounted for sightings of this species which has only been seen twice previously in the UK.

Coming up

The services now offered by NBIS will lead to more proactive use of records, helping to identify threats to, and opportunities for, the biodiversity of Norfolk. Here is a taste of some new projects that NBIS is involved with:

- In the Norwich growth areas, audits are underway of current land-use to help identify new potential for habitat and ecological network creation to the north-east and south-west of the city.
- A Forestry Commission funded survey of existing datasets of the county's wet-woodland habitat in Norfolk.
- Updating County Wildlife Site maps.
- Mapping for the North Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan review.
- Updating wetland habitat maps with funding from Natural England. Outputs will include new Geographical Information System (GIS) layers conforming to national habitat inventory standards.



Land-use audits will be carried out for these areas near Norwich

Events >>

All the events are being held at the Abbey Conference Centre

18 February 09 – Non-Native Species Stakeholders' Forum.
Contact Mike Sutton-Croft
email: michael.sutton-croft@norfolk.gov.uk



Non-native American signal crayfish are leading to declines in native white-clawed crayfish (photo courtesy of Scott Perkin)



Australian swamp stonecrop choking a pond (Keith Luxford)

New initiative to tackle invasive species

The Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership has recently launched a major new initiative to promote the prevention, control and eradication of invasive non-native species in the county.

www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/nonnativespecies

The Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative (NNNSI), which is generously supported by Norfolk County Council, the Water Management Alliance, Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority, aims to improve our understanding of these

species which have such significant economic, environmental and social impacts. Good recording is essential to enable effective management and the initiative will work closely with NBIS to collect records focussing initially on 6 invasive aquatic and riverside

plants: Australian swamp stonecrop, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, floating pennywort, Himalayan balsam and parrot's feather.

NNNSI Project Co-ordinator, Mike Sutton-Croft said, "We are keen for the public to send in their sightings of these species so we can assess the scale of the problem in Norfolk. Please do get in touch if you can help."

michael.sutton-croft@norfolk.gov.uk



Silver studded blue butterfly (Graeme Cresswell)

Audit highlights national significance of county for biodiversity

This summer, NBIS staff examined nearly a million database records to find out how many nationally important plant and animal species occur in Norfolk.

Results were checked against published literature in addition to seeking specialist input from the recording community. The audit provided a wealth of information about the biodiversity resources of the county, and should benefit planners, naturalists, researchers and environmental managers. Findings show just how important Norfolk is for conservation: there are 419 species listed on the national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) occurring in Norfolk, representing 36% of the national list. Some 88% of bird species and 59% of moth species on the national list have been recorded in

Norfolk demonstrating the importance of the county for these groups. The audit highlighted several areas to address to make the datasets even more useful and this information was used to stimulate discussion in the recent 'gaps' workshop (see article).

The draft report can be downloaded from www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/news

If you have any comments, please get in touch with Pat Lorber: pat.lorber@norfolk.gov.uk 01362 869292

New era for Records Centre (Continued)

NBIS has a crucial role to play in the development and implementation of the Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) – the county's plan to maintain and enhance biodiversity - delivered through the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership. It will help local authorities and other public bodies as they fulfil their obligations under the NERC Act of 2006 to conserve biodiversity, and will strengthen Norfolk's County Wildlife Sites System run by Norfolk Wildlife

Trust. NBIS will also integrate with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) "Gateway" – the portal to national biodiversity data www.nbn.org.uk.

A new NBIS website www.nbis.org.uk, which is set to go live early in 2009, will provide a great way to find out more. With regular updates on projects, partners and news from the recorder network, the website also gives details of the rejuvenated enquiry service.



NBIS website www.nbis.org.uk



NBIS

Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service

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Did you know?

NBIS responds to enquiries from local authorities, consultants, statutory agencies, conservation bodies, voluntary recorders, students and the general public.

Most enquiries seek information about species, habitat and site data. NBIS responds with distribution maps and inventories of species and habitats. Simple, non-commercial enquiries can often be answered promptly and

where possible are dealt with by e-mail. Commercial enquiries are subject to a charge – please see our website or email: nbis@norfolk.gov.uk for further details.

Although there is currently no public access to the centre, NBIS is always interested to hear from Norfolk residents keen to find out more about local biodiversity, perhaps in the context of parish plans.

Find out how you can submit records of your own via Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Natural Connections Project

www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections

Staff

NBIS has increased its staff complement. **Pat Lorber**, Biological Records Officer for a number of years with the Norfolk Biological Records Centre, was joined this autumn by **Martin Horlock** (Biodiversity Information Officer) who will be responsible for the maintenance and development of NBIS datasets and spatial mapping using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in addition to responding to commercial

enquiries. **Chris Jones** (Norfolk Biological Records Assistant) collates and inputs data for NBIS and liaises with the Natural Connections project run by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. **Sam Neal** (Environmental Information Support Officer) is responsible for spatial mapping projects using GIS and other IT. **Su Waldron** (Temporary Biological Records Officer) who started with the service in October, will be involved with communicating the work of NBIS.

Our funding partners:

