

FROGLIFE PRESS RELEASE

Press release – for immediate release

Charity Froglife to host a Toad Summit in Bath

Wildlife conservation charity Froglife are hosting a Mini Toad Summit on 26th January in Bath. They have invited Toad Patrollers, members of the public, academics and volunteers to be a part of crucial toad conservation efforts.

Toad Patrollers are volunteers who help toads across the road on their annual migration to their breeding ponds. The aim of the event is to improve the knowledge of Toad Patrollers, motivate Toad Patrollers and enable them to share good practice, so that more toads are saved.

It is important to bring toads to the forefront of UK conservation efforts as the findings from research that analysed the 30+ year Toads on Roads database concluded that the UK's common toads have declined by 68% over the 30 year period, so action needs to be taken before we lose this charismatic animal.

Sheila Gundry, Development Manager for Froglife and Bath resident, said: "This is the first time that we have run a toad event in the Bath area and we are delighted with the excellent response – over 60 people have signed up and we have a long waiting list. It's great to see such enthusiasm for conserving toads in the Bath area."

The Mayor of Bath, accompanied by the Mayoress, will open the event. The afternoon's talks will be delivered by a variety of speakers ranging from academic to community-focused discussions, including talks from Angela Julian of ARG UK, Andy Ryder (Chair of Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group), John Dickson (Chair Reptile and Amphibian Group, Somerset), plus the Managers of Local Toad Patrols. Bath is very fortunate to have an active toad patrol at Charlcombe Lane. The Charlcombe Lane Toad Patrol give a talk on their work and will be assisting at the event. Other nearby Toad Patrols include Shew Valley and Bitton.

Along with the talks, this summit will give attendees a chance to see the work that Froglife are doing across the UK, including the national 'Toads on Roads' project.

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Contact:

Sheila Gundry: Sheila.gundry@froglife.org

Tel: 07837647398

Venue: Friends Meeting House, York Street, Bath

Free photos available on request.

NOTES:

1. About Froglife:

Froglife is a national wildlife charity committed to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles – frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards – and saving the habitat that they depend on. Central to our ethos is to involve as many people as possible into being able to take positive, practical action to save our wildlife.

2. Toad Patrols

In February and March common toads migrate back to their ancestral ponds to breed. They follow the same route, regardless of what gets in their way. When roads are built they continue across the roads leading to high levels of mortality. There has been a 68% decrease in the number of common toads in the UK over the past 30 years (Petrovan and Schmidt, 2016).

Froglife's Toads on Roads project registers these sites with the Department of Transport as 'migratory crossings' and helps coordinate local Toad Patrols. Patrols apply to their local council for road warning signs to be installed and actively help the toads across the road. Volunteers go out every night during the toad crossing season, whatever the weather, and help the toads and other amphibians across the road. Great care must be taken by volunteers on busy roads. The Toads on Roads project has been running for over 30 years and there are over 180 toad crossings nationwide.

In Bath there is a very active toad patrol at Charlcombe Lane, Bath. B&NES Council provides a temporary road closure, this year it will be from February 11th to March 24th (few Councils do this). This is funded by the Charlcombe Lane group and the signage is put in by Skanska. There is a concern that the Clean Air Zone may make Charlcombe Lane a rat run and cause higher levels of mortality.

In the 5 years before the temporary road closure an average of 354 toads were saved each year by the Charlcombe Lane toad patrol volunteers and an average of 159 were found squashed by vehicles using the road (ie nearly half, 45%, were fatalities). In the 5 years up to 2018, 867 toads have been saved on average per year and 28 found squashed on average per year (only 3% fatalities). This shows a substantial increase in toads since the road closure and a much lower rate of toad fatalities.

Other nearby toad patrols are: Chew Valley, Bitton, Winscombe Hill, Cameley, Priddy and Fishponds.

3. Facts about common toads:

- Toads are amphibians, like frogs and newts.
- The common toad, although suffering a population decline, is widespread in England, Scotland, and Wales.
- Toad identifying features; they have dry, 'warty' skin, and move by crawling rather than hopping. Their body colour is generally brown-green-grey and can have some dark markings on the back, like the common frog a toad's colour can change depending on the environmental conditions. A toad's eye has a bronze/gold coloured iris and horizontal slit pupil, and behind each eye has a gland that secretes toxins, making it distasteful to predators.
- Toads feed on slugs, worms and insects, mostly at night, so are great friends of gardeners. They may be found around the garden hiding under plant pots, logs and bins during the day.
- Famous toads include Mr Toad from *Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Graham and Trevor from *Harry Potter* by J.K. Rowling.

3. Facts about toads and roads:

- Over 98,000 toads were saved by toad patrollers on roads in 2018.
- In addition to death by cars themselves, common toads also fall foul of badly designed road features like high kerbs which steer toads towards drains, where they are then trapped and die.
- Toads mostly move at night, often crossing roads in their thousands.

Further information on Toads on Roads and Toad Patrollers: www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads/