

NATTERCHAT

Froglife Newsletter

Autumn / Winter 2010

the toad issue...

- what's what with toads?
- the latest toad research
- help by supporting the Tuppence a Toad campaign

plus... all the latest news : HNR notebook : q&a

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from the ceo



Dear all,

They say time flies when you are having fun, and this is certainly the case here at Froglife. We have had a terrific six months and we have definitely *leapt forward for reptiles and amphibians*.

As you will read, we were recently awarded £200,000 by WREN for our Scottish work. This came through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and meant we needed to unlock almost £21,000 in Third Party funding. I'll not bore you all with the technicalities of Third Party requirements but needless to say we did have a frantic period when the begging bowls were rolled out! Fortunately, through a combination of contributions from North Lanarkshire Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Glasgow Natural History Society and from several of our Friends we managed to secure the money needed to release the grant.

Although we are very successful at project fundraising, like most charities, we always find it difficult to raise funds for our so-called core activities - such as our Information Service and supporting Toad Patrols. It is with this in mind that we have introduced a fun merchandising range (see p12), developed the Tuppence a Toad campaign (p8-9) and are encouraging staff and others to undertake fundraising activities. Please do visit our website www.froglife.org for more information on how you may be able to help support our fundraising initiatives.

Once again thanks to all for everything you have done to help with our success, we most certainly would not achieve nearly as much as we do without your continued support. Happy Reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kathy'.

Kathy Wormald, CEO
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froglifers

Chair of Trustees: Lin Wenlock
Chief Executive Officer: Kathy Wormald

Administration team: Finance & Administration Officer: Melanie Hamlett; PA to the CEO: Bonnie Rogers.

Communications team: Communications & Development Coordinator: Samantha Taylor; Community Fundraiser: Tina Lindsay; Wildlife Information Officer: Lucy Benyon.

Conservation team: Conservation Officer: Paul Furnborough; Living Water Officers: Alex Draper, Eilidh Spence, Rebecca Turpin; London Great Crested Newt Project Officer: Sivi Sivanesan.

Education team: Conservation Officers: James McAdie, Paul Furnborough; Conservation Youth Worker: Laura Brady.

Conservation and Education Advisory Group (external advisors): Andrew Mortimore, Daniel Piec, Jules Howard, Natalie Giles and Stephen Lambert.

BBC STAR HELPS PROMOTE NEW SCOTTISH PROJECT

Froglife has received funding from WREN to launch a new urban pond project in Scotland. The money will be used to create and rejuvenate ponds at 23 sites in Glasgow and North Lanarkshire.

Daniel Roche, who plays Ben in the BBC hit show *Outnumbered*, helped launch this latest round of WREN grants from a £10million fund, with a little help from one of his favourite creatures - a toad.



The child actor got up close and personal with the amphibian after funding group WREN announced ten projects were to receive cash from its Biodiversity Action Fund (BAF). The money will protect vital habitats for Britain's wildlife and includes £200,000 for Froglife to create and restore urban ponds.

10-year-old Daniel said it was brilliant being eyeball-to-eyeball with an amphibian. "I like frogs and toads. It's amazing to watch a tadpole turn into a frog in front of your eyes, the way their legs appear and then all of a sudden they are fully grown almost overnight."

The large-scale urban pond creation project, north of the border in Glasgow, will restore a stronghold environment for many nationally protected pond species. It will also give children living in urban areas the rare chance to get up close to creatures like frogs and toads - once common sights in our gardens and parks. The project will increase Froglife's Scottish staff from one (over-stretched!) officer to four - a new Project Officer and two part-time field assistants.

Kathy Wormald, chief executive of Froglife, said WREN's funding will directly increase the amphibian population of Scotland by restoring and introducing priority habitats.

"The UK's frog, toad and newt population is under threat as ponds decline at a dramatic rate," she added. "We campaign to do everything possible to restore these habitats so that children, like Daniel, can continue to learn about these precious British creatures."

For more about on our Scottish work visit www.froglife.org/scotland



FURTHER CELEBRITY SUPPORT FOR FROGLIFE

Local Peterborough girl Julia Bradbury, presenter of BBC's *Countryfile* and *Wainwright's Walks*, recently paid a visit to one of Froglife's education projects. After hearing about the success of the Green Pathways scheme, funded by BBC Children in Need, Julia took the opportunity to attend a summer session. With some pond-dipping and a quick rummage around the rest of the allotment there was plenty of wildlife to see. Further funding is currently being sought to continue the project and also take it to other cities, such as Glasgow.

www.froglife.org/greenpathways



MAKE-OVER FOR TRENT PARK'S PONDS

Thanks to SITA Trust and Enfield Council, Froglife has received a grant to improve the habitats at Trent Park, including an ancient toad breeding pond. Toads have been using the park for generations but over the years their breeding pond has become increasingly shaded by overgrown vegetation. Starting this autumn, the £23,000 grant will be used to restore the pond, by opening up the water to more light, and to create two new wildlife ponds in the wildflower meadow. A section of an Ancient Moat will also be restored to help increase breeding sites around the park.

More London news at www.froglife.org/london

RESERVE NOTEBOOK

"Summer is survey season on the Reserve, and this year we've really expanded, covering everything from beetles to badgers! We kicked off with aquatic plant and beetle ID and moved on to water vole training with the local Wildlife Trust and searches for badger setts. I've got plans afoot for branching into bats next year - watch this space!

On top of these one-off surveys, Nick Peers (volunteer Assistant Warden) has been conducting reptile and amphibian surveys and leading volunteer sessions.

Our regular bird and butterfly transects

are going strong and even managed to add a new species to the Reserve list: silver-washed fritillary. We also started dragonfly and moth monitoring; next year we hope to take part in the National Monitoring Scheme.

In June I got the opportunity to visit Eilidh in Glasgow. My week-long trip took me to all the city's nicest greenspaces. On my first night I surveyed two ponds with a team of intrepid volunteers - it took

Hampton Nature Reserve is managed by Froglife on behalf of O&H Hampton Ltd.

ACROSS THE POND... a world news round up

Pea-sized frog discovered in Borneo

One of the world's smallest frogs has recently been discovered in the heath forests of Borneo. Living in and around pitcher plants, the tiny amphibians *Microhyla nepenthicola* - adults of which are less than 15mm long - were originally thought to be juveniles of another species. Further studies are being carried out.

source: wildlifeextra.com

Evolution in action: Australian lizards abandon egg-laying

Yellow-bellied three-toed skinks have been found to be abandoning egg-laying in favour of live births in warmer regions of New South Wales.

source: news.nationalgeographic.com

Disney releases *Newt* artwork

In the last issue of Natterchat we brought you the sad news that Disney had cancelled its amphibian animation *Newt* - but you can now see some of the original artwork online: <http://is.gd/fbWkK>.

source: hollywoodnews.com

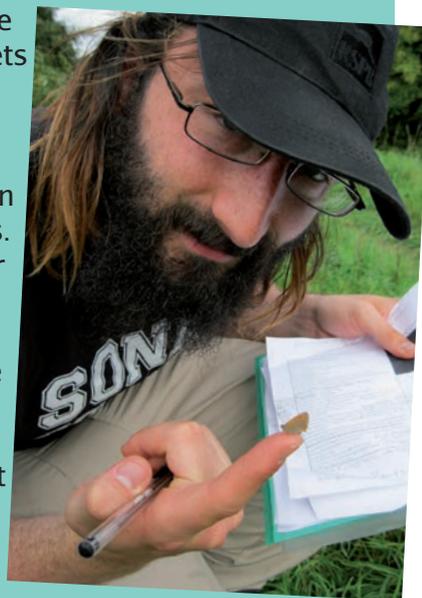
nearly five hours because of all the emerging froglets and toadlets! It was one treat after another as the following night we counted 75 adult toads on the paths between ponds. This was a neat reminder that toads are highly terrestrial animals and spend much of their time foraging on land. It was also a rare opportunity for me to see the amount of colour variation in our common toad, with individuals ranging from greens to browns to orange. Beautiful - a night to remember always.

Finally, we're wrapping up our Second Life for Ponds project on the Reserve. This is a fantastic evidence-based study into the effects of pond management across a range of species groups. A full report will be published soon!

It's been an amazing summer with wildlife round every corner and now we're ready to get stuck into the winter management tasks to restore the Reserve to top condition."

Paul Furnborough, Conservation Officer
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Photos: right: Paul with small copper butterfly (Laura Brady / Froglife); left: grass snake underwater (Keith Wilson)





I ♥ TOADS

Toads are facing some serious declines in the UK and desperately need our help. Not being cute and fluffy is a big problem for them. How can we really get the public at large to love the toad more? Guest writer **Nick Larkin** suggests some radical thoughts...

"Aren't they a firm making burglar alarms?"

"Err... they're ugly. And live in a hall"

"One of characters in American Graffiti was named after them. He was the nerdy one."

These were just a few of the negative and off-the-radar wrong comments echoing around the office when I asked the stressed eccentrics that are my work colleagues to come up with some positive comments about toads. Admittedly, I was surveying a mainly male environment of classic car writers, but it shows just how big a battle Froglife and its many supporters face. How can we get cynics out there to feel tenderness towards toads, and even shed tuppences in their direction? Well...

Toads are dignified and precious - amphibian Winston Churchills. What's wrong with having a few warts? They're needed for camouflage, not the result of not washing and definitely not contagious like verrucas (so don't worry if a toad gets into your swimming pool).

They have sweet golden eyes, a sweet, sticky tongue, are highly intelligent and play an important part in nature's eco-balance. My car-loving friends were far more impressed by the fact that toads return to the same ponds year after year to breed, carefully negotiating roads to do so. And with only one cheap sat-nav between them.

Natterjack toads sing happily. They could probably chirp some drivetime radio classics or even Rogers and Hammerstein if asked.

Toads are stars of literature - not only the residents of a certain hall but also poems by Christina Rossetti and Philip Larkin. As a result, fibreglass toads have been scattered around Hull to commemorate the anniversary of Larkin's death.

So, don't lose hope spreading the word and if all that doesn't work just promote another thought suggested to me: "Can't you lick the Australian ones and get high?"

Nick is a freelance writer with a passion for classic cars and vintage buses, as well as a soft spot for toads.



TOADS

DESERVE VICTORY!



TOADS IN A HOLE?

Toads are declining - but why and how do we know? The data collected through Froglife's Toads on Roads project offers an important insight into how common toads are faring across the UK.

Despite their name, common toads are not the regular sight they used to be. But is this something we should be concerned about or is what we're seeing a natural process for toad populations?

Each spring our Information Service is inundated with calls from concerned Toad Patrollers and members of the public

who've noticed an alarmingly low number of amphibians breeding that year. Most of the time this is nothing to worry about - populations naturally fluctuate so it's normal to see a cycle of peaks and troughs in the numbers.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

However, data does show a worrying decline in local

populations of toads, with no sign of them picking up again. Common toads have also been added to the Biodiversity Action Plan's priority species list due to their declines.

An important report, published in 2003, highlighted substantial and unexplained declines of the common toad in parts of England (Carrier and Beebee, 2003*).



This report showed that...

- Whilst frogs were doing reasonably well in lowland England with thriving urban populations, the picture for toads was not as bright. Toad populations were showing substantial declines in both urban areas and the wider countryside.
- Drops of toad numbers are commonly attributed to the loss of ponds and terrestrial habitat, as well as the fragmentation of these habitats, particularly by roads.
- The report found the geographical distribution of the decline corresponded to the most intensively farmed regions of the country.
- Interestingly, toads also fared worse at sites where they occurred alone - if frogs were present the toad population tended to do better.

2010: A BUMPER YEAR?

Interpreting the data from Toad Patrols can be difficult as the number of toads rescued depends on the number of patrollers and their availability. However, it's still a great way to keep an eye on what might be going on for toads across the country. This year, more toads than ever before were recorded being helped across the road.

Does this mean the toad's fortunes have turned? Or perhaps the message is getting through and more people are becoming involved in toad conservation? Toads still face a number of issues affecting their future, so it's difficult to say. It's possible that this spring's weather was simply better for toads.

STEPS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

As you can see, ongoing research and monitoring is needed to keep track of what is really happening for toads and help us save them from further declines. The data collected by Toad on Roads volunteers is essential; Professor Rob Oldham, toad expert and Froglife trustee, is currently carrying out some analysis to see if the downward trend is continuing. In practical terms, habitat management, wildlife-friendly farming and careful planning appear to be useful steps in protecting this charming species.

To find out more about **Toads on Roads** see www.froglife.org/toadsonroads

*Carrier and Beebee (2003): Recent, substantial and unexplained declines of the common toad *Bufo bufo* in lowland England (*Biological Conservation* 111).

TOAD RESEARCH: THE FUTURE...

Part of the money raised from Froglife's Tuppence a Toad campaign will be used to fund research. There are still many unanswered questions - what *is* the best way to help a toad across a road? Should toads be moved across these physical barriers or can they be encouraged to change their behaviour?

With these questions in mind, Froglife has developed a new research project. **Bufo Buffer Ponds** will create new ponds at toad crossing sites in an effort to stop the toads having to cross the road to reach their existing breeding pond.

We have anecdotal evidence of successes and failures of this type of scheme so this pilot project will put the theory to the test. The existing pond will also be maintained so that a new problem is not created by toads crossing in the other direction.

Recent research has focussed on preventing the toads accessing the road by installing tunnels or fences. Tunnels have proved costly and vary in their efficiency and fences still depend on a local volunteer group transporting the toads across the road. This research will help confirm whether this third option is viable.

This initial study will take place in the east of England and is dependent on finding suitable locations. If you know of a toad crossing site that may benefit from a new pond, particularly if you are or know the landowner, please let us know: www.froglife.org/bufobuffer.



Can you teach an old toad new tricks? We're trying to tempt toads away from their ancestral ponds (photo: Barry Kemp).



TUPPENCE A TOAD

Launching on 1st October, our year-long campaign will raise some much needed funds and awareness for toads and the Toads on Roads project.

What we are planning...

Our campaign launches with **Tucking in the Toads**, a bedtime-themed event to celebrate the hard work of the volunteers up and down the country who rescue toads. Going out with buckets at night as the weather starts to warm up in February, the Toad Patrollers this year alone have rescued over 65,000 toads from death or injury. Held at the beautiful Orton Hall Hotel in Peterborough, 45 minutes from London by train, the event includes talks and films to celebrate all things toad-y, as well as a catch up on how toad populations are getting on. We'll be wishing the toads a safe hibernation as they find their way to log piles, rockeries and other nooks and crannies.

Following the launch will be a busy calendar of activities, one of the highlights of which will be **An Evening at Toad Hall** on Saturday 2nd April. We'll return to the Orton Hall Hotel for an evening of 'putting the fun into fundraising', featuring an auction, food and games such as toad bingo and Scalextric racing!

Raising money is at the heart of the campaign, inviting people to donate their small change to make a big difference. Funds will be used in 5 main ways:



- 1 To create a pot of funds for Toad Patrols to dip into for torches, high-vis vests, buckets and other necessary equipment.
- 2 To fund research into how toads are getting on and how we can help, including looking at new methods to help toads cross roads safely.
- 3 On the ground conservation work to benefit toads, including the *Bufo Buffer Pond* project to create experimental new ponds near roads.
- 4 Publicity and educational materials to encourage the public to help and keep an eye out for toads and the toad crossing signs.
- 5 Lobbying for better roads, more signs and general awareness of the issue of wildlife on roads.

Getting involved with Tuppence a Toad...

We are asking people to support toads in all sorts of ways. It's not all about money - we also need help to raise the profile of toads and the risks they face. Do let us know what you're up to as we may be able to help, for example if you'd like to use the Froglife logo or any of our pictures in your publicity. Here are a few suggestions for fund- and awareness-raising ideas:

- Collect your spare change in a jar over the year and post us a cheque for your final total.
- Encourage your business to raise 2p for each toad saved by volunteers in 2011.
- Support your local Toad Patrol. If you can't help directly with volunteering then you could offer to make posters to put up in the local area or give talks about Toads on Roads to the local community. Find your nearest patrol at www.froglife.org/toadsonroads
- Download our educational resources for some toad-themed fun in your school: www.froglife.org/tuppence/resources.htm
- Treat friends and family to *Tuppence a Toad* merchandise, including magnets, air fresheners, greetings cards, painted pebbles, phone charms and a virtual gift; see p12 for more details or go to www.froglife.org/shop
- Have a toad themed 'pub quiz'! We've designed some questions for you which are available here: www.froglife.org/tuppence/pub_quiz.htm
- Join Froglife staff in doing something sponsored. Collecting your sponsor money is now easier than ever as you can do it online through Virgin Money Giving. Go to www.virginmoneygiving.com and search Froglife.
- Hold a dinner party and raise money via www.Dinner4Good.com, which has templates for invites and menus for you to use.
- Have a toad-themed art exhibition in your school or college and invite local press to a private view.
- Play our Frogger online game and download the app: www.froglife.org/frogger
- Host a bring and buy sale, coffee morning, cake bake, non-uniform day, dress-down day, dress-up day... whatever you can think of!

We will be keeping you posted on what Froglife is up to over the course of the campaign, the totals we have raised and the outcomes we achieve.

Here's to a fantastic campaign and a brighter future for toads!

If you have any questions please contact Tina Lindsay on 01733 425824 or tina.lindsay@froglife.org



Savi Sivanasan / Froglife

Duane Hammett



Sam Taylor / Froglife

Froglife tuppence a toad



Laura Brady / Froglife



Paul Gardner



Laura Brady / Froglife



Where's a good place to see natterjack toads?

Natterjack toads (top right) are almost completely confined to coastal dune habitats, with only one inland population in Cumbria. They can be found in pockets of Norfolk and Lincolnshire, along the coast in Lancashire and Cumbria and on the north coast of the Solway Firth in Scotland. They have also been introduced to sites in Hampshire, Surrey and near the Dee Estuary in Wales. Spotting them in the wild can be tricky - even if you visit a site where they are breeding successfully they are a very small, shy toad, mostly active at night. Natterjack toads can be distinguished from common toads by the presence of yellow stripe down the centre of the back; they also have green or yellowy eyes rather than golden eyes like the common toad. Natterjack toads can move surprisingly quickly on land, often making scurrying movements, but are very poor swimmers. They are easiest to locate in the breeding

season but even then they may be heard rather than seen - they're not known as Europe's noisiest amphibian for nothing!

What can be done if a local toad habitat is threatened?

Although common toads lack the full legal protection of some other amphibians they still have to be taken into consideration during developments. Toads are a Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and must therefore be protected from the adverse affects of a development and from further declines (under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 and Planning Policy Statement 9). If you know a toad habitat is under threat, contact your local council to make sure they know of the toad's presence. Always make sure you submit your sightings and records to Froglife and to local groups so that any potential impact on amphibians can be flagged up at the earliest time. Appeal to the local community for support and consider getting

some publicity, for example via The Guardian's online *Piece by Piece* campaign.

What is 'toad fly'?

Toad fly is a condition that affects toads during the late summer months. A species of fly lays its eggs somewhere on the toad's body; when these hatch, the maggots crawl up the toad's nostrils and feed on the soft tissue, basically eating the toad from the inside out. This is a very unpleasant way for the toad to die, and for you to witness, so if you see a toad which you suspect to be infected it would be best to talk to a vet about having it put down. There are currently some research projects being carried out to find out more about the fly but as yet there is no treatment. Early symptoms include the toad making a clucking noise when it breaths, followed by holes or a 'caved in' appearance to the nose, face or head. Please get in touch to report any cases of toad fly you encounter.



TOP TIP

Rather than buying a toad home why not use an upturned plant pot with a hole knocked in the side for a door? Or if you fancy a bit of DIY you can find instructions for building your own version on our website. You just need some wood, nails and something to cover the roof with. A great family or youth club activity.
www.froglife.org/resources.

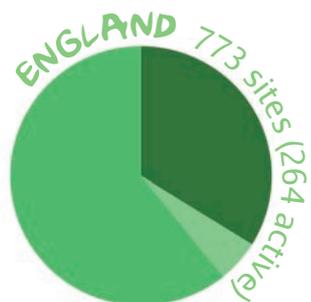
froglife toads on roads 

A slightly reduced Toad Talk this issue (seeing as the whole newsletter is about toads!). Here, we're highlighting the fantastic work of you the Patrollers, with a few facts, figures and successes from the last 25 yrs...

As always, please get in touch with your thoughts or observations: 01733 558930 or lucy.benyon@froglife.org. www.froglife.org/toadsonroads

Key for pie charts:
 Active sites
 'Unknown' sites
 Inactive sites

Total number of registered sites: 825
 Total number of active sites: 294
 Number of new sites registered in 2010 (January-September): 69
 Total number of toads helped in 2010: 68,522 (and counting...!)

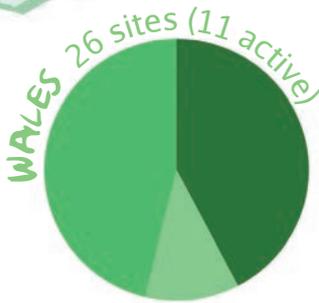


Most active county: Lancashire (86% of 14 sites are active).
There are some counties which are 100% active but they only have 1 or 2 sites registered!

County with the most number of registered sites: Derbyshire (81).

Location of first toad crossing sign: Llandrindod Wells, Powys.

Successful use of road closure: Charlcombe, Avon.



Most southerly crossing: Lelant, Cornwall
(Though we last heard about this site in 1997 and don't know if it's still active).

Most northerly crossing: Lochinver, Highlands.

Most Royal crossing: Holyrood Park, Edinburgh.

Successful use of 'fence and bucket' method: West Stow, Suffolk.

Most number of toads helped in a year: 10,501 at Henley-Marlow, Buckinghamshire (2010).

Most amount of data from a site: 23yrs (Studham, Bedfordshire).

GREAT GIFT IDEAS FOR CHRISTMAS... (OR ANY TIME!)

'make frogspawn not war' bag

Our popular cotton bags are now available in funky green! Long handles, approximate dimensions: 38cm x 52cm (excl. handles).

Price: £2.00 P&P: £0.50



froglife christmas cards

Resident artist Sam Taylor has created a fifth card to add to the Christmas series. Packs of 10 cards (2 of each design) with envelopes.

Price: £5.00 P&P: free

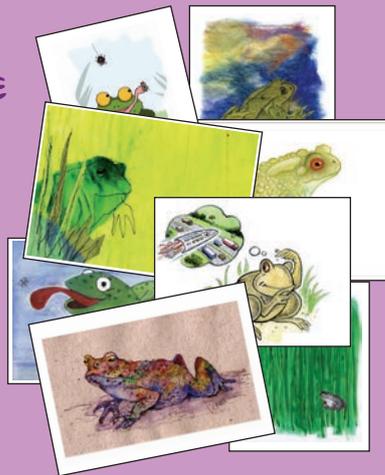


TUPPENCE A TOAD MERCHANDISE

toad notelets

Earlier this year we launched a competition for artists to design a toad-inspired notelet to be sold in support of the campaign. Froglife staff and visitors voted for their favourite designs and the eight winners are now available. Packs of 8 (1 of each design) with envelopes.

Price: £5.00 P&P: free



'virtual' gift: protect a toad population

Donate to our Tuppence a Toad campaign on someone else's behalf via this virtual gift. Your money goes into the Patrol Pot which helps Toad Patrols help toads by providing them with support and equipment such as high-vis vests. The gift recipient will get a Toads on Roads magnet and a certificate thanking them for their support.

Price: £10.00 P&P: £0.50



toad on roads magnet

These cute magnets are a great stocking filler.

Price: £1.00 P&P: £0.50



car air freshener

What to get that toad-lover who has everything...! These fun car air fresheners are lightly fragranced with honeysuckle and are a great reminder to keep an eye out for toads on the road!

Price: £1.50 P&P: £0.50

FROGLIFE IS SUPPORTED BY



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AND

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Frank Clark, Inez Smith, John Walker, Prof. Rob Oldham, Prof. Roger Downie, Tracy Spraggon, and Nick Peers. Plus all the other volunteers we couldn't do without!