

# Delivering Living Landscapes – Citizen Science Survey



**Duration Survey:** July 2015

**Theme of Survey:** Wetland Species

**Species Recorded:**

- Himalayan balsam
- Water vole
- Grass snake

**Promotion:**

- A6 cards distributed in the broads area
- A4 poster distributed in the broads area
- NWT E-newsletter
- Press release
- Social media



## Survey overview

In July Norfolk Wildlife Trust's launched a month-long survey mapping the distribution of water voles, grass snakes and Himalayan balsam in Norfolk. Receiving sightings from the public enables the Trust to identify areas which are especially important for wildlife in Norfolk and helps map non-native invasive species in need of control. All records were forward to Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service.

**Survey Summary:**

- 110 records uploaded
- 78 individuals submitted records
- All records through online survey



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## Further information:

### Water voles

Water voles have declined more rapidly than any other UK mammal and are a threatened species. Reasons for this national decline include predation by introduced North American mink, pollution of rivers and water courses and loss of wetland habitat. Norfolk is an important stronghold for water voles, and our survey saw **17** records being uploaded by **14** people to the online survey, recording **19** individual water voles.



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## Grass snake

Grass snakes have also declined nationally. Reasons for this include loss of wetland and heathland habitats and although they are a protected species, they are still sometimes illegally persecuted by people who dislike snakes. In Norfolk grass snakes have a patchy distribution and sightings will help us identify areas which are strongholds. Grass snakes are also known as water snakes so we would expect them to have a stronghold in the Broads, but more sightings need to be submitted to help build a better picture of the distribution of this fantastic reptile. During this survey **61** records were uploaded by **51** people to the online survey, recording **91** individual grass snakes. The most grass snakes seen in one area was **11** individuals near **Weston Longville**.



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## Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam, as its name suggests, is a non-native species in Norfolk and was introduced to the UK as a garden plant. It has colonised many river banks and wetland areas, creating dense, impenetrable stands which shade out native plants. Sightings of Himalayan balsam will help map areas where this invasive non-native has become established and help to assess the need to control this species to benefit native wildlife.

During this survey **32** records were uploaded by **30** people to the online survey, recording **490** individual Himalayan balsam plants.



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## In conclusion

In comparison to other surveys we have run at Norfolk Wildlife Trust we did not receive as many wildlife records for this one. However, due to the elusive nature of grass snakes and water voles and the short duration of the survey this was expected. Also, in hindsight, the month of July is not necessarily the best month to survey water voles as the vegetation found along dykes and other freshwater bodies is quite dense making it harder to spot water voles or their signs. Therefore if we run a water vole survey again it would be better to run it in spring or late autumn.

There was a lack of records submitted from the North Norfolk area, this may be due to the species not being spotted in this area, but more likely due to promotion of this survey not reaching residents in this area of Norfolk.

During this survey we were sent some wonderful images Of grass snakes and also received anecdotal evidence of this wonderful reptile being recorded in and around garden ponds and compost heaps, showing the importance role gardens play for grass snakes.



Tab's Taberham



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