



Patrol Pack

Important information for Toad Patrollers

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Patrol Pack

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Background

During the 1980s it was decided that something should be done to help the thousands of toads that were killed on the UK's roads each spring and so the Toads on Roads project was set up.

Common toads are very particular about where they breed and follow the same migration route back to their ancestral ponds each year. If something is constructed in their path, they carry on regardless. Unfortunately, if this something is a road then the toads are at risk of being killed by traffic or becoming trapped in drains.

To save these intrepid travellers there are various steps that can be taken - including displaying road warning signs to make drivers more aware, lowering kerbs and setting up a Toad Patrol. A Toad Patrol is a group of volunteers who monitor the stretch of road that toads are crossing and try to help the toads, if possible.

Froglife holds the Department for Transport database of amphibian migratory crossings. A 'toad crossing' that features on this database is able to apply to the local authority for road warning signs to be installed during the migration period (February to April) or for dropped kerbs to be installed along the stretch of road the toads are using.



What does toad patrolling involve?

HOW DO I PATROL A TOAD CROSSING?

If the road is not too dangerous a Patrol may be possible. Your safety is the primary concern so if the road is busy or has poor visibility DO NOT attempt to rescue any toads. If you do plan to patrol then always wear reflective clothing, carry a torch and make sure someone knows where you are. Patrolling itself is quite simple - it's just a case of collecting the toads from one side of the road and transporting them to the other side in a bucket. Toads tend to start moving around dusk and will continue into the night, depending on how cold it gets; you only really need to patrol during the first part of the evening when there is a high likelihood of them encountering traffic.

WHEN SHOULD I PATROL?

Toads can emerge from hibernation any time from January onwards, depending on local weather conditions; they tend to emerge a little later than frogs. Amphibian movements are very dependent on weather so it's crucial to check local forecasts; key signs to look out for are: first mild temperatures ($>5^{\circ}\text{C}$), together with rain. When these conditions have been identified it's a good idea to start monitoring the site - if you can, check the site every evening or at least during/after appropriate patches of weather. It may be easiest to have one person coordinating who can draw up a rota so not all volunteers are out all the time; if a Patroller discovers a particularly busy crossing one night they can then call on reinforcements.

WHY SHOULD I RECORD DATA?

We ask Toad Patrollers to record the numbers of toads and other amphibians they help across the road, and how many they see killed. This data feeds into national monitoring projects and helps us determine how the UK's toad population is faring as a whole. The data can give a good idea of how successfully Patrols are helping local populations. This data does not always provide an accurate view - there can be various other influences on toad numbers such as the weather causing them to move later at night when they're not seen, or more volunteers available so more are recorded - but it's certainly a good starting point. In 2010 over 70,000 toads were helped across the UK's roads. A recording form is at the end of the pack and data can be submitted online (www.froglife.org/toadsonroads). **Please return your data at the end of the season!**



Health and Safety

Toad patrolling is an immensely rewarding activity with potential to help toads locally and to provide crucial data that can feed into national monitoring initiatives. However, toad patrolling is a potentially dangerous volunteer activity and any attempts to prepare a crossing should be fully risk assessed beforehand and insurance should be sought.

If you have any concerns about safety on a road, under no circumstances should you undertake a Toad Patrol. Your local council might be able to help on these roads by providing signs, or occasionally, by installing tunnels / other mitigation measures. Contact Froglife if this is the case.

PROCEDURES FOR TOAD PATROLLING

1. DO NOT undertake or take part in a Toad Patrol without first undertaking a full Risk Assessment.
2. DO NOT undertake or take part in a Toad Patrol without first taking out insurance for you and your patrollers (see below).
3. YOU ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION to undertake or take part in a Toad Patrol. If you are uncertain or have concerns about undertaking or taking part, under no circumstances should you continue.
4. CHILDREN UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE SHOULD ONLY TAKE PART IN A TOAD PATROL IN THE PRESENCE OF A PARENT OR GUARDIAN. Vulnerable persons taking part will also require specialised supervision.
5. REFLECTIVE CLOTHING should be worn and a TORCH should be carried at all times.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Before starting a Toad Patrol it is vital that you identify the risks involved by doing a Risk Assessment. If you do not undertake this you might be liable should an accident occur to you, other patrollers or passing traffic. The Patrol Pack contains a



sample Risk Assessment which outlines some example dangers that might occur at a toad crossing and which you need to control for. You must visit the site and fill in the blank Risk Assessment, also provided, evaluating and specifying how you will control for site dangers that might occur there. If you have any further questions please get in touch.

INSURANCE

As a Froglife volunteer you and your Patrollers are covered for Personal Accident Insurance under Froglife's insurance policy. All you need to do is **get each Patroller to read the appropriate Health and Safety information ('Procedures for toad patrolling' above), your Risk Assessment and Method of Work, and sign a declaration form.** ALL patrollers must sign a form and return it to us otherwise they WILL NOT be covered. Declaration forms can be downloaded from the website or can be posted on request.

ARG UK (Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK - www.arguk.org) also has an insurance scheme which covers Toad Patrolling. Individual ARGs need to sign up to this scheme for their members to be insured. Check with your ARG representative to find out if your group is affiliated.

IDEAS FOR SAFE WORKING

Good preparation...

- If you don't have a rota, try to get volunteers to 'book' on so that you have some idea of numbers each evening.
- Make sure you have enough high-vis clothing for all volunteers, or that they bring their own, and that it is well maintained – it won't work if it gets dirty!
- If your crossing is particularly large, try to make sure you have one or more experienced Patrollers around to help manage each evening.
- Always visit the site in daytime before the start of the season, even if you think you're relatively familiar with the site. Check how easy it is to walk along the collection and release areas; clear vegetation if necessary.



On patrol nights...

- If you are patrolling alone ensure you have let somebody know where you are and let them know when you are home safely. Always carry a fully charged mobile phone.
- Try to have a car park/meet point away from the road and toad crossing where you can safely brief and equip your volunteers. Sign a safe route (off the carriageway) from here to the toad crossing; if this isn't possible, make sure you walk as a group on the roadside facing oncoming traffic, wearing your hi-vis clothing.
- Don't keep your Risk Assessment a secret! Get all volunteers to read it and highlight any particular hazards and how to avoid them.
- Make sure your volunteers are dressed for the weather and terrain and have torches or head torches.
- Think about setting up additional road signs - 'Toad Patrol', 'People on the road', etc. Make sure they are at a distance that gives motorists plenty of warning; if possible have two sets - one in each direction. You may need to seek the Council's permission to display signs, check first.
- To try and avoid pedestrian/vehicle collisions get Patrollers to cross in groups, either by having experienced volunteers leading groups or by having designated crossing points at the safest places.
- Count your volunteers in and out - we don't leave our Toad Patrollers behind!
- The patrol coordinator should carry/have access to a fully charged mobile phone and, ideally, a first aid kit.



Recruiting volunteers

If you require additional help with your Toad Patrol you may find some of the information below useful. If someone takes an interest ensure you get their contact details straight away. Putting together a list of interested people is the first step to coordinating a successful Toad Patrol. From here-on, try and keep the group focused in the run-up to the toad migration season via phone calls or group emails. Arrange a site visit for all volunteers, during the daytime, sometime before the migration starts.

ADVERTISING FOR HELP

Posters are available (at the end of the Pack) for displaying in the local area (shops, pubs, notice boards, car windows etc). If the road is too dangerous to patrol or if you have no/few volunteers, being able to warn local people that toads might be on the road is vital.

If there is a local event/fete in you area, consider having a stall with posters and pictures to promote your Toad Patrol. This often proves a good way to raise support and awareness. Get in touch with Froglife if you would like any promotional material or colour posters. If there are no organised events, think about holding your own! Set up a stall in your local town/village centre, though remember you may need to seek permission.

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

You could also consider contacting local schools. Some children may be too young to take part but they might be interested in hearing about the project; get them involved by designing their own toad crossing sign or thinking about how they could help toads in their garden or school conservation area. Visits like this help raise awareness amongst the local community.

Don't forget to contact local wildlife groups who may be able to help. If there are any nature reserves nearby ask if you can put posters up on the notice boards promoting your cause. Useful starting points may include the local ARG (www.arguk.org), Wildlife Trust (www.wildlifetrusts.org) or your local authority's Biodiversity Officer.



Publicity and your Toad Patrol

Over the years, toad migrations and toad patrols have been featured regularly on regional TV, radio and in newspapers. You might decide that you'd like to raise awareness of your toad crossing in this way – if so the following might be of use...

DOES YOUR SITE REALLY NEED PUBLICITY?

In some cases, media exposure can have a positive effect on a toad crossing: it can make drivers drive more slowly; it can raise awareness of the site to the local council, increasing the likelihood of required action (e.g. sign installation); or it can attract volunteers to help. All of these have positive implications for your toads.

On the negative side, media exposure can sometimes lead to anti-social repercussions, where signs are stolen, or where toads (or worse, patrollers) suffer abuse - a situation which unnecessarily affects your safety.

These are issues you must weigh up before publicising your toad crossing.

WHO DO I TELL?

Should you decide to publicise your toad crossing, there is a draft press release in this pack, which you can use as a template. Send this to local media outlets. A good place to start is by phoning up your local newspaper and asking for the newsroom, where you can then speak to a journalist about your toad crossing. Another good idea is to get in touch with your local BBC news office - the email will be: 'county name'@bbc.co.uk (e.g. Devon would be devon@bbc.co.uk). This could then lead to both BBC radio and TV coverage. If you would like a copy of this template emailed to you just get in touch: info@froglife.org

BE PREPARED!

It's notoriously difficult to tell how much publicity your site might get: it might be that you hear very little, or it might be that you are overcome with enquiries. One thing



that's really important is that you have some key messages ready for when the journalists ring: (e.g. "we want volunteers", "we want the council to listen to us", "we want to help our local toads" etc.) this way you can get your message heard clearly, before the interviewer takes you off the subject with other questions.

OTHER RESOURCES

There might be other people you could forward media enquiries to should you need: your County Coordinator (if there is one in your county, find out from Froglife) or your local Amphibian and Reptile Group (www.arguk.org), will be good contacts for local enquiries. For more national information on Toads on Roads, contact Froglife on 01733 558960 or email info@froglife.org. Information on free photos is available in the notes section of your press release template.

FEEDBACK TO FROGLIFE

Keeping track of where your Toad Patrol has appeared in media is really useful for a number of reasons - it means you can re-contact journalists should you need the following year, plus it means you have a public record of the site's importance, which could be useful if the site should become threatened in future years. Please also send photocopies (or web links) of any coverage to Froglife, who will insert this information into your Toad Crossing file, and feedback the level of publicity the Toads on Roads project has received nationally each year.



Checklist

As the run-up to the migration season begins, you might find this checklist useful to make sure you are adequately prepared!

VOLUNTEERS

- It's important to get in touch with all your regular Patrollers from previous years and advertise for new ones if necessary. There are posters available for you to display in local shops / community centres / etc.
- When you hear back from potential Patrollers, find out their availability, experience and get their contact details (daytime and evening).
- If you do not live particularly near to the crossing site, try and find a local person (e.g. a dog walker, or someone who lives or works near by) who can keep an eye out for toads starting to move – they can then let you know, even if they're not able to patrol themselves.
- Arrange for all the Patrollers to visit the site in daylight to familiarise themselves well in advance of the migration season. Perhaps organise an informal meeting (at a local pub or café?) and then use this opportunity to ensure all new patrollers are briefed on their task and understand the recording forms.
- Ensure everybody has read your Risk Assessment and signed our volunteer declaration form or ARG UK Volunteer Agreement.
- Confirm availability of each of your Patrollers - this will help if you want to draw up a rota.

INSURANCE

- Please see the Health and Safety section of the Patrol Pack - make sure you carry out a Risk Assessment and get all Patrollers to sign a volunteer declaration.



WEATHER

- Toad migrations can start anytime between late-January (southwest England) and late-March (northeast England, eastern Scotland) so be sure to check the local weather forecast for the first run of consistently mild ($>5^{\circ}\text{C}$), wet nights and make sure all Patrollers are prepared. It will help to have someone nearby or who can check the road regularly to inform you when the toads are beginning to move.
- Websites that may be of use (remember to look at night time conditions not just day time): www.metoffice.gov.uk or www.bbc.co.uk/weather.

PATROLLING

- Make sure all volunteers have the means to record their data (even if it's just a scrap of paper and a pencil!) and that it is collected each night.
- Remember the toads will be most likely to move during or just after appropriate weather so the migration may happen in 'waves'.

DATA

- Once you have collected all the records, submit your data either by filling in and returning the recording form or entering it online at the end of the season.

