



# Toads on Roads

National Science and Engineering  
Week 2011

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# Raising awareness about the plight of toads

Froglife's education team put together a successful interactive exhibition for National Science and Engineering Week 2011. The project was led by the young people on Froglife's Green Pathways scheme and from their ideas we conjured up an exciting and innovative way to communicate the plight of toads on Britain's roads to the general public.

The exhibition was set up for one week in the heart of Peterborough's City centre, under the cover of the Guildhall. It tied in with *Tuppence a Toad*, a year-long programme of funds and awareness raising to support Froglife's Toads on Roads project that works with volunteers to rescue thousands of Common Toads every spring as they migrate back to their breeding ponds.

It took the hard work of young people from 6 Peterborough schools, 2 after school groups, young offenders from the Froglife Active Conservation Team, 1<sup>st</sup> Yaxley Brownies, volunteers, friends, family and Froglife's Wildlife Ambassadors to pull together this remarkable exhibit. Over the course of the week, 431 people came for organised sessions and dropped into the installation to learn more about the threats facing toads and what they could do to help.

Although we didn't receive any funding, Perkins Learning Centre, Mears Workshop, Peterborough City Council, St John the Baptist Church and Opportunity Peterborough all generously donated the use



of their facilities. Everything in the exhibition was handmade from recycled materials, thus keeping the environment, as always, at the heart of our work.

The installation consisted of different learning areas for visitors to explore:

### Help a Toad across the Road

This area created a larger mock-up of a toad breeding pond and a nearby road, with a human-sized toad lollipop lady helping three small toads to safety. One of the issues facing real toads when migrating across a road is that they are very small and well camouflaged, particularly as the toads cross in spring on damp evenings around rush hour. Although a large number of toads can cross in one area, they could still be all but invisible to passing traffic.

The young people designing the installation felt that what toads really need are lollipop ladies to help them across! In a way, Toads on Roads volunteers in their hi-vis vests act in this role, as they help the toads to safety by picking them up and moving them in buckets.



### The Scales of Justice

The number of toads that are killed on roads every spring are estimated to weigh a total of 20 tonnes. This is a staggering amount, and quite hard to imagine. The interactive 'Scales of Justice' offered a way for people to compare how many toads die every year to the equivalent numbers of cats, people and elephants. Bean bag toads, rag doll cats, elephants and people were all carefully created so that they could be laid on the scales and comparisons made between 20 tonnes of these different types of animals.

Even when the toads are lucky enough to have a Toads on Roads Patrol to help them, a percentage of animals are still found dead or injured. In some areas, the high mortality of



toads caused by roads is starting to have an effect on the long term population of toads and is becoming a conservation as well as an animal welfare concern. Toads are often forgotten about as animals, so comparing them to charismatic mega fauna, pets and humans, was designed to help people understand the scale of the threat facing toads. This idea came from the writing of one young person on the Green Pathways project, who used comparisons with better known species to write an impassioned piece questioning why more **isn't know about** toads and the huge numbers of them that are killed every year.

### The Lily-pad Area

Comfy felt lily pads stuffed with straw provided a space where young and old alike could learn to make origami toads and see whose toad could get into the pond the fastest! This area enabled people to stay, chat and learn more about the life cycle of toads, how to tell the difference between frogs and toads and discover what they could do to help amphibians, reptiles and other animals at home.



The overall aim of this National Science and Engineering Week event was to take the messages and concerns from **Froglife's** Toads on Roads project to a new audience, where they would not be expecting to learn anything new about science or their local wildlife. The pop-up nature of the installation meant that we were able to catch people by surprise and engage them in a fun and entertaining way, whilst raising their awareness about the difficult life of a toad. By working with young people and people Not in Education Employment or Training through our projects, and empowering them to speak up on the toads' behalf, the event also had an important training element.

We were thrilled that this quirky and interactive installation came Highly Commended in the National Science and Engineering Week Awards for the Outstanding Achievement Award.

