

NATTERCHAT

Froglife Newsletter

Spring / Summer 2010

the pond issue...

- why are ponds so threatened?
- bringing ponds to life
- how you can help



plus... all the latest news : toad talk : q&a : coming up

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from the ceo

Dear all,

Firstly I'd like to say a big thank you to all those friends who contacted us to assure us of their continued support after hearing the news of the failed merger. It was incredibly heart warming to receive such solid support and we are very appreciative. We value all of our friends and, although your financial contributions are very welcome, it is the moral support that you provide to us that is particularly important.

We do appreciate that this has been a difficult time for all our friends and we hope this newsletter will go some way in addressing your concerns and assure you that Froglife is once again back on the road towards a long and successful future.

We do sincerely hope that every single one of our Friends choose to stay with Froglife, but if you feel unable to do so, then we do understand, and we would like to thank you for all the support that you have given to us.

Please do feel free to get in touch at anytime, we are always pleased to hear from you, and certainly very keen to hear your ideas and views.

Happy reading.

All the best,

Kathy Wormald, CEO

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froglifers

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Reparation Manager: Andy Mortimore
Wildlife Information Officer: Lucy Benyon



'UNDER THE SURFACE' SCOOPS NATIONAL SCIENCE AWARD

Froglife has received national recognition for a unique approach to explaining the value of biodiversity to young people. The week-long *Under the Surface* exhibition urged visitors to explore a make-believe underwater pond-scape in order to understand more about the relationships between the animals and plants that live there (find out more on page 6).

This extraordinary event was run as part of *National Science and Engineering Week* (12th-20th March). Judges from the British Science Association visited the 'pond' and were so impressed they awarded it Best Science Event.

"We thought it was a really wonderful event, and we loved the way Froglife reached out to different parts of the community to create artistic representations of what life is like under the water," said Dan Richards, of the British Science Association, who judged the award. "It was great to see an activity that could be tailored to engage all sorts of different groups while still communicating a core message of biodiversity."

The exhibition formed part of Froglife's calendar of events celebrating 2010 International Year of Biodiversity - raising awareness of efforts to safeguard biodiversity and focusing minds on the urgent conservation challenges ahead.

"This type of event is something of a niche for Froglife, bringing an interactive and hands-on approach to sharing important concepts in conservation. We will be developing this 'science with a difference' approach further through our education strategy and future events and projects," said Froglife's Sam Taylor.

For information on upcoming Froglife events visit www.froglife.org/events



COUNTING THE CAPITAL'S CRESTED NEWTS

Thanks to a grant from the SITA trust Froglife has recently started work on Great Crested Newts Revisited - an exciting project to find out more about the Capital's newts. In 1984 Froglife conducted a survey of great crested newt sites in London and now, more than 25 years on, we're back to find out how they're getting on.

This charismatic species, that many people remember seeing in ponds and gardens when they were children, have been slowly disappearing from the British landscape due to fragmentation of habitats and the disappearance of ponds. However, Britain still has the largest remaining population in the world and this new project aims to follow up on sites that were found to be home to newts during the initial survey.

Project officer Sivi Sivanesan was thrown in at the deep end (almost literally on some occasions!) and, along with an intrepid band of volunteers, has already carried out torchlight surveys on over 110 ponds on 30 sites across London, including in some of the Royal Parks. The project works by revisiting sites that have anecdotal or historical evidence of great crested newts, or if they have a high potential. Over the next two years Sivi plans to conduct further surveys and carry out restoration work where possible. The data collected will feed into Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL) and inform local councils as to where the newts are found.

"It's great to be able to revisit some of these sites and find the newts still thriving. Roaming around London's parks at night might not be everyone's idea of fun but it's so rewarding to see newts and other amphibians flourishing in the Capital's ponds."

Sivi Sivanesan, London Great Crested Newt Project Officer

To find out more or to volunteer with the project contact Sivi on 07530 103238 or sivi.sivanesan@froglife.org; alternatively see www.froglife.org/london

COULD YOU BE A FROGLIFE TRUSTEE?

Froglife is keen to boost its board of Trustees with some new recruits, particularly individuals with expertise in the some of the following areas: finance, human resources, law, social work. If you think you'd be able to assist with the overall management of the charity please get in touch: kathy.wormald@froglife.org or 01733 558844



FUNDING NEWS

Thanks to a grant from Natural England's Access to Nature fund and the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme Froglife have just recruited two project officers to coordinate a brand new training scheme. Our Wildlife Ambassadors project will deliver tailored conservation training to carefully selected individuals who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Conservation-themed events will also be run, aimed at a wide range of audiences.

More information at: www.froglife.org/education

HEY DISNEY, BRING BACK 'NEWT'!

Froglife was saddened to learn that the Disney Pixar film *Newt* has been abandoned. The animated adventure, announced in 2008, would have portrayed the story of the last two blue-footed newts on the planet. "This would have been a unique opportunity to get kids engaged in amphibian conservation." said Froglife's Education Coordinator Jules Howard.

Pledge your support for *Newt* by joining our Facebook group: www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=126642600681352.

ACROSS THE POND... a world news round up

Tokyo terrorised by terrapins!

Escaped or released terrapins are not just a problem in UK ponds, it appears that this is also an issue in Japan. Every spring, Tokyo charity Eco-Works trap and remove terrapins from ponds in Shakujii Park. Over the last three years, 80% of terrapins caught in the ponds have been exotic species, predominantly red-eared sliders.

source: The Daily Yomiuri

New species discovered

As amphibian and reptile researchers travel the world, new species continue to be discovered. During the last few months there have been reports of a 2m-long monitor lizard (in the Philippines), a frog that raises its tadpoles in leaf litter (in Madagascar) and a frog that as well as being able to glide, also changes colour at night (in Borneo).

source: news.bbc.co.uk

South American screaming tadpoles

It's been found that tadpoles of the horned frog *Ceratophrys ornata*, found in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, make a distress call when under attack. The call, described as a brief, clear metallic sound, is the first noise recorded from amphibian larvae.

source: news.bbc.co.uk

RESERVE NOTEBOOK

Working on Hampton Nature Reserve over the past six months has been a true joy. With the help of trainee Assistant Warden Nick Peers, we're as busy as ever with the summer surveys getting underway.

Our main task over the winter was regenerating an old hedgerow which had overgrown to become a treeline of hawthorn and blackthorn. It's been thoroughly satisfying for me, and the volunteer teams, to see wildlife living on habitat which we've been managing - most notably with reptiles basking in small scallops cut into the scrub.

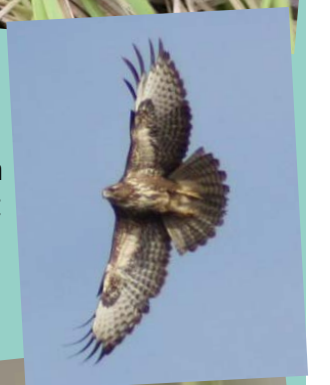
I've now seen the Reserve change through the seasons, from the most unbelievable snowscape in winter to being covered in spring coltsfoot (also called 'sons before fathers' due to its habit of flowering before coming into leaf). It's currently exploding into life, with grizzled skippers, wall browns and green hairstreaks showing strongly for the butterflies, whilst hairy dragonflies and large red damselflies are already climbing out of the ponds as larvae, shedding their skins on reeds and emerging as adults in huge numbers. Every week turns up a new species - all our reptile species have now been spotted and the newts are out in force (both great crested and smooth); the search for frogs and toads is ongoing...!

Paul Furnborough,
Conservation
Officer

paul.furnborough@froglife.org or 01733 425825

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

Photos from HNR. From top: red kite, early purple orchid, grass snake, buzzard, common blue (all Nick Peers)





THE POND PROBLEM

Over the last fifty years, one third of ponds have disappeared. What's more, those that survive face some serious threats to their quality and value. Living Water Officer Alex Draper explains more...

"'Heron is a serious threat to your pond'. This is true if the purpose of your pond is to display your much loved carp. But the carp are a threat to your pond if your heart's desire is to see thriving frogs, toads and newts... Threats to our ponds can be subjective and are linked to their function.

We at Froglife place great value on a pond's critical function as life support for our wildlife (especially amphibians) as well as being a healthy, living, green environment offering us vital contact with nature.

Ponds are amazingly diverse in their origin, form and function. There is, perhaps, no such thing as a perfect pond - no pond can offer a perfect home for every plant and animal. We need our ponds big and small; permanent and temporary; deep and shallow; sun drenched and shaded; acid and alkaline; scattered and in clusters. All these characteristics and more but not all these things at once!

The origins of the diversity of our pondscape are rooted in the naturally evolved landscape combined with the legacy of human interaction: ancient glacial cleaving of the landscape to create kettle ponds; the sudden uprooted tree bowl offering a temporary pool; the need to water livestock, swell cart wheels, farm fish and a myriad of other agricultural and industrial needs; plus, of course, the new generation of wildlife gardeners looking to create a watery soul in their garden.

Changes in our attitudes, our needs and our activities has driven the documented dramatic loss and continues to pose a future threat to the precious diversity of our pondscape. A recent survey* showed 80% of ponds in the British countryside are in 'poor' or 'very poor' condition.

*The Ponds Report 2010

Threats to ponds are well known:

Change in land use and higher water abstraction has rendered ponds as obsolete and unwanted or devoid of water.

Intrusion by invasive species such as alien plants or dumping unwanted pets like terrapins and goldfish.

Pollution by pesticides, fertilizer, road run off and other chemical contamination. Litter and the dumping of larger items, such as shopping trolleys and bikes, is also common in urban ponds.

So the creation of a rich diversity of our pondscape is key to our future happiness; and the heron, like any native wildlife, should be welcomed."

Climate change will alter our pondscape - earlier amphibian breeding, more seasonal ponds, the need to harness winter rains better.

Poor management leaving a pond degraded, habitat fragmented and isolated from other ponds.

Human recreation such as excessive duck feeding or uncontrolled trampling by dogs; conversion to angling lakes can sometimes lead to loss of habitats and the introduction of tadpole-predating fish.

alex.draper@froglife.org

TOP TIP!

Have you ever noticed an oily film on the surface of your pond and been concerned about pollution? To check whether there is a problem, try dipping a stick into the water - if the oily sheen swirls back together immediately it's petroleum-based but if it breaks apart it's most likely from bacteria or another natural source so there's nothing to worry about.



BRINGING

The key to conserving amphibians and reptiles is protecting their habitats and so much of our work comes back to ponds. Whether it's creating them, enhancing them or simply showing other people what amazing places they can be.

Froglife and ponds. The two are inextricably linked. We create them, we restore them, we monitor and maintain them. And when all that's done, we take people and show them what's in them and how best to make their own. Through our work on Habitat Action Plans we're ensuring the survival of these vital water bodies and our own pond-based projects - Living Water, Ponds in the Landscape, Ponds for Life, Hampton Nature Reserve, Second Life for Ponds, Great Crested Newts Revisited, youth work on allotments - are no doubt crucial for the survival of local wildlife. Here we focus on just a few of our projects...



The Green Pathways allotment (Natalie Giles / Froglife)

The Ponds for Life 'Under the Surface' exhibition (Sam Taylor / Froglife)

PONDS TO LIFE

living water

Since the Living Water project began in 2008 it has gone from strength to strength. Initially focusing on North London, we have since taken the project to South London and Glasgow, Froglife's first venture in Scotland.

In North London recent grants from Haringey Council and Biffaward have enabled the recreation of a historic pond at Downhills Park, whilst Heritage Lottery Fund money has been used to restore a pond at Railway Fields, a former British Rail goods depot. These two new ponds now have dipping platforms and are wheelchair accessible; in both cases the local community, 'Friends of' groups and volunteers (including BTCV) got stuck in to help raise funds, dig and plant up the ponds.

Meanwhile in South London, major work is underway at Foots Cray Meadows park, Bexley this summer. Funded by Cory Environmental Trust in Britain, a complex of nine new ponds will be created and other habitats improved to benefit the great crested newts on site. A further four ponds are being created across Lambeth (funded by Grantscape) this autumn, bringing the total to eight.

Up in Scotland, Glasgow officer Eilidh Spence has been working hard over the last year on various sites across the city. With the help of over

100 volunteers, so far seven ponds have been created and a further 11 enhanced; more than 120 children have also been provided with pond-dipping opportunities. Much of this has been partnership work with Glasgow City Council along with BTCV, Prince's Trust and Clyde ARG. Over the next two years Eilidh will be enhancing and creating up to 14 ponds and completing amphibian, invertebrate and plant surveys.

A series of Living Water workshops, courses and events will be taking place over the summer, in London and Glasgow, including a launch event at Railway Fields where local artists will create a giant willow newt.

allotments

Our Froglife allotments, in Peterborough, are currently buzzing with life; with three ponds and three bog gardens (across two sites) to choose from, the local wildlife - including frogs, toads and, for the first time, newts! - are enjoying the range of habitats. Each of the ponds has been planned, dug, filled and planted up by young people from the local area, either as part of their time on Froglife's educational Green Pathways Scheme (funded by BBC Children in Need), or through their reparation hours with the Youth Offending Service on our Peterborough Environment Enrichment Project. Now the ponds

are established, sessions include surveying and monitoring techniques.

ponds for life

Another Peterborough-based project, Ponds for Life, will shortly draw to a close. During the project, the question was raised: how can we show people the huge variety of life in a pond when many of the creatures are so hard to see? The answer was simple - make them ten times bigger! The *Under the Surface* exhibition transformed an art gallery into an underwater pondscape.

Hundreds of young people helped make 111 weird and wonderful pond creatures, out of papier mache and bubble wrap amongst other things, which were displayed in the moodily-lit space to give visitors a frogs-eye view of life in a pond. The event was linked with *National Science and Engineering Week* and Froglife provided guided tours, explaining the concept of biodiversity and highlighting just how crucial ponds are for wildlife. Over 300 people visited, with many expressing surprise at just how packed with life even the smallest pond can be; there was also the opportunity to have their photo taken with a dragon-sized newt and take away information about creating frog-friendly back gardens. Hopefully, by taking a journey 'under the surface', we've helped people see ponds in a totally different way.



Pond planting in Lambeth (Alex Draper / Froglife)



Students 'Under the Surface' (Sam Taylor / Froglife)



JUST ADD WATER...

You've seen how we're helping the nation's ponds, now it's down to you!



GET DIGGING!

It may seem obvious, but by providing a water body in your garden, and encouraging your neighbours to do the same, you can have a big impact on local wildlife, particularly amphibians. Ponds don't have to be large or deep, so whatever your time, space or budget there's a pond to suit you. Creating new ponds can go some way to counter-acting the loss of ponds in the wider countryside. If you don't already have a copy of our popular Just Add Water booklet, or would like to request copies for friends and neighbours, please get in touch or visit www.froglife.org/justaddwater.

INVOLVE LOCAL SCHOOLS

Educating children, not just on the benefits of ponds to wildlife, but on the dangers they pose and how to be safe around them is important for the future survival of ponds. School wildlife areas can be great places for amphibians and reptiles and most kids are fascinated by the transformation of tadpoles into froglets. www.froglife.org/education.



SPREAD THE WORD

Creating green 'corridors' is crucial to ensuring the survival of local wildlife. Linking habitats means species can spread out and colonise new areas. You could think about getting involved with 'Friends of' groups or local volunteers to ensure public areas are made more wildlife-friendly and encourage your neighbours to consider what can (and can't) easily access their gardens. If there are public ponds near by, find out who owns them and how you can help keep them litter-free and frog-friendly. Ponds in highly urban areas can suffer badly with litter problems - with anything from drinks cans to cars ending up in the water. Interestingly, our officers in London have found that removing larger items often just encourages more vandalism and so have begun modifying dumped shopping trolleys to benefit the ponds inhabitants by planting them up. www.froglife.org/volunteer.

BECOME A FROGLIFE FRIEND

If there are few opportunities for you to help out locally consider making a donation to Froglife or encouraging friends and family to become Friends. Without your financial support our important work could not continue. www.froglife.org/support.

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

"My name is Tina Lindsay and I'm the new Community Fundraiser for Froglife. As you're probably aware, the past 12 months have been eventful, but be assured the whole Froglife Family are fully focussed on looking ahead and doing our best for our Friends and our species.

I'd like to very briefly introduce you to our next campaign, which will launch in 2011. It's called 'Tuppence a Toad' and it's our most ambitious national campaign yet (find out more on the backpage). My main involvement is to organise a fundraising Gala Evening for the official launch - this is to be held on 2nd April 2011 at the Orton Hall Hotel, Peterborough. The event is in its infancy planning stage just now but as it grows we'll be keeping you informed via Croaks (the new name for Frogbites) and future issues of Natterchat.

The programme for the evening's events will include an auction. So, may I be so bold as to ask anyone who is able to offer items for this integral part of the fundraiser, to contact me on tina.lindsay@froglife.org or 01733 425824 to discuss further".



Sam Taylor / Froglife



There are so many different pond liners available, how do I choose?

There are three main types of liner to consider:

The most common is a **butyl rubber liner** - butyl is a strong and flexible material and these liners are easiest to lay however, if they're not laid correctly, can be prone to punctures. They're usually laid with a protective membrane to prevent puncture and abrasion. Ensure the liner is covered from the sun as this can cause degradation. Butyl can be used for very small to very large ponds, though with small ponds remember to form ledges to put plant containers on; in larger ponds you can cover the liner with a layer of subsoil and plant straight into it.

A **powdered bentonite clay liner** is mixed with sand or subsoil material and then laid over the soil with a rake. It can be used in any size pond providing the sloping sides are not too steep as this would cause the material to slump. It's not too expensive and reasonably easy to install (some effort is required to make sure it's mixed properly). Once wet the material forms a watertight barrier. A layer of subsoil can be laid on top to plant straight into.

Geotextile clay liners (GCL) are a membrane containing bentonite clay mineral. It can be heavy and difficult to lay; large rolls will need machinery to move. It comes in varying sized sheets, in either a prehydrated or dry form (the latter is slightly cheaper but requires application of granules along the joins). For the liner to be watertight at least 300mm of compacted sub soil needs to be spread evenly. Once wet the clay expands under pressure to form an impermeable barrier. It's somewhat 'vandal proof' as if punctured it can reseal itself. Slopes should not be too steep to avoid slumping of the soil covering and liner; you can plant directly into the soil covering. This is a good option for medium and larger ponds, especially those in public areas.



Wendy Sabine

I maintained an air-hole in the ice on my pond this winter but I still found dead frogs afterwards - how can I help them in the future?

For years it has been Froglife's advice to try and keep an air-hole in iced over ponds, not to let in oxygen (as this small surface area would not make much difference to the oxygen in the water) but to let out the various other gases that could be building up under the ice. 'Winterkill' is a natural phenomenon - frogs that choose to hibernate in ponds risk becoming trapped if ice forms - and although there is no serious threat to the local frog population, it's unpleasant to be coming across dead frogs in the pond. Thankfully, it's usually only a small proportion of frogs in the area that will choose to hibernate in the pond which minimises the impact on the overall population.

This winter Pond Conservation carried out the Big Pond Thaw survey and it appears that making an air-hole in the ice makes little difference to the survival of hibernating amphibians. It may be that there's very little you can do once the ice has formed, but to ensure there is plenty of oxygen in the water all winter there are a few things you can try: **remove some sediment**, a large build up of leaves and sediment can de-oxygenate the water; **add more oxygenating plants**, these can continue to produce oxygen when the pond is iced over (clearing snow so underwater plants can still photosynthesise may help if it is lying on the ice for a long period of time); **consider running your pump** if you have one, especially if you have a fairly deep pond as this will help oxygen circulate to the deeper areas (shallower ponds tend to have higher oxygen levels anyway).

The focus of this survey was on the affect of various factors on the amount of oxygen in the water so it is still unclear what role other gases play in amphibian winter deaths.



TOP TIP FOR PLANTING UP PONDS

Rather than using unsightly (and unenvironmentally friendly) plastic planters, get hold of some hessian sacks and cut them into squares. Fill each square with aquatic soil and stones to weigh it down and tie it around the roots of your pond plants with hessian string. These will naturally degrade in the water over time.

Photos: Rebecca Turpin / Froglife

In this issue's Toad Talk we look at some record-breaking Toad Patrols, reasons why so many toads were recorded this year and what to do if toad numbers appear to be declining.

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

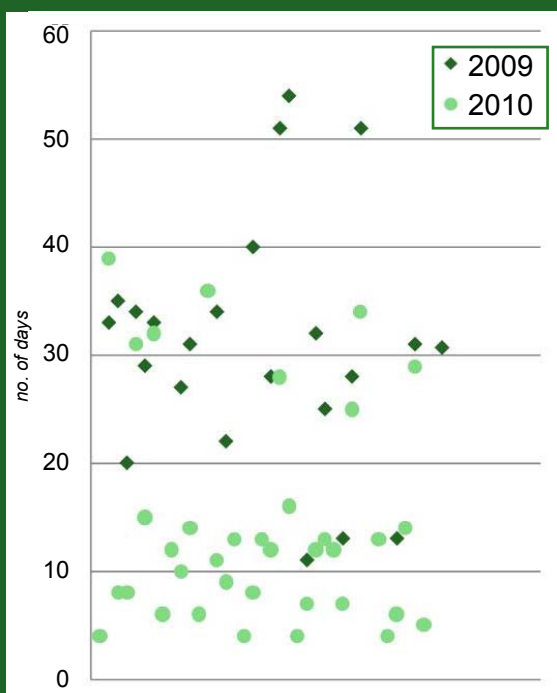


After several years of concerned patrollers and disappointing numbers of toads recorded, this spring was a bumper year for toads. Patrols at last reported seeing a more 'typical' pattern to the migration, ie mass movements over a few nights, rather than the long drawn out migrations we've seen over the last few years. It's thought that, as always, this is down to the weather. The last few winters have been quite mild, with nothing but gradually increasing temperatures to signal the arrival of spring. This year, however, we had a very cold winter and a very definite sudden leap into spring and this has prompted the toad behaviour we would expect to see. This is shown, not just in the high numbers of toads recorded, but in the length of the migration period; last year patrols lasted, on average, 30 days whereas this year that number has halved. The graph (right) compares the length of time patrolled in 2009 and 2010 (each dot represents a patrol) and it's clear to see where the majority lie this year.

So far we've received data from 41 sites and between them they've helped a staggering 44,630 toads across the UK's roads! This has already smashed last year's total of 35,548, which came from 70 sites, so it just shows what a bit of good 'toad weather' can do for the figures. Several Patrols have reported their 'best year yet', with many recording vastly higher numbers than in the last few years. For example, at Fawler in Oxfordshire 62 toads were helped in 2009 whereas this spring 524 toads were helped; patrollers at Underton in Shropshire recorded over ten times as many toads this spring (1,022) than last spring (97); at Thornton in Fife, it was thought the population was too small to be considered a registered crossing when just 8 toads were seen in 2009 but this year 225 toads were helped across the road.

The record for this year goes to the Henley-Marlow Toad Patrollers who helped an incredible 10,501 toads across the road this spring. Making use of the fence and bucket system, the patrollers have undoubtedly ensured a safe future for these toads. Toads who also have a bright future are those in Llandrindod Wells - a new toad tunnel was installed this spring to ensure the toads can safely make it to the breeding pond. We look forward to hearing how successful it has been next spring.

IF YOU STILL HAVE CROSSING DATA FOR THIS SEASON THEN PLEASE DO SEND IT IN!



Length of time patrolled in 2009 and 2010

ROAD DEATHS A CONSERVATION CONCERN

The data from this year's migration is certainly very encouraging so does this mean that toads are no longer in decline? Experts say no, and we shouldn't get complacent after a few years of high numbers. Toad populations still face a number of threats and roads continue to play a part in their decline. For many years the toads on roads issue has been considered one of welfare - it's not acceptable for animals to be needlessly killed on our roads - but it has become increasingly obvious that road deaths should be a serious conservation concern. Zoologist Arnold Cooke has been studying toad populations in the Cambridgeshire town of

Ramsey for over two decades and has come to some worrying conclusions. From his data it seems clear that the number of toads killed on the road has a massive impact on the survival of the population. Toad Patrols in the area became disheartened when numbers fell and gave up on their efforts to save the toads. Arnold thinks this was the wrong move, "The message is clear, if numbers fall over a period of years for no obvious reason, don't stop lifting but redouble your efforts." Had the Ramsey Toad Patrollers known this they may not have stopped and there may still be toads breeding in the ponds today.



Tim Watts



Natalie Giles / Froglife

Please keep sending in your photos - whether it's the toads, the site or the Patrollers!

IN THE NEWS...

Swedish bus stops for toads

A Stockholm bus driver has been reprimanded by his bus company for stopping to help some toads across the road. Passengers did not mind the delay but the driver was told not to make unscheduled stops for wildlife.

Toads detect Italian tremors

It's long been believed that toads and other animals can predict earthquakes but this has been based mainly on anecdotal evidence. However, scientists studying common toads *Bufo bufo* in Italy found that there was a dramatic change in behaviour before the earthquake in L'Aquila in April 2009. The toads were studied before, during and after the earthquake and some surprising changes in behaviour were recorded. Five days before the earthquake the toads abandoned spawning and did not resume normal behaviour until several days afterwards. It's unclear what cues the toads were responding to but it's thought it could be to do with pre-seismic disturbances in the ionosphere (the top layer of the atmosphere).

FOCUS ON...

BURNSIDE, PERTHSHIRE



PATROL ORGANISERS:

Philip and Sheila Burgess

LENGTH OF TIME SITE PATROLLED:

Approximately seven years, but only the last three years as 'official' patrollers.

PATROL SIZE: Two - just us!

SUPPORT: The council hinted that they might provide signs, but have so far not delivered. We have seen cars drive over several toads which we believe the drivers must have seen, so we're not sure that signs would necessarily be effective here. We're a little concerned signs might attract people who would deliberately target the toads. We have not sought any other support.

CURRENT TOAD POPULATIONS: Over the last three years we have helped 351 toads, 201 and 304 respectively, so there appears to be no trend - but it is better than the zero of 20 years ago. We introduced toad and frog spawn to our garden (officially authorised) so now feel responsible for their safety and wellbeing!

CAUSES OF CHANGES IN TOAD NUMBERS:

We were responsible for the initial introduction but, with only 3 years of data, cannot tell if there have been changes recently. We only patrol perhaps two or three times between 7.00 and 10.30pm each evening, so we have no idea how many might be crossing throughout the night.

HIGHEST NUMBER OF TOADS HELPED IN ONE YEAR: 351 (2008)

HIGHEST NUMBER OF TOADS HELPED IN ONE NIGHT: 66

MOST UNUSUAL ANIMAL HELPED ACROSS THE ROAD: Palmate newts

HIGHLIGHT OF PATROLLING SO FAR:

Rescuing toads from certain death in road drains - at least we hope it was a highlight for the toads!



coming soon...

This year was a particularly frantic 'Toads on Roads' season, with many new crossings registered with Froglife, alongside hundreds of requests for our help. But as a wildlife conservation organisation are we winning the battle? And how can we resign the image of thousands of squashed toads to the history books? Froglife's Jules Howard gives some thoughts...

"Love them or loathe them, seeing dead toads on a road is a terrible site. Crushed and sometimes still alive, later to perish once they dry out, these toads are a gory illustration of the fact we as a country, and as a sector, still haven't got our wildlife conservation actions quite right. New roads and current road management schemes still often fail amphibians, trapping animals on roads or creating insurmountable barriers that kill-off migration routes, and local amphibian populations. This is, to a degree, the same stark reality we faced twenty or thirty years ago.

Thankfully we have an amazing volunteer movement in the UK, and we boast an incredible network of over one thousand Toad Patrollers who go out on spring nights helping toads, and providing us with lots of important data about how 'their' toads are doing, year on year.

We need more help though. There are gaps in the 'Toads on Roads' model that need fixing urgently. Volunteers don't have enough funds to purchase site equipment (like torches, or fluorescent tabards). The process of getting signs put up by councils is long and convoluted, and signs, if installed, are sometimes stolen. Coordinating the actions of Toad Patrollers requires intensive support that we, at Froglife, don't have the capacity to maintain. Lastly, new roads are still being built and, again, we lack the staff capacity to engage at a higher level with the planning sector, ensuring that new roads are amphibian-friendly.

As staff we have the ideas, the passion and the thriving volunteer network to plug these gaps and drive Toads on Roads forward. Hopefully in future we can ensure that the sight of hundreds of squashed and dying toads is, like badger-baiting, DDT and whaling, an image of human-caused animal massacre that seems outdated and totally out of place in modern society."

In the coming months Froglife will be working on a fundraising campaign called **Tuppence a Toad**. We want people (and businesses) to contribute 2p for each toad that's saved in the 2011 toad migration period, or to take actions to fundraise for our campaign themselves. The money we raise will help us to stop the building of new roads that kill toads, and to support our network of volunteers who take action on-the-ground.

www.froglife.org/campaigns



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