



Swapping antlions for tigers

Scott Perkin, Co-ordinator for the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, is leaving Norfolk in January, for a post with IUCN in Asia.

He leaves behind him an incredible legacy, having worked energetically and successfully for seven years to expand and develop the NBP to an unparalleled degree. Under Scott's guidance, the Partnership has become the focus for action on a plethora of areas affecting biodiversity in the county.

Scott's enthusiasm, his ability to connect with people, his vision for the way ahead, his sheer commitment and hard work have led to real gains for the county's wildlife and all those who work in the sector.

We will miss him tremendously, but send him and his wife Mary every good wish for the future.

We are most fortunate that Haidee Bishop will be involved with the start up activities for the Local Nature Partnership (see page 2). Haidee brings considerable expertise in biodiversity, project management and cross-cutting themes, from her roles with Natural England and Norfolk County Council's Waste team.

Gerry Barnes
Chairman, Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

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www.norfolkbiodiversity.org

Working together to conserve, enhance and restore Norfolk's biological diversity

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Plans underway for Local Nature Partnership



Staverton Park (credit: Scott Perkin)

Proposals to establish a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for Norfolk and Suffolk are off to a strong start, with the news that a grant of £31,000 has been awarded to the two counties from Defra/Natural England.

The funding will be used to support a range of preparatory activities over the next eight months, including:

- **Dialogue** with a wide range of organisations and interest groups about their expectations of a Local Nature Partnership;
- **Piloting** a “Business and Biodiversity Forum”, to explore the potential for conservation bodies to work more closely with local companies;

Haidee Bishop will co-ordinate preparatory activities which will build the foundations of the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Nature Partnership.

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- **Organising** three, in-depth, stakeholder workshops, with the health sector, the marine sector and local community organisations;
- **Investigating** the potential for expanding “visitor payback” schemes to benefit conservation. The schemes encourage visitors to make voluntary donations to a fund, which is then used to support environmental and community projects in the local area;
- **Preparing** a draft environmental vision for Norfolk and Suffolk.

Following the completion of these capacity building activities, it is envisioned that an application will be made to Defra to secure formal Local Nature Partnership status in summer 2012.

The proposed Local Nature Partnership will build on the strong foundations that have already been established by the Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnerships. The proposed LNP will look at the natural environment in its widest sense, and will seek to engage with a very diverse range of stakeholders, including: health and wellbeing boards; local businesses; tourism; local authorities; education bodies; communities and the wider public; statutory agencies, such as the Environment Agency and Natural England; environmental charities, such as the Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trusts; local landowners and farmers; and Local Record Centres.

Scott Perkin, Co-ordinator for the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, said:

“There are powerful reasons for bringing Norfolk and Suffolk together under the umbrella of a single LNP, including the cross-county nature of many of our landscapes and ecosystems, such as the Brecks and the Broads. Additionally, the proposed LNP boundary mirrors that of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which will help us to work with local businesses.”

Gen Broad, Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator, added:

The Norfolk and Suffolk Biodiversity Partnerships have a long tradition of working together. The proposed LNP will build upon and strengthen our existing relationship, delivering benefits for both people and wildlife in our two counties. ”

Biodiversity Forum

The science, art and controversy of species' re-introductions were the topics under debate at this year's popular Annual Biodiversity Forum, held on 3rd November. Re-introduction projects have brought red kites back to British skies, beavers back to Scottish wetlands and pool frogs back to Breckland. They are also increasingly seen as a way of helping species adapt to climate change through "assisted migration" and can even help stimulate tourism. However, species' re-introductions can also be costly and controversial and spark local concern. Many are technically difficult, and a significant number of re-introduction projects fail or have unforeseen consequences for other wildlife.

The conference heard from leading re-introduction experts working with IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), the Scottish Beaver Trial, RSPB, Plantlife, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and the Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative. Presentations can be downloaded from http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/about/annual_biodiversity_forum.aspx

Community Biodiversity Awards

The annual Community Biodiversity Awards were presented in July to eleven outstanding Norfolk conservation projects with community involvement at their heart.



Community Biodiversity Award winners, 2011 (credit: Charles Greenhough)

Winners were: Draughtna Trees (Group Award) who have established new community woodland in Drayton); Acle High School Art Department (Education Award) for natural form artwork exhibited in Burlingham Woods; Litcham Common Management Committee (Site Award) for community effort to re-introduce grazing by ponies; Ernest Woodrow (Individual Award) for his outstanding efforts to run the Norwich Community Green Gym; Norwich Bat Group (Species Award) for work to raise awareness of bats in Norwich.

Highly commended projects were Friends of Eaton Park (Group Award); Harding's Pits Community Association (Group Award); Whitwell Common Trustees (Group Award); Pott Row first School (Education Award); Emma Harwood (Individual Award); John Ellis (Individual Award);

Planning and Biodiversity Seminar

The 7th annual seminar was held this year at the British Trust for Ornithology offices at Thetford, in collaboration with the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership.

This year, a record 70 participants gathered for the meeting, which provided an overview of the latest national and county-level developments and best practice related to spatial planning, development control and biodiversity. Presentations covered the following topics:

- Key national issues related to biodiversity in development control (Mike Oxford);
- Implications of the Localism Bill (Marie Smith);
- Biodiversity offsetting (Claire Lewis);
- Natural England and planning (Alison Collins);
- The District Ecologist post at Norfolk County Council (David White)
- Local Record Centres in landscape-scale projects and planning (Martin Horlock)

All are available for download from: <http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/planningguidance/planningbiodiversityseminar.aspx>

New sponge recorded off Norfolk



Purple sponge (credit: Rob Spray)

A species of sponge never before recorded in the UK has been discovered off the coast of Norfolk by scientists taking part in the first-ever survey of seaweed along the east coast of England this summer.

The "Seaweed East" survey involved national marine biodiversity experts, Seasearch divers, a botanist and a wild food expert.

A total of 131 species was collected, including four non-native species. All the samples will be pressed and scanned, in order to produce an East Coast Seaweed Collection. Whilst exploring the coast of East Runton in Norfolk, the team discovered an unidentified species of purple sponge new to science.

The Seaweed East survey was co-ordinated and funded by The Wildlife Trusts and carried out by Seasearch, a voluntary organisation which involves divers in biological recording. Additional support was provided by the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership and a range of other organisations, including the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership, Environment Agency, Durham Heritage Coast, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust and Purling Transport.

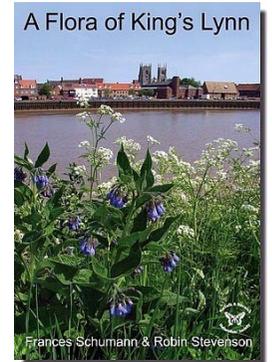
Survey highlights role played by community groups

A recent survey, commissioned by the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership and carried out by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), revealed that there are at least 60 community environmental groups active in the county. They work with more than 1,300 volunteers on some 200 different sites, making

a tremendously important - but often under-recognised contribution - to the conservation and management of Norfolk's biodiversity. The information from the survey has been collated into an online directory, which allows users to find out more about activities and volunteering opportunities in their local area.

Find out more at: <http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/communityprojects/>

A new flora for King's Lynn



The NBP's project fund helped with costs to get the Flora of King's Lynn into print this October.

This informative and richly illustrated guide was the culmination of five years of effort by local botanists **Robin Stevenson** and **Frances Schumann**. The publication describes the habitats of the town and includes an alphabetised list of the 800 species recorded. All, except the commonest species, are accompanied by a distribution map and text, commenting either on the biology, history or uses of the plant – a mixture of facts designed to make the flora appeal to as wide a selection of people as possible, not solely botanists.

"When we began, we expected to find 400 or so species," said Robin. "But we have been surprised by the sheer quantity and variety of the plants we have identified," he continued.

There are very few particularly rare plants described, but the work highlights the amount of biodiversity that can be found in an urban area such as King's Lynn.

Items discussed at Topic Groups recently

Coastal and Marine	MCZ process Chalk reef survey North coast valuation study Little Tern Working Group
Communities and Nature	Community Biodiversity Awards Natural Neighbours Local Nature Partnership Biodiversity off-setting Nature Improvement Areas Action plans for Open Mosaic Habitats; barn owl; swift; allotments
Econets & Climate Change Adaptation	No meetings during this period
Farmland	Farmer-related activities in the North Coast AONB Grassland CWS project Action for Pollinators project Site visit to Sea Mere farm
Heathlands	Update on heathland CWS project Adoption of Heathland HAP Update on Brecks HLF and NIA bids Project proposals – CWS on former mineral sites and Mousehold Geodiversity Trail
Planning and Biodiversity	Implications of the Natural Environment White Paper The District Ecologist post Green Infrastructure component of CIL Biodiversity offsetting
Waterbodies	Introduction to the Norfolk Rivers' Trust Update from Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative Norfolk 'ark' site for crayfish Revision of mollusc Species Action Plan
Wetlands	Broads Biodiversity Audit Update on proposed Local Nature Partnership Fen Orchid Steering Group meeting Fen hydrology report Action plans for reedbeds and fen Site visit to Buttles Marsh
Woodlands	No meetings during this period

Heathland Practitioners' Forum

The Heathland Practitioners' Forum gives those with an interest in the conservation of heathland an opportunity to exchange ideas on the most effective ways to conserve and create this rare and valuable habitat.



Thetford Warren
(credit: Neil Featherstone)

During summer 2011, the group spent a busy day visiting three contrasting sites within Thetford Golf Course and Marsh (SSSI). The day started at Thetford Warren Lodge with a tour of the site and a discussion of the ambitious proposed heathland restoration works. The group was also lucky enough to be shown inside the 13th century lodge and be given a brief history of Thetford Warren. Next stop was Thetford Golf Course, where the management of the site through Higher Level Stewardship takes into account its heathland character. The day ended at the marshes and wet woodland, where the Forestry Commission described how it manages the site through grazing. With such a diverse range of habitats within only a small area, the day served to highlight the importance of Breckland for biodiversity, archaeology and landscape.

The Forum was as well attended as ever, demonstrating the continued enthusiasm for events such as this which give attendees an opportunity to share 'best practice' on site.

Sarah Cunningham, member, Heathland Practitioners' Forum

Topic Group Chairs

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Woodlands

Vacant

Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative

The Norfolk Non-native Species Initiative (NNNSI) has been in the news with the launch of Broad Sweep – a citizen science survey calling for public help with recording six invasive non-native species: Himalayan balsam; giant hogweed; Japanese knotweed; floating pennywort; red-eared terrapin; and American mink. The survey has generated a good response, with many records submitted through the online recording facility developed by NBIS. Find out more at: <http://www.nbis.org.uk/BroadSweep2011>

NNNSI is also leading an initiative to safeguard the survival of the white-clawed crayfish in the county by establishing 'ark' sites where populations are isolated from non-native crayfish. It is hoped that these refuges will help to ensure the survival of the species. Read more here: <http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/news/?id=12>

New England Biodiversity Strategy

A new strategy to stop the loss of species and habitats in the England was published this summer in response to the international goals and targets agreed in Nagoya in 2010. The England Biodiversity Strategy will use a joined up approach to deliver gains for nature through more effective and integrated management which includes plans for the

creation of landscape-scale Nature Improvement Areas. It will seek to ensure that 90% of priority habitats are in good shape; to create an extra 200,000 ha of priority habitat; and to restore 15% of poor wildlife habitat to help mitigate against climate changes. Fifteen new indicators to monitor progress with the outcomes and actions set out in the Strategy have been developed. These have been designed to communicate with a broad audience. A competition - the Big Wildlife Garden competition – was also launched to encourage people to garden with wildlife in mind. Read more here: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/>

Farewell from Scott

I feel very privileged to have worked for the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership these last seven years. As I look back over my time here, I am struck by how much I have learned – about biodiversity, about partnerships and about translating national objectives and targets into local action. My perspective on biodiversity has been radically transformed; whereas I once thought of biodiversity largely in terms of national parks and great wildlife spectacles, I now view biodiversity as being of vital importance everywhere, and at all scales.

I would like to thank all the members of the Partnership for making me feel so welcome from my very first day in post. Some special

acknowledgements need to be made. I would particularly like to thank Gerry Barnes, Chairman of the Biodiversity Partnership, for all his guidance over the years, as well as Keith McNaught, the first Chair. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the Topic Group Chairs, who have given so much to the day-to-day work of the Partnership. And lastly, I would like to thank all the members of the NCC's environment team, who have provided support, humour, counsel and biscuits – and who are without doubt the nicest bunch of people with whom I have ever worked.

Together, I believe we have made a real difference for biodiversity in the county, and I wish the Partnership every continued success in the future.

Scott Perkin
Biodiversity Services Co-ordinator

Events

19th May 2012 Wild About the Wensum, Pensthorpe.

Find out more about local events here: www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/events/

Funding partners:



Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership

Anglian Water | Breckland Council | British Trust for Ornithology | Broadland District Council | Broads Authority | Environment Agency | Forestry Commission | Great Yarmouth Borough Council | King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council | Natural England | Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service | Norfolk County Council | Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group | Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society | Norfolk Wildlife Trust | North Norfolk District Council | Norwich City Council | RSPB | South Norfolk Council | University of East Anglia | Water Management Alliance

