

## FIRE

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### *Symbol of energy*

Sunrise and sunset, summer solstice and winter solstice – these are the great daily and seasonal fire cycles of the sun that pull the tides of life on the coast. Tides of migratory birds ebb and flow with the seasons: warblers, swallows and terns in spring; and the great skeins of geese in autumn. Dawn and dusk, when the world holds its breath between day and night, are times when the power and magic of this coast are felt most strongly.

Throughout history man has used fire to tame parts of the land here. Coastal heathlands were traditionally managed by burning. This encouraged a flush of new growth for sheep to graze and prevented trees and scrub encroaching. North Norfolk's heaths are no longer managed by fire but some coastal reedbeds are still burnt. Burning the reeds in winter helps prevent an accumulation of dead material which, if left, can gradually lead to the reedbed drying out.

Fire is both a creative force and a destructive one. The pinewoods at Holkham and Wells have both suffered damage from accidental fires. Gorse-covered heaths at Kelling and Salhouse are also prone to fire damage, whether deliberately lit by vandals, or perhaps accidentally caused by the sun's rays on a carelessly discarded glass bottle.



Right: Blacksmith – North Creake.

Opposite: Reed burning at Cley Marshes – January.

