

# Garden Wildlife Health



## Spring 2016 Newsletter

Garden Wildlife Health is a citizen-science project that identifies and investigates disease threats to wildlife across Great Britain, focussing on garden birds, amphibians, reptiles and hedgehogs. Summer 2015 was extremely busy for the project and we received a high number of reports. We would like to thank you for contributing to **Garden Wildlife Health (GWH)** and for helping us to learn about the health conditions affecting native species.

Here's an update of what happened during the second half of 2015 and some of the health conditions we need your help with investigating this year, including those affecting reptiles and amphibians.

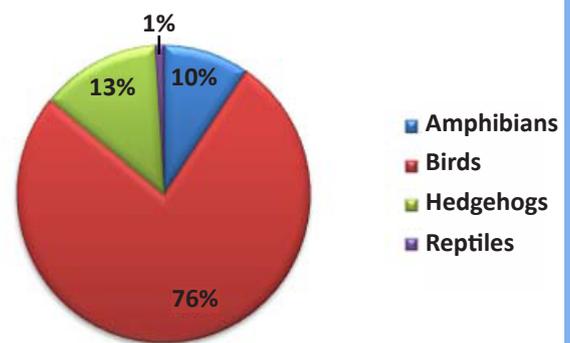
### Reports we received: July to December 2015

**766** disease reports

**202** post-mortem examinations

The majority of our reports between July and December 2015 involved garden birds, though we also received a record number of sick hedgehog sightings during autumn. These incidents mainly involved juvenile hedgehogs that were born late in summer. Unfortunately, this is commonly seen at that time of year.

#### Disease reports from different groups



## News

### Autumnwatch Extra

One of our vets was interviewed on Autumnwatch Extra in November. Lydia discussed recent project updates and how to protect garden wildlife during the bonfire season. This was a great opportunity to spread the word about GWH and get more people interested in wildlife health.



### Published paper on drowning in starlings

Long-term data is really valuable since it enables us to spot patterns of wildlife disease occurring over several years. Information gathered from over 20 years was used to identify 12 incidents of starlings drowning in groups in Great Britain, most involving juvenile birds. It is likely that this phenomenon can be explained by inexperienced juveniles and the gregarious behaviour of the birds. If you have a pond, add a ramp to help wild animals to safely enter and exit. This scientific paper is **free to access here**.



A starling bathing (Image: Jill Pakenham/BTO)

# Garden Wildlife Health



## *We need your help!*

### Reptile sightings

Six reptiles are native to Great Britain; three snakes (adder, grass snake and smooth snake) and three lizards (slow worm, sand lizard and common lizard). Sadly, many of these species are thought to be in decline and it is unknown whether diseases may play a part. There is a lack of information on the conditions affecting native reptiles and we need your help to learn more. Reptiles are very secretive and difficult to spot but if you see any sick or dead, we want to know.



Healthy grass snake (Image: Froglife)

### Plot the disease

**Ranid herpesvirus skin disease** is caused by a virus and causes common frogs to develop grey or white-coloured warty skin lesions, often compared to the appearance of candle wax drips. Here's a map of reports of affected common frogs in 2015. We receive few sightings of this disease but it appears to occur across Britain. This condition is usually seen in spring so please keep an eye out for it and **report it to us**.



Common frog with Ranid herpesvirus - (Image: Doug Mackenzie Dodds)



## *A disease dissected:*

### Hedgehog lungworm

Hedgehogs with lungworm have a parasitic lung infection. Parasite eggs are found in hedgehog faeces and these then infect snails, slugs and earthworms – all components of a hedgehog's diet. Parasites can also be picked up from contaminated surfaces and via maternal milk. Signs of infection range from nothing to snuffles, difficulty breathing, reduced appetite, and even death. If you feed hedgehogs, rotating feeding sites and cleaning the areas regularly will prevent the accumulation of parasites. **Find out more in our factsheet**.



A hedgehog feeding (Image: Hedgehog Street)