

natterchat

Froglife's newsletter - amphibians, reptiles & nature news
spring/summer 2014

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the wildlife health &
disease issue

the Garden
Wildlife Health
Project

what you can
do to help

research &
policy

the latest from
toads on roads

plus... Photos & apps with Dave Kilbey: Pudsey in Peterborough : Froglife events & training

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from the CEO



Writing the introduction for the Spring edition of *Natterchat* is always a great pleasure. As the weather perks up, the wildlife wakes up and we also start to feel invigorated. Whilst out walking Grezley (the office Airedale) people give us a cheerie greeting rather than the usual Winter grunt.

However, not to put a dampener on this feel good factor, this edition's theme is rather a sad one. As Tom

Langton's article (page 6) explains, Froglife has been researching with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) for many years the devastating effects of amphibian disease. Although we have come a long way, there is still a lot to discover. We are therefore very pleased to have partnered up with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), ZSL and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) on the Garden Wildlife Health project (see page 8). The strength of data from BTO volunteers surveying their gardens, coupled with the data submitted by RSPB and Froglife supporters will certainly move this work into a whole new, more positive phase. So, if you do encounter any amphibian or reptile

mortalities that look suspiciously like a disease incident then please do report them.

On another note, Froglife celebrated the start of our Scottish Dragon Finder project in Edinburgh parliament on 19th March 2014. We had a terrific turnout and MSP John Wilson read out the winning entries from our very first poetry competition. Look out for these in our Annual Review and the next *Natterchat*.

We have also submitted our full application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for River Nene Dragon Finder, so hopefully people living along the River will shortly be able to get involved in a wide range of fun and educational activities,

habitat management and volunteer training. Keep an eye on the Dragon Finder website for news from all the projects: www.froglife.org/dragonfinder

Whilst you are enjoying the glorious Spring weather and wonderful wildlife, please do remember to send on your data, made even easier by our free Dragon Finder App (see page 5).

Here's to a wonderful Spring and Summer!

Kathy Wormald, CEO
kathy.wormald@froglife.org

Kathy

froglife news : spring / summer 2014

A glorious celebration for our Wildlife Ambassadors

Our *Wildlife Ambassadors* project supported by Access to Nature funding came to an end in August last year. We had a wonderful day's celebration of all that the project participants had achieved at the Green Backyard in Peterborough.



BBC *SpringWatch*'s Nick Baker joined us for the day, running pond dipping activities for hundreds of people. We also joined *CountryFiles*'s John Craven for an awards ceremony to mark the end of the Access to Nature fund from Natural England and Big Lottery, which has supported inclusive conservation projects across the UK. Well done to our super voluntter Ash Jarvis, who recieved a certificate from John, and also won Green Volunteer of the Year in Peterborough.



Going underground

Our pioneering work involving camera traps in amphibian tunnels continues this spring, with projects monitoring tunnel use on Hampton Nature Reserve and a Toads on Roads site in Biggleswade (see *Toad Talk* on page 12 for more information). Results so far have been even better than expected, highlighting really interesting behaviour by toads and newts in these man-made environments. We aim to publish our findings later in the year.

Froglife is the campaign title for The Froglife Trust. Registered Charity Number 1093372 (in England & Wales) & SC041854 (in Scotland); Registered Company Number 438714 (in England & Wales). The views expressed in *Natterchat* are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of Froglife. To advertise in or to sponsor an edition of *Natterchat* please contact Kathy Wormald kathy.wormald@froglife.org or 01733 602102

Cover photo: Laura Brady

You can support Froglife's work through a text donation - this is a free service for us, the donation comes off your bill and we get 100% of it to help amphibians and reptiles.

Help us dig more ponds, train more volunteers, manage more habitat and inspire more people to love our wonderful wildlife!

**Save our frogs & toads
 newts, snakes & lizards!**

Text NEWT13 £2 / £5 / £10 to 70070 to donate now eg NEWT13 £5

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Photos: Sam Taylor, Silviu Petrovan

project profile



Here we zoom in on one of Froglife's conservation and learning projects around the UK. This time, Conservation Youth Worker Rebecca Neal shares news from the *Green Pathways* project, supporting vulnerable teenagers in Peterborough.

Froglife project: Green Pathways.

Staff and volunteers involved: Rebecca Neal.

How long has the project been running: Since January 2012.

The aims, objectives, outputs and outcomes: Green Pathways works with vulnerable and disadvantaged teenagers on practical outdoor wildlife linked projects and activities. We aim to improve confidence, social skills and positive behaviour whilst giving young people the opportunity to enjoy being outdoors, learn about their environment and develop new skills. The sessions are tailored to the needs and wants of the young people. Sometimes they

just want to jump in puddles and climb trees and other times they need to work as a team to achieve something more long term. We do things like reptile surveys, digging ponds, coppicing, den building, pond dipping and wildlife gardening.

The results to far: In the first two years of the project we worked with over 1000 young people, delivered 380 sessions and worked with 30 different referral agencies. We got muddy in more than 15 different community green spaces across Peterborough. The majority of young people who take part in the project experience a positive change as a result.

Any highlights? I am particularly proud of how we have redeveloped

several areas of Peterborough by spray-painting murals on underpasses and bridges. These were inspired by local wildlife and designed and painted by young people with support from professional street artist Stuart Payn from Blok Collective. I am also very proud of the pond we created in the allotment at Heltwater special school. It is part of a luxury amphibian resort with resting, sleeping, eating and breeding areas. We have been watching the wildlife colonise and are really looking forward to frogspawn spotting in the Spring.

Funded by: Salary and some behind the scenes costs are covered by a grant from BBC Children in Need. Materials, transport costs and professional input have

been paid for by cash donations and grants from: The Wakeham Trust, Perkins, J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust, The Voyager Academy, Peterborough City Council, Cooperative Community Fund, Councillor Paula Thacker, Orton Community Development Fund, The Ironmonger's Company, Ken Stimpson Community School

How Froglife supporters can get involved: Our established volunteers keep getting jobs! If you want to get involved, please contact us.

You can donate money directly to this project on our website.

For more information: Rebecca.neal@froglife.org

Find out more at www.froglife.org

people / places / culture

the spotter: dave kilbey

Spotting amphibians, reptiles and people who are passionate about them



Froglife was introduced to Dave Kilbey via the Toad Patrol he organises. In-between saving toads, he manages to take some great photos of them. He's given us permission to use his pics without charge and here shares some of his dragon spotting tips.

Common Lizards, *Lacerta vivipara*, can be a challenge to photograph in the UK but mainly because they're tricky to find, being relatively localised in distribution. Once a population is discovered, however, these charming animals can be remarkably approachable if your timing is good (I've even had them climb onto me whilst I've been taking pictures, to take advantage of a bit of extra warmth and elevation!). Early Spring and late Autumn are two of the best lizard spotting seasons as this is when they spend most time basking in the

sun to bring their bodies up to "operating temperature." They often use the same basking sites (fence posts, flat stones and log piles) and when it's chilly, will return to the site throughout the day as they begin to cool off.

For the best shots I'd recommend a 100mm macro-lens, an early start and above all, some sunshine. Common Lizards can emerge after winter very early in the year if the temperature is mild enough and I've often seen and photographed them from mid- February onwards. Many nature reserves will include species listings on their website to help you find a local hot-spot for the animals, but they can also be found in gardens, allotments and brown

field sites. South facing dry stone walls are the ultimate des-res sites for a Common Lizard, so keep your eyes peeled, particularly around walls that are surrounded by low vegetation.

Dave and his team have created a number of useful, free wildlife apps. IRecord Butterflies and iRecord Ladybirds report sightings of these insects to help UK monitoring schemes. PlantTracker, Sealife Tracker and Aqualnaders focus on recording invasive species in the UK and the latter includes introduced amphibians and reptiles. You can find the free apps at www.naturelocator.org Take a peak at Dave's images at www.davekilbeyphotography.co.uk



Help us find Dragons...

Grab your phone, get your wellies and sunscreen on and get out dragon hunting this spring and summer, to help us map amphibians and reptiles.

Our free Dragon Finder smartphone app will help you to identify all the different amphibians and reptiles you might spot in the UK. You can also use it to record your sightings, adding to our Living Atlas of where the animals can be found.

Search for Dragon Finder in the App Store or Google Play



Or download our free amphibian and reptile spotting app from the Dragon Finder website at www.froglife.org/dragonfinder



Photos: Dave Kilbey

What's happening to our frogs?

How volunteer power in Froglife's early years helped discover a new disease

by Tom Langton

Tom Langton was Froglife's co-founder and director from 1989-2005. He shares his story from the early days of the Frog Mortality Project.

Noticing a worrying trend

Until the 1990's UK wildlife disease received relatively little attention, unless it threatened commercial interests or human health. This is perhaps surprising, as disease has long been known as one of the primary influences shaping evolution of animal and plant communities. Government interest and funding proved minimal and it was hard work to convince people of the need to investigate disease in the UK. Back in the 1980's, as interest in garden ponds and frog spawn stepped up a gear, problems with frogs dying in garden ponds was an occasional sporadic report and put down to bacterial infection or 'red leg' disease. However I was, through telephone surveys and 'hop lines,'

advising on public interest in frog spawn, noticing a slight year-on-year trend in increased reporting of unusual frog death reports from one or two to up to twenty a year.

It was not until Andrew Cunningham at the Institute of Zoology in London (IoZ) rang me in 1991 that we realised that the trickle of reports was increasing - something was changing and needed looking into. The Frog Mortality Project (FMP) was launched in May 1992 by Andrew Cunningham and Peter Bennett of the IoZ and my consultancy HCI. The embryonic organisation that is now Froglife was penniless, with two volunteers (myself and Catherine Langton) working on raising funding for our first employee. Over the decade Froglife would progressively take over the day to day running of the public communication role for the FMP.

With Froglife staff growing in number from the mid 1990's, the interest in the work from around the UK (and the world) proved that our investment had been more than justified. Helped by a small grant obtained from the RSPCA in 1992, surveys were sent to people responding to a national media appeal for records of where dead or dying Common Frogs (with or without other sick or dying animals) were found in or around garden ponds in unusual circumstances. Our telephones were ringing in late summer with dozens of people a week worried about mass mortalities and occasionally even in tears.

Grisly scences

Initially work included collection of specimens by me and Andrew Wilson, with Andrew Cunningham conducting post-mortems. Attending frog sites around London was a grisly task. Often you were

met by a war-like scene of dead and dying frogs, some with terrible wounds - a living death. Many were emaciated and lethargic, or debilitated. In some cases, ponds contained so many dead frogs that the whole pond turned anaerobic and 'died' requiring complete emptying. Pond silt was on occasion a mass of thousands of frog bones lying bright white against the black sediment.

Frogs were promptly taken for post-mortem. Work led to a further RSPCA grant and we started to look in more detail about the longer term impact of the die-offs on population size with fieldwork by Sarah Anderson. This detected healing or healed wounds and recovery in a proportion of animals, suggesting a degree of immunity and the hope that frog numbers would not be reduced permanently. The study found that unusual/mass mortality incidents of frogs were occurring in England

to a much greater extent than had previously been appreciated and quickly led to Andrew adding further work to the project as a part of his amphibian disease PhD which would be published in 2001. It was part of one of the most detailed investigations of wildlife disease in the world ever conducted.

A new virus

The identification of Ranavirus was finally made and a complex series of disease pathways showing different combinations of symptoms revealed by Andrew's enormous effort with many hundreds if not several thousands of hours in the lab day and night - a real wildlife hero at work. Andrew has become one of the leading international wildlife disease experts in the world.

There remain many important unanswered questions such as the role, if any, of Goldfish and Bullfrogs in Ranavirus spread. Disease as a contributor to the global decline in amphibians became better recognised and we instigated and published with Tim Halliday and the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force (DAPFT) the first guidelines for fieldworkers to avoid disease transmission during conservation surveys and other fieldwork. Such disease control protocols are now standard around the world.

Almost immediately that the FMP began, a range of other diseases were noticed around England, some seen before in other European countries. One or two cases of herpesvirus skin disease where frogs develop skin abnormalities which look like grey or white-coloured warty lesions were reported. The arrival and breeding of American Bullfrogs in Kent and the outbreak of Chytrid was also playing out, and we were fully occupied in what appears to be a war against exotic species introductions and disease outbreaks.

Wildlife disease is unpredictable and it is hard to generalise about its long-term effect without study. There are opportunities for volunteers to do their own studies and to follow up work in places where disease has passed, to see if numbers have recovered, something that can happen although by no means at every site. Simple observations often lead to new discoveries and watching wildlife closely for enjoyment will always bring new findings that you can record and send to others. Together we can build a clearer picture of how our garden wildlife behaves and enable better responses for others to follow and to keep our gardens as wildlife havens.

Other diseases such as Chytrid are 'out there' and reporting of exotic species in the wild must always draw the questions as to what diseases have been released. One thing is for sure, there is much work to be done to develop and publicise sensible precautions that should include avoiding moving animals around needlessly.

Dealing with disease investigation and formulating good advice to the public is a challenging process. Great care is needed to balance the need to prevent disease spread and not to put people off looking and occasionally handling amphibians as a part of childhood and adult enjoyment of gardens. The wealth of experience over the last 25 years is worthy of further publications and advice sheets so that people can better understand and participate in amphibian study and conservation.

what I'm up to...

garden wildlife CSI



Photos: Ben Aveston, Rob Williams, Ash Jarvis, Steve Allain, Matt Wilson & Sam Taylor

Who would have thought these little animals could be so interesting?



If you contact the Garden Wildlife Health project in the Institute of Zoology at London Zoo, chances are you might hear from Tim Hopkins or Lydia Franklins, the team of vets undertaking wild animal post mortems and co-ordinating the project. For someone with quite a grisly job Tim's remarkably upbeat...

The main aspect of Tim's role is using the new Garden Wildlife Health project online system. You can log sightings of dead or ill animals in your garden, and the website will send the vets a message if you have a specimen for them to examine. The vet will then contact you directly by

phone or email to discuss the incident and to decide whether further investigation is appropriate. Tim explains, "In order to get the most information from our examinations, we need to conduct any post mortems as soon as possible. The vast majority are done fresh rather than frozen, because the samples are so much more useful."

In a frog post mortem, everything is weighed, measured and tested. "It will probably take an hour per frog, and then about 20 mins to write it up," said Tim. "We usually follow that up with a phone call as well as sending a report."

Ranavirus, discovered through the Frog Mortality Project, is one of the most common diseases that the GWH vets diagnose. It can be really hard to spot, and impossible to truly diagnose without testing. "Even then, tests are not 100% sensitive, so being able to examine more than one body from an incident is hugely valuable."

In terms of what actually kills the poor frogs suffering from the disease, bleeding and ulceration can lead to fatal blood loss, secondary infection, animals not being able to eat or hunt, causing the emaciation that can be a tell-tale sign. It's not a nice way to go, but some animals can

Find out more at www.froglife.org

Every edition, we feature a Froglife supporter taking action to help amphibians and reptiles. This time, Sam Taylor visits one of the vet team at the Institute of Zoology (IoZ) investigating wildlife disease.

If you would like to let us know what you're up to or to suggest a friend who should be featured please email info@froglife.org.



Froglife, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the RSPB, and the Institute of Zoology (IOZ) form the Garden Wildlife Health partnership, working to map incidents of disease and undertaking research into their causes and spread. Citizen scientists are a crucial part of the process, sending in reports from gardens across the Great Britain.

and do survive, and there's hope that immunity will develop. Tim went on to talk about some of the more positive aspects of his work.

The Garden Wildlife Health website went live on the 26th of June 2013 and to the end of the year it received 1,000 disease incident reports. "In 2013 we did 281 post mortems, 92 of them were herps, and we expect to do about 800 post mortems a year in future. Even in that first year, we have investigated unusual mortality incidents and have fed into some really exciting further research." Tantalisingly, Tim couldn't say any more before the work is officially published and shared, but it's wonderful to know that the project is already growing knowledge.

This is the more inspiring side of Tim's role - discovering new health issues and using the lessons learnt from previous outbreaks to help. "When threats to wildlife do get noticed, there's often a retrospective cry of 'Why didn't we do something? Why didn't we see this coming?' And that's what we're trying to do; we're trying to be proactive, not just reactive."

Beyond gardens

Despite its name, the project is not just focussed on gardens, especially in the case of reptiles - we really want to get as many specimens as possible to the IoZ. Both frogs and toads can be affected by Ranavirus, with toads and newts the animals more likely to be carrying Chytrid. The team are particularly keen to examine more

Adders. "Because they're so cryptic, they tend to hide away to die so we don't have many samples to say that diseases *hasn't* played a role in their decline." Tim emphasises that we are also looking for herp field workers to get involved. "If you are finding protected species dead at a site, you'll want to know whether this might be due to environmental reasons, disease or whether there is something else going on - we can hopefully help determine the cause."

Tim's enthusiasm for the work is infectious. "One of the students said 'who would have thought that these little creatures could be so interesting?'" he concludes. "We are learning so much from species thought of as common - after declines in Hedgehogs and Greenfinches, we know we can't take them for granted. Studying garden wildlife gives us an insight into what is going on in our hedgerows and river systems, where wild animals can be much more difficult to see. We can use what we learn about their health as a proxy for the wider world."

The Garden Wildlife Health project is interested in YOUR reports of dead, diseased or ill amphibians, reptiles, garden birds and Hedgehogs. They may have been caught by cats and other predators, have been injured, effected by the weather or birds may have flown into windows.

You can report to the project whether or not you have dead animals available that could be submitted for examination.

Tim's Tips: what to do in a disease outbreak

1. Try not to cross contaminate organic material from a site where there has been an outbreak - don't share plants with your neighbours or move frogspawn around.
2. When you're cleaning out the pond, make sure you put silt and other waste nearby rather than dumping it elsewhere, where it could spread disease.
3. Make sure you remove dead amphibians as soon as you see them. The longer the bodies are near the water source, the more chance there is of them infecting other animals.
4. Current advice is to bury dead amphibians near to the pond to help prevent any further spread of disease.
5. Field workers should clean and disinfect boots and equipment that might be used in different ponds or other water bodies to minimise the movement of potentially-infected material (e.g. spawn, tadpoles, amphibians, water or water plants).

Find the Garden Wildlife Health project website at:

www.gardenwildlifehealth.org

The Garden Wildlife Health project is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Defra, and the project partners (BTO, Froglife, RSPB and ZSL).

research round up

a summary of the science: amphibian disease

Paper 1: Assessing the long-term impact of Ranavirus infection in wild Common Frog populations.

Authors: Teacher et al.

Source: Animal Conservation 13 (2010) 514–522

The aim of this study was to investigate the long-term effects of Ranavirus on frog populations. FrogLife assisted with the study by collecting ad hoc records of mass mortalities. Frogs infected with Ranavirus tend to have ulcers and reddening of the skin, and may appear emaciated and lethargic. Mortality rates are often extremely high (up to 90% of the population may be killed), however there is evidence that frogs may be able to recover from the infection.

The authors looked at historic records of frog mortalities and re-surveyed sites that were likely to have been affected by Ranavirus. They found that different populations of frogs infected with Ranavirus responded differently to the infection. Some populations were completely eradicated when the disease first occurred, other populations persisted even though they were repeatedly infected year on year, and others appeared to have recovered completely from infection and experienced no further mortalities. Frog populations that were infected for around ten years experienced consistent population declines (approximately an 80% loss). Populations that were not infected showed no evidence of population declines over the same period of time. This study provides evidence that Ranavirus can have a significant negative impact on Common Frog populations in the UK, however the strength of that impact may vary among populations.



by Dr Victoria Ogilvy



Paper 2:

***Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* sp. nov. causes lethal chytridiomycosis in amphibians**

Authors: Martel et al.

Source: PNAS Early Edition

A fungus, known as Chytrid (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*), has caused widespread losses of amphibians all over the world, and is known to occur in the UK. It is one of the most deadly vertebrate diseases ever discovered and has led to local extinctions in over 40% of amphibian species in areas of Central America. Fire Salamanders in the Netherlands have declined rapidly since 2010 and only 4% of the population now remains. These declines have been unexplained until now. The salamanders were tested for *B. dendrobatidis* but the results came back clear. The tests did, however, reveal that the salamanders were infected with a new species of Chytrid fungus, which has been named *B. salamandrivorans*.

The researchers found that *B. salamandrivorans* could survive and grow at lower temperatures than the previously discovered fungus. They also showed that *B. salamandrivorans* did not infect Midwife Toads, which is the species that is most highly susceptible to infection by *B. dendrobatidis*.

These results show that the two Chytrid species are likely to differ in the amphibian species that they infect. In addition, the chance of being infected by each of the two Chytrid species will differ depending on location as they function optimally at different temperatures. Several studies have been carried out to determine the occurrence of *B. dendrobatidis* throughout the World, however we currently know very little about where *B. salamandrivorans* occurs, and it wouldn't have been picked up by previously used tests. The discovery of *B. salamandrivorans* could therefore help shed light on losses of other amphibian species that are thus far unexplained.

Find out more at www.froglife.org

Photos: Sam Taylor, Rebecca Turpin, Helen Bell-Palmer & Sue Bell

policy page healthy garden wildlife

by Rob Williams

Practical action and scientific research are crucial when maintaining the health of our native wildlife. There is also a host of legislation and policy which works behind the scenes to keep the UK's wildlife healthy and prevent new threats reaching our shores. This legislation and policy works to achieve this in three main ways:

Controlling imports

A lot of media attention is given to legislation aiming to prevent rare or endangered species being brought into the UK. Less is given to legislation in place to prevent the import of some species known to be highly invasive and that pose an "ecological threat" to our native wildlife.

EU Wildlife Trade Regulation currently bans the import of 7 such species, including: American Bullfrog *Rana catesbeiana*; Red eared Terrapin *Trachemys scripta elegans* (below) and the Painted Turtle *Chrysemys picta*.



This sort of legislation not only helps protect native wildlife against aggressive new competitors, but perhaps more importantly against any novel diseases which these animals may carry. For example, the American Bullfrog has been implicated as a possible means by which the Chytrid fungus reached the UK.

Preventing release of non-native species

You don't have to look far to see non-native species that are already at home in Britain, e.g. Grey Squirrels (right) or Ring-necked Parakeets.



In many such cases the animals were deliberately released and as a result of the damage caused legislation was introduced to make further releasing of non-native animals illegal.

Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act makes it an offence for any person to release or allow to escape any animal which is not ordinarily resident in or a regular visitor to Great Britain in a wild state.

This legislation is important as there are many plants and animals that can be legally imported into the UK from abroad that still represent a risk if released into the wild. For example, Italian Great Crested Newts can legally be imported into the UK and were once commonly used within universities. However, they are known to hybridise with our native Great Crested Newt and thus represent a risk to the species if released into the wild.

Bio-security

Once non-native species are present and established in the wild it is imperative to prevent exacerbating the problem by transferring the species or the diseases they may carry to new areas.

Many policies and guidelines have been produced to educate us in the UK about non-natives and wildlife disease. They also detail what can be done to prevent their spread.

Defra's *Check, Clean, Dry* initiative looks at reducing the spread of aquatic non-native species by getting anglers and boating enthusiasts to clean and disinfect their equipment after use (available at www.nonnativespecies.org).

The Amphibian Disease Guidelines from ARG UK were produced to help prevent the spread of diseases such as Chytrid and Ranavirus (available at www.arguk.org).



Every edition we feature news from the world of Toads on Roads - a national project through which Froglife supports volunteers who rescue toads from busy roads during the breeding season. This time, Sivi gives us an update on some of the numbers from the last year and some exciting new developments...

Toads, Tunnels and Technology



Work to install a new fence in 2014 near the Saxon Gate Toad Patrol tunnel, with the help of Bedfordshire Amphibian and Reptile Group, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity and ACO. Photos by Marcus and Susan Phillips

As usual, we would like to start with a big **thank you** to all of the Toad Patrol volunteers and especially those of you who send us data. More on that later! In 2012 we had one of the wettest summers in recent years; in 2013 one of the coldest springs and now, in 2014 we've had the wettest winter since records began in 1910. The wet weather has resulted in early amphibian migrations on many sites, compared to 2013 when the migration was nearly a month later than expected.

Thankfully the Patrollers have been gearing up early due to the wet mild winter and sites were on the lookout for those first movements to report back to Froglife and allow us to get the word out to the nation.

With the early migration we've been getting lots of volunteering enquires, and it has been made much easier to keep up with the demands of putting

volunteers in touch with their nearest patrol. Our new interactive Toads on Roads Map saved the day. Developed with John Heaser (a Toad Patroller himself) and his team at Heaser Business Consulting (www.heaser.co.uk), the map allows potential volunteers to find local sites with just your post code. You can "Offer to help" your local Patrol and the system will send your details to enable the group to contact you. We will be developing more tools to improve the Toads on Roads area of the website in 2014, some of which will be the results of research from projects supported by organisations such as Patagonia and Natural England.

Now, back to that all important data. In last year's Autumn / Winter edition of *Natterchat*, we reported that the number of toads saved was down from 2012. However, the numbers were still coming in after the

publication date. Thanks to a late surge of data submissions which lasted until February 2014, we've had our highest number of sites reporting back to us in recent years (140 sites). We have also had our highest number of toads saved to date - 80,923! - but that doesn't necessarily translate to more toads at each site. Some sites had lower numbers than 2012, while other sites had an increase in toads.

You can check out the top 10 sites of 2013 and find the new search system at www.froglife.org/toadsonroads.

The Top Ten listing can always change; a recent submission from Kent joined the current top ten, displacing a few of other sites. Could your site do the same? Number 1 for toads saved in 2013 is Cranwich with 8,217 toads, and Elsing-Bartles comes in at Number 10 with 1,821 toads saved, both in Norfolk. Keep your data coming in to toads@froglife.org

Find out more at www.froglife.org

80,923
toads rescued in
Spring 2013

3,781
Common Frogs
rescued from 95 of the sites

141
Toad Patrols sent back
their data

7,327
Common Toads reported
dead at crossing sites

3,289
newts saved at 87 sites

1,974
volunteer days
an amazing effort, thank you!



SPOTLIGHT ON BIGGLESWADE

Biggleswade has been home to the Saxon Gate Toad Patrol since 1998 when the founder members of the patrol were contacted by Ivel Valley Countryside Project (IVCP) about toads trapped down drains around a balancing pond associated with a new housing development.

On an initial site investigation, they found a total of 98 toads, nine frogs and two Smooth Newts, thankfully all alive. They continued to save toads and other amphibians on the site and the patrol was born.

Given the number of amphibians that were being attracted to the new balancing pond as their older breeding ponds in the area had been removed by development, the group approached the County Planning authorities via the IVCP about a toad tunnel to save the population. They were successful in getting the tunnel and associated fencing installed in 1999.

But the story doesn't end there: in more recent times the amphibian fencing was damaged when contractors drove over the structure during road side maintenance; while the volunteers worked hard to repair it toads were still getting back on the road and the repaired fence (created from remnants of the original) wasn't as extensive as it had once been.

It was at this point that Froglife got involved. With funding from Natural England, Patagonia, ACO and the Froglife Trust, the fencing has been repaired and the tunnel is being monitored to better establish tunnel usage by amphibians and to help improve future designs. This will help create new design standards to be communicated out to Toad Patrollers nationally.



You can provide vital support for the Toads on Roads project through donating to our Tuppence a Toad appeal. Call us on 01733 602102, or go to www.froglife.org/tuppenceatoad and help us protect these amazing animals.

Natterchat Spring / Summer 2014

Photos: John Fray & Steve Allain



out and about with froglife events / volunteering / talks / training

We have an exciting diary of opportunities for you to meet some of the Froglife team, get involved with projects or help out through volunteering.

More information on our events can be found on the website at www.froglife.org/events

Date	Event	Details	Type
Every Thursday	Butterfly surveys on Hampton Nature Reserve, Peterborough	Join the team to spot and record butterflies on this amazing site, not otherwise open to the public. Contact Paul for more details: Paul.Furnborough@Froglife.org	Volunteer surveys
Two Saturdays a month	Volunteer sessions on Hampton Nature Reserve, Peterborough	Details to be confirmed closer to each event. Activities might include: Water Vole surveys, bonfires, creating signs, preparing the site for diggers. Contact Paul for details: Paul.Furnborough@Froglife.org	Practical habitat volunteering
12th April 2014 1-4pm	Amphibian and Reptile Course at Hampstead Heath, London	Learn more about the ecology, conservation and identification of our native species. Contact Eddie to book and for more information: Eddie.Brede@Froglife.org	Free training course
26th April 2014 11am - 4pm	International Save the Frogs Day, Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow	Join us for a fun and interactive celebration of frogs at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow. Pond dipping session at 11am, 1pm and 3pm. Craft and animal activities in the Environment Discovery Centre from 2pm. No need to book. Contact Vicky for more information: Victoria.Ogilvy@Froglife.org	Indoor family activity
26th April 1pm-3pm	Wildlife Workshop for allotment holders, Rosendale Allotments Association, Lambeth, London	Come along for some tips and advice on how to make allotments more wildlife friendly. Contact Eddie to book and for more information: Eddie.Brede@Froglife.org	Free training workshop
18th May 1pm-3pm	Wildlife Workshop, Briar Road Allotment Association, Twickenham, London	Come along for some tips and advice on how to make allotments more wildlife friendly. Contact Eddie to book and for more information: Eddie.Brede@Froglife.org	Free training workshop
24th May 1pm-3pm	Wildlife Workshop, Chinbrook Meadows Horticultural Society, Marvels Lane, Grove Park, London	Come along for some tips and advice on how to make allotments more wildlife friendly. Contact Eddie to book and for more information: Eddie.Brede@Froglife.org	Free training workshop

Date	Event	Details	Type
25th May 1pm-3pm	Wildlife Workshop, Carlyon Road Allotments, Yeading London	Come along for some tips and advice on how to make allotments more wildlife friendly. Contact Eddie to book and for more information: Eddie.Brede@Froglife.org	Free training workshop
30th May - 1st June	Gardening Scotland, the Royal Highland Centre Edinburgh	Froglife will have a stall at Scotland's gardening and outdoor living show. Contact Vicky for details: Victoria.Ogilvy@froglife.org www.gardeningscotland.com	Stand national gardening show
31st May 1pm-3pm	Wildlife Workshop, Brentham Allotments and Framfield Allotments Hanwell, London	Come along for some tips and advice on how to make allotments more wildlife friendly. Contact Eddie to book and for more information: Eddie.Brede@Froglife.org	Free training workshop
8th June 2014 10am-4pm	Dragon Day Bedfords Park Visitor Center, Romford, London	A festival family day out with activities celebrating reptiles and amphibians. No need to book. Contact Vanessa for more information: Vanessa.Barber@Froglife.org	Indoor and outdoor family activities
7th - 12th July 9.30-12, or 1-3.30pm	Life Under The Surface at Vauxhall City Farm, London	Bring the family to an interactive art event and discover the amazing creatures Under the Surface of a pond. Contact Vanessa for more information: Vanessa.Barber@Froglife.org	Indoor family activity
20th July, 10am - 2pm	Amphibian and reptile training at Crombie Country Park, Monikie, Angus	Join us for an indoor session on amphibian identification and survey techniques, followed by a practical session at the pond to see what we can find! There will be information on where and how to record your sightings. Contact James to book your place before attending: James.Stead@froglife.org	Free training workshop
24th August	Pollok Park Family Fun Day, 2060 Pollokshaws Road Glasgow	A fun family friendly day exploring the park and learning about local wildlife. No need to book. Contact Vicky for more information: Victoria.Ogilvy@froglife.org	Outdoor family activity

We have a range of cards, books and gifts suitable for a variety of occasions in the Froglife online shop. Browse for unique gifts and Father's Day ideas at www.froglife.org/shop. All funds raised support our work to protect amphibians, reptiles and their habitats.



Father's Day Card designed by Sam Taylor
£1.50 + p&p



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AND

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Fairbairn Foundation ~ Garfield
Weston Foundation ~ Glasgow City
Council Landfill Community Fund ~
Glasgow Natural History Society ~
Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
~ Mackintosh Foundation ~ Mears
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~ O&H Hampton Ltd ~ Patagonia
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CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

ACO ~ Animal Friends Pet Insurance ~
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CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION ADVISORY

GROUP (external advisors):

Jules Howard ~ Daniel Piec ~ Sam
Taylor

TRUSTEES & VOLUNTEERS

Lin Wenlock, Frank Clark, Roger
Downie, Heather Jones, Richard
Donahue and Inez Smith; Ashlea
Jarvis and all the other volunteers we
couldn't do without!