



Winter 2011

# Biodiversity News

*Newsletter of the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership*

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*Wading into the breach – partnership programme to help conserve local birds.*

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*The Scottish Mink Initiative – building on the success of the Water Vole Project.*

*Red Letter Day for North-East Squirrels – a return to the region for our native squirrels?*

*PAWS for thought – restoring our ancient woodlands.*

*They might be giants – a welcome return to some marine visitors.*

*On the sixth day of Christmas...some White-fronted Geese...*

*And finally - conservation is for life...*



*Photo by Lorne Gill (SNH) – Waxwing, winter visitor to NE Scotland.*

Welcome to the winter edition of the NE Scotland LBAP Newsletter. The recent mild weather, which has seen some unseasonably late sightings of several species throughout the North-East, has given way to our familiar winter landscape. With

it, there are still many opportunities to observe biodiversity at close at hand; indeed this is often the busiest time of the year at our coastal wetlands.

This issue shows there are many people working together to help protect and preserve our biodiversity. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors to the first two issues of the newsletter and look forward to many more ideas for articles next year. Indeed next year promises to be a very busy and exciting time for the LBAP with lots of plans for projects, which I look forward to highlighting in the next issue!

In the meantime, if you have any ideas for articles, or wish to send feedback on the newsletter, please contact me at [rose.toney@hutton.ac.uk](mailto:rose.toney@hutton.ac.uk). I wish you all a biodiversity filled winter!

Rose Toney – LBAP Co-ordinator.

[www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk](http://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk)

## Moray Dolphin Initiative Shortlisted for Nature Award



Photo by Charlie Phillips

***Congratulations to a local initiative promoting sustainable eco-tourism which has recently been short-listed for the RSPB's Nature of Scotland Awards. Recognising the economic value of wildlife watching, the Dolphin Space Programme brings together accredited wildlife tour operators within the Moray Firth. Running since 1995, the programme supports businesses providing opportunity to responsibly watch the most northerly resident population of bottlenose dolphins in the world and to learn about the threats they face. [Read more...](#)***



Photo by Hywel Maggs

### Farmland Wader Project Looking to the Future

**A North-East collaboration between farmers, conservation organisations and environmental consultants has completed its first year of a project designed to help conserve farmland birds. The Grampian Wetland and Wader Initiative has just published summary results and is looking forward to implementing longer term actions to benefit these important species. [Read more...](#)**



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## Farming fun for young naturalists



Photo by Lynne Laing

A bunch of keen young naturalists working towards a John Muir Award had the opportunity recently to experience the biodiversity of a wildlife friendly farm. The Moray Wildlife Watch Group, a junior branch of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, visited Colin Campbell's Easter Bauds farm as part of the award's aim to help participants discover and explore wild places. [Read more...](#)

## Salmon in the Classroom



The River Don Trust is offering the chance to local primary schools to get involved in their successful Salmon in the Classroom initiative. The project, in its third year, is one of a number of



education initiatives, supported by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Rivers and Fisheries Trust of Scotland, which has been developed to provide children with the opportunity to learn about the ecology of one of the region's most iconic species and take an active part in helping the fish develop throughout their lifecycle. [Read more...](#)

Photos by Jamie Urquhart

# Project Updates

## The Scottish Mink Initiative



Photo by Jamie Urquhart

*The North-East Scotland Water Vole Conservation Project started life as an LBAP Project in 2003. Having demonstrated considerable success in raising awareness of and protecting this priority species, the project is now part of the larger Scottish Mink Initiative which seeks to eradicate the invasive American Mink, the biggest predatory threat to water voles, from the region.*

*Aberdeenshire Mink Control Officer, Sarah Atkinson, gives an update on the early successes of the project and hopes for expansion of the initiative. [Read more...](#)*

## Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels



Photo by Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels

*Local support for a campaign to save one of the region's most loved species appears to be paying dividends. The Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project, which utilises volunteers to survey for the presence of native red squirrels and invasive grey squirrels, has just published some encouraging results.*

*Recent surveys show that, not only has there been a reduction in the number of sightings of grey squirrels, but that red squirrels are now being recorded in areas where they had been absent for some time. [Read more...](#)*

## Return of the Giants?



Photo by Laura Clark (SNH) – Humpback whale off coast of Scotland.

The coasts of North-East Aberdeen are much lauded as one of the best places to watch cetaceans in Europe; porpoises and dolphins are often seen in abundance. Some of the smaller whale species also frequent the region. However, recent sightings of much larger visitors to our seas have caused quite a stir. Ian Hay, Project Officer for East Grampian Coastal Partnership relates his fortuitous sighting of one marine giant and ponders on the occurrence of sightings of some other species. [Read more...](#)



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## Restoring Our Ancient Woodlands



*Nearly half of all Scotland's ancient woodlands were planted over with non-native trees, mostly conifers, during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Research has shown that in most of these sites, remnant ecological & historic features still survive amongst these plantations.*

*Carol Robertson, North East Manager for Scottish Native Woods, highlights the importance of helping*

*Photo by Scottish Native Woods*

*to restore our Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites or PAWS and offers advice on how this can be achieved. [Read more...](#)*

## Power to the Peatlands - IUCN Inquiry



**Sundew – a typical peatland species**



**Two thirds of Britain's dragonfly and damselfly species utilise peatlands**

Above all other habitats, peatlands are probably our closest thing to a truly natural environment. Blanket Bog rolls over some of the upland parts of the North-East, and far more extensively further north and west in Scotland, whilst isolated pockets of Lowland Raised Bog survive in the east of our region from Buchan down to Kincardineshire. These environments provide a haven for some of our most specialised and unique wildlife assemblages. A recent inquiry by the International Union for Conservation of Nature has highlighted how essential it is to preserve this valuable habitat. [Read more...](#)



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## *Priority Species Focus – the White-fronted Goose*



*Photo by Nick Littlewood -White-fronted Goose (flapping) with Tundra Bean Geese*

The North East is certainly no stranger to the influx of skeins of overwintering geese each year; it is often remarked that the familiar sight of Pink-footed Geese filling the Grampian skies heralds the beginning of the autumn term at university. However, the region also occasionally hosts a number of other overwintering geese, two of which are UK Biodiversity Action Plan priorities; the Greenland White-fronted Goose and the European White-fronted Goose.

Sightings of the European White-fronted Goose are usually few and far between in the North East. However, substantial numbers of this priority species have been seen in the region within the last few weeks. Nick Littlewood provides a brief account of these recent visitors. [Read more...](#)

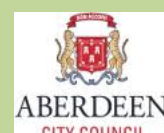
### *And finally...*

*Many conservation organisations offer the opportunity for giving “green” gifts at Christmas; endangered animals can be sponsored or adopted in the name of a loved one, hectares of woodland can be bought and a multitude of branded items such as cards and calendars are available to buy. These all greatly contribute towards the essential work of environmental charities struggling in these difficult economic times. However, there are many opportunities to make small, but meaningful, contributions to helping protect biodiversity throughout the year; bird and bat boxes are easy to make and put up, planting wildflowers in the garden pays dividends for insects and not forgetting the many volunteering opportunities available across the North-East which can make a real difference to helping conserve our landscape and wildlife.*

*Have a lovely Christmas and Happy New Year.*

*P.S Don't forget to recycle your cards and wrapping after the holidays.*

*The North East Scotland LBAP is funded by;*



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