

River Nene Dragon Finder



End of Project Evaluation

Education and Community Projects 2014-2019

June 2019

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1) Evaluation in Summary

Through the River Nene Dragon Finder Froglife exceeded expectations and delivered a large number of hands on workshops and discovery events, using a range of excellent innovative materials.

Froglife engaged nearly 10,000 people directly in discovery events and workshops and nearly 70,000 in total including those who attended exhibitions and less structured events.

These numbers dramatically exceed the original targets set in the activity plan, with Froglife delivering nearly four times as many discovery events and workshops as anticipated in 2014. This impressive increase appears to be due to two factors:

- Froglife creating easily replicable formats for the activities with excellent supporting materials, hence minimising time in preparation for each workshop, or event,
- Froglife employed much appreciated hard working and dedicated staff.

These are some conclusions about the impact of the workshops and discovery activities on the 9808 people who engaged in discovery activities and workshops:

Engaging new audiences

At least half the audience had never been involved in nature conservation before.

Awareness of wildlife and habitat

- ***95% of people were more aware of amphibian and reptile conservation,***
- ***95% were more aware of nature conservation,***
- ***89% of people being more aware of surveying and the Dragon Finder app.***
- ***88% of people becoming more aware of the River Nene and the surrounding area.***

Learning about wildlife and habitat

Learning was a strong, often mentioned, and much appreciated aspect of the project, with some excellent teaching and really helpful visual aids provided.

71% of people attending Wildlife Workshops, Dragon Boat Tours, and Volunteer Days developed at least a little in new skills, with identification skills often mentioned.

64% of these people , more than half, pledged to learn more themselves.

23% of these people pledged to teach others the skills they had learnt - either through friends and family, or through schools and groups. If these people teach an average of four other people each, this represents a further 2000 people learning about amphibians and reptiles.

73% of people attending Wildlife Workshops, demonstrated a clear increase in their identification skills, and of these, 57% learnt how to identify the whole range of common amphibians and reptiles.

Habitat Improvements

Over a third of people attending Wildlife Workshops, Dragon Boat Tours and Volunteer Days pledged to make some improvements to their own site. Wildlife Workshops were particularly significant in promoting pond building in private habitat.

Feedback from these workshops extrapolated implies at least:

318 people will make a new pond.

Over 460 people will improve the management for wildlife of existing ponds.

Nearly 900 people will make an improvement to their garden for wildlife.

These improvements will be made at different sites including private gardens, allotments, horse paddocks, school gardens and nature reserves.

Feelings about amphibians and reptiles

Some people who attended already had strong feelings for amphibians, and reptiles.

A small amount of people had negative feelings towards snakes. Of these some improved their feelings.

There is some evidence of an improvement of many people's attitudes and empathy towards amphibians and to a certain extent towards snakes as a result of these workshops.

Recording Amphibians and Reptiles.

34% people attending Dragon Boat Tours, Wildlife Workshops and Volunteer Training pledged to take up surveying and/or use the Dragon Finder app.

2) Project Scope

Dragon Finder is a series of Froglife projects, bringing together practical conservation, surveying, data collection and interactive educational activities to help conserve reptiles and amphibians in the UK.

The River Nene Dragon Finder brought together some of the best of Froglife's activities, along with new innovations, all delivered by a small team of a Project Manager, Project officer and Project trainee.

It was focused on the counties of Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire through which the River Nene, flows and where there was previously a gap in monitoring data for amphibians and reptiles. The project lasted four and a half years until the end of May 2019. It was delivered as a self contained project following similar Dragon Finder projects in London, and Scotland and was able to build on the experience of these and utilise resources produced by them such as the Dragon Finder app for use recording amphibians and reptiles on a mobile phone. The River Nene Dragon Finder however, introduced new activities and put in place a focus on certain demographic groups.

It should be noted that this evaluation focuses only on the public awareness raising aspects of the project. There is a brief description below of the projects.



Projects

Training days and **Wildlife Workshops** using friendly techniques, practical examples and visual aids to give practical understanding of amphibian and reptile identification, recording and habitat management.

Train the Trainer days were run with similar content from a different angle, to help teachers and others in a public facing role understand how to share their learning of the needs of amphibians and reptiles.

Mapestry was a new project to encourage family learning around art workshops to produce textile panels portraying amphibian and reptile habitat through the year. Following the workshops the Mapestry Tour exhibited the artwork in different locations for wider engagement, and occasionally used as an aid to discussion with groups.

Volunteer Training days worked alongside habitat creation projects to help build an understanding of how to manage the new habitat, and encourage the formation of a group around this.

Dragon Boat Tours (*pictured above*) these were a new idea relevant to the River Nene area, to provide guided amphibian and reptile and habitat discovery sessions through a pre-booked hour long boat trip on the River Nene.

Swimming with Dragons gave immersive learning about amphibian behaviour through fun activities inside a swimming pool. Many of the activities were originally developed through London Dragon Finder and modified for delivery here.

A reminiscence project, this project evolved to take the form of a [video available here](#). This video was a replacement for the originally planned project which was a new idea to collect several thousand public childhood memories on postcards accompanying Memory Benches and the Mapestry exhibition.

Dragon Fun Days, as had proved popular with other Dragon Finder Projects, Froglife ran drop in engagement activities at country parks, visitor centres, museums and other partner venues to raise broad awareness and build partner relations. Froglife also participated in the **Dragon Boat Race** to raise further awareness.

Networking and Showcasing Days were small conferences which helped build partnerships and catch up on best practice, through showcasing, presentations, workshops and networking.

Habitat improvements Froglife set out to improve, restore or create 163 habitat sites including restoration of 50 existing ponds, the creation of 35 new ponds and the improvement of 78 land habitats. *These are not covered in this report.*

Target Outcomes

Outcomes for Education, Awareness, Participation and Understanding

At the beginning of the project, Froglife set out to achieve a change in public awareness, and feelings about amphibians and reptiles through their facilitated discovery and education. Alongside this they were keen for some people to move on to recording amphibians and reptiles, helping to fill the deficit of records for the area. They hoped that others would go on to improve habitat in their own domain, for example garden ponds, improved community and school gardens, or improved farmland. The full list of agreed target outcomes at the beginning of the project is below:

Increased public **awareness** of:

- amphibian and reptile conservation
- the importance and value of the River Nene and the surrounding landscape
- surveying and land management techniques.

Increased public **empathy** for amphibians and reptiles, and their habitats.

People encouraged and enabled to **take part** in practical wildlife conservation.

People encouraged to **take up recording** amphibians

Increased skills amongst participants

Engage diverse audiences

Reach **audiences that would not normally engage** in wildlife conservation activities.

Engage a number of **different target audiences in the workshops**, including: farmers, allotment holders, gardeners, local councils, community groups, local volunteer groups, and conservation organisations.

Landowners **empowered** to look after amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats in their local area. Groups of **volunteers empowered** to look after amphibians and reptiles, and their habitats in their local area.



The evaluation

This evaluation is a final study of the achievements of Froglife's River Nene Dragon Finder project through its interactive educational activities to help conserve reptiles and amphibians in the UK.

In 2016 at an early stage in the River Nene Dragon Finder project, Froglife commissioned an external evaluator, Helen Firminger, and set out to produce a joint evaluation of the educational projects, with different areas shared with Froglife staff, and a high element of mentoring in this in order to aid internal learning.

Staff worked with the evaluator to describe the change they were setting out to measure, and to define the outcomes they were aiming to achieve, in line with the Activity plan from 2014. They then worked together to agree a new feedback form which helped to assess progress towards these goals and the Froglife curriculum. This form was used from 2016 - 2019 across the educational and discovery activities.

The consultant provided two interim reports during the project which helped to guide project development and information collecting.

The newer feedback forms were collected by staff from 174 participants out of the 9808 in direct learning experiences over the final two-three years of the project.

- 57 on Dragon Boat Tours.
- 34 in Volunteer Days,
- 74 participants in Wildlife Workshops (landowner groups)
- 9 in 'other' events: 1 Dragon Fun Day 4, Training the Trainers Day, 4 in Training Days, which were similar to Wildlife Workshops,

Because of the relative small sample size, and the fact that some groups were represented to a much greater extent than others, we have used the feedback forms to indicate broad areas of success, and been cautious about extrapolating the results to make definitive conclusions about the 9808 people who engaged in these workshops.

Alongside the analysis of feedback, the evaluation presented here includes some detailed case studies by Catherine Duerden, Froglife's River Nene Dragon Finder Project Officer, presenting her experience of the successes of three project areas, along with a study by the consultant of the Wildlife Workshops.

3) Dragon Finder Outputs

At the beginning of the project, Froglife set itself a target for the number of each type of event they would deliver, and the number of individuals they would reach through those events. They meticulously measured attendance and achievements against these goals, with the results displayed below.

Events			
Froglife's River Nene Dragon Finder Against Targets			
Activity	Target	Number	Target met
Initial Engagement Events			
Launch Event	2	2	100%
Dragon Boat Festival	4	4	100%
Networking and Showcasing	5	4	80%
Mapestry Tour	12	18	150%
Promo Event Engaged		11	
Wildlife Memories Benches	2	3	150%
Structured Learning Events			
Dragon Trail Fun Day	10	29	290%
Swimming with Dragons	20	21	105%
Dragon Boat Tour	40	41	103%
Training Day	40	55	138%
Wildlife Workshop	45	103	229%
Mapestry	48	48	100%
Train the Trainers	2	5	250%
Volunteer Days	166	173	104%
Habitat Work	163	238	146%
Total	396	517	131%

Individuals Engaged Froglife's River Nene Dragon Finder Against Targets.

Activity	Target	Engaged	Target met
Initial Engagement Events			
Launch Event	None	90	
Dragon Boat Festival	None	105	
Networking and Showcasing	100	205	205%
Mapestry Tour	40000	58613	147%
Promo Event Engaged	None	480	
Wildlife Memories	5000	146	3%
Structured Learning Events			
Dragon Trail Fun Day	None	3400	
Swimming with Dragons	None	467	
Dragon Boat Tour	None	460	
Training Days	400	1264	316%
Wildlife Workshop	675	1981	293%
Mapestry	540	1019	189%
Train the Trainers	30	58	193%
Volunteer Days	886	1059	120%
Event Volunteers		100	
Total	47631	69447	146%
Total Engagement	45100	59639	132%
Total Structured Learning	2531	9808	388%

69,447 people were engaged by Froglife's hard working team through 517 events for the River Nene Dragon Finder project. This is an extremely large number for a project on this scale, and a high achievement, exceeding targets in all areas except one.

The most substantial proportional increases on targets were in the area of Wildlife Workshops, which are fairly intensive learning activities to deliver. The increase in numbers here is due to the popularity of these workshops, the excellent materials minimising preparation time, and the hard work of Froglife staff who delivered an additional 73 workshops to an expanding target audience.

Only one project did not perform as expected, and this was the wildlife memories. It was originally projected that Froglife would collect wildlife memories from 5000 people through a set of postcards. However this project was later modified with agreement from the HLF funders, to focus on a much smaller number of memories, and to produce a video from these.

1159 volunteers were engaged throughout the River Nene Dragon Finder, in many cases, enabling continued good management of habitat.

9808 individuals were engaged in structured learning relationships directly with Froglife staff to a pre-set curriculum, such as the group undertaking training in newt surveys in Irchester below. This was nearly three times as many as were originally intended, and we have focused on these for the majority of the outcome assessments in this evaluation.

The majority of the large numbers of individuals engaged enjoyed some short informal drop in sessions, particularly viewing the stimulating Mapestry exhibition. These visits are examined in more detail in the relevant section of the evaluation.



4) Analysis of Feedback

Target Outcomes

At the beginning of the evaluation froglife and the independent evaluator discussed and defined the change we were aiming for. In line with the Activity Plan produced beforehand, we agreed to focus on measuring certain key areas:

- 1) Increased public **awareness** of: amphibian and reptile conservation, the importance and value of the River Nene and the surrounding landscape, surveying and land management techniques.*
- 2) Increased public **empathy** for amphibians and reptiles, and their habitats.*
- 3) People encouraged and enabled to **take part** in practical wildlife conservation.*
- 4) People encouraged to take up **recording amphibians***
- 5) Improved skills*
- 6) Engage a number of **different target audiences in the workshops**, including: farmers, allotment holders, gardeners, local councils, community groups, local volunteer groups, and conservation organisations.*

Collecting Feedback

Feedback forms were collected from 174 participants in direct learning experiences over the final three years of the project.

- 57 on Dragon Boat Tours.
- 34 in Volunteer Days,
- 74 participants in Wildlife Workshops,
- 9 in 'other' events:
 - 1 on a Dragon Fun Day
 - 4 on a Training the Trainers Day
 - 4 in Training Days, which were similar to Wildlife Workshops,

An earlier feedback form was used initially, exploring helpful issues such as marketing and quality of the service. This was revised in 2016 order to focus directly on the target outcomes for the remainder of the project.

The audience

The activities took place in a range of locations with community groups. Northamptonshire's excellent range of community run pocket parks provided a particularly willing audience.

At 51%, the majority of the audience had not been involved in nature conservation before.

The strongest new audience of 61% was gathered through the Dragon Boat tours.

The Volunteer Days were targeted at existing groups where one could expect a certain established knowledge. Even here, ***26% of the Volunteers had never been involved in nature conservation or action before.***

Have you been involved in nature conservation or action?-by %					
	Yes	A little	No	Yes, work or study	Total participants
Volunteer Days (34)	56%	18%	26%		34
Dragon Boat (57)	14%	25%	61%		57
Wildlife Workshops	14%	27%	53%	6%	74
Other	22%	22%	56%		9
All Groups	23%	24%	51%	2%	173

Some examples of previous involvement in Nature Conservation were given, these showed a range including practical volunteering, and other discovery events :

'Ground conservation work during angling working parties'

'Volunteered for the Wildlife Trust in Northamptonshire'

'Tree planting at Stanground Lock'

'Creating habitat at home for hedgehogs, birds and frogs'

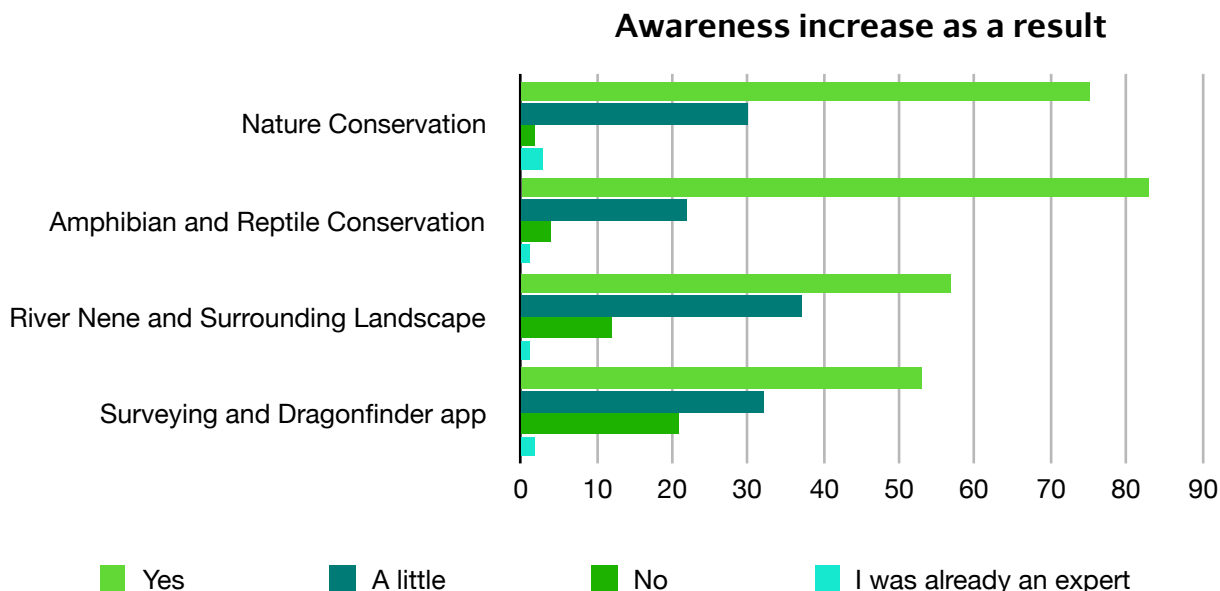
'Litter picking, helping pocket park'

'In school - pond, hedgerows, bug hotels etc.'

'A visit to Peterborough Rowing lake to listen to the bats. A visit to Woodston Ponds, we saw Common and Great crested newts!'

Q1 Did we raise awareness and teach new skills?

We asked the 174 people who gave feedback whether they felt more aware of relevant outcome areas as a direct result of the Dragon Finder Project. In total numbers in their own estimation:



- 95% of people were more aware of amphibian and reptile conservation, with only 4% not gaining this awareness, and 1% already an expert.
- 95% were more aware of nature conservation, with only 2% not gaining this awareness, and 3% already an expert.
- 89% of people being more aware of surveying and the Dragon Finder app.
- 88% of people becoming more aware of the River Nene and the surrounding area

Percentage more aware of the following as a result of the workshop

	Yes	A little	No	I was already an expert
Nature Conservation	68%	27%	2%	3%
Amphibian and Reptile Conservation	75%	20%	4%	1%
River Nene and Surrounding Landscape	53%	35%	11%	1%
Surveying and Dragonfinder app	49%	30%	19%	2%

In measuring an increase in identification skills, participants were asked to fill in the same picture quiz both before, and after each event, giving a helpful assessment for both Froglife, and the participants themselves, of how they went beyond awareness to actual learning. 42 people filled these out across all areas, but particularly Wildlife Workshops.

The quiz was fairly hard, asking participants to identify, by their pictures:

- Adder (female)
- Common Lizard
- Common Frog
- Common Toad
- Smooth Newt
- Grass Snake
- Slow Worm (female)
- Great Crested Newt

Quiz Results

Of the 42 people, 31 had 100% correct answers at the end of the session.

Of these, 7 people actually had 100% correct at the beginning of the session, showing that they had a pretty good understanding to start with.

12 people had 75% or more correct at the beginning and 100% at the end.

8 people had 50 - 62% correct at the beginning and 100% at the end - doubling their knowledge.

6 people had under 50% right at the beginning and 100% correct at the end, which is a fantastic achievement and shows how well they were taught.

4 people had less than 100% at the end score, but still demonstrated a significant increase in their understanding.

2 people got 75% correct both before and after the workshop.

2 people actually dropped in their knowledge with a lower number for their final score to their initial one.

In conclusion:

24 people (57%) learnt how to identify the whole range of amphibians and reptiles through the workshops - fantastic teaching.

31 people (73%) clearly demonstrated an increase in their identification and understanding of amphibians and reptiles.

Many, in the different comments section on their form, discussed the importance of their learning, this was a strong theme in their answers to the question about what skills they had gained:

Pond surveying and how to distinguish between frogs and toads etc

Can now identify different types of newts and snakes

It was an enjoyable boat ride- lovely to see the river+ the banks from a different perspective

What to look for in terms of providing for amphibians, e.g. where to place hibernacula

More aware of nature

We have land in France where we have members of all these species and we can now build areas which can help them thrive and encourage/improve habitats. AH

Newts grass snakes / lizards -> identification

I can ID newts!

Identifying pond life and knowledge about them

Pond dipping skills and identifying species

'Very interesting workshop to inspire us'

'More awareness of habitats, thank you!'

When asked about their increase in skills:

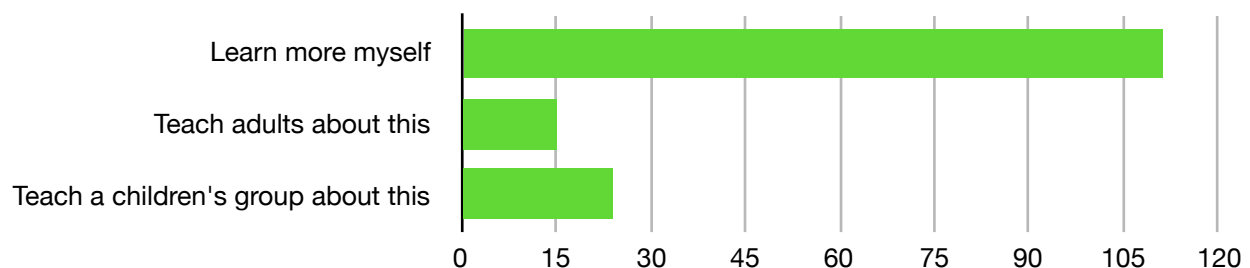
35% of people learnt new skills.

71% of people learnt at least a little in the way of new skills,

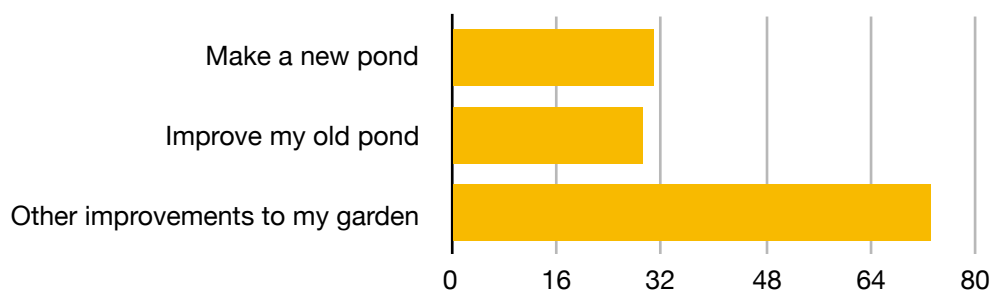
Q2 Did Dragon Finder activities encourage participants to take actions?

When asked, 'As a result of this event, do you plan to take any action' most participants indicated commitments at the end of each workshop in broad areas of: Action at Home, Action in Public, Learning:

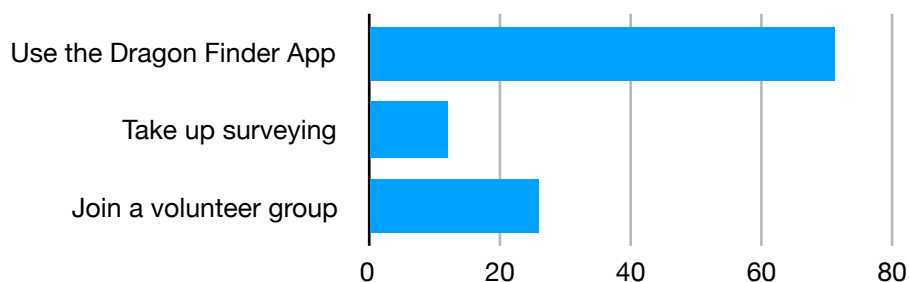
The most popular pledge was to **'learn more myself'** with 111 people (64%) committing to this - a huge accolade for the River Nene Dragon Finder project suggesting the project had aroused enough interest to encourage this continued study.



The second most popular pledge was to **'make other improvements to my garden'** at 73 people (42%) with examples given like a log stack, or bug hotel. there were interesting commitments to making a new pond, examined in more detail below. All of this contributes to the outcome of enabling people to take part in **practical wildlife conservation**



71 people (41%) were keen to Use the Dragon Finder App, along with a further 12 (7%) who were ready to take up surveying, this makes 48% - nearly half the participants ready to fulfil the outcome of **being encouraged to start recording amphibians.**



In considering how the learning and awareness raised in the River Nene Dragon Finder might have a wider impact on others, we can note:

26 people (15%) were interested to join a volunteer group.

15 people committed to teach adults about this (9%)

24 people committed to teach children about this (total 23%).

Examples given suggested that those who would teach children were a mixture between at least 6 teachers in schools or nurseries, and parents and grandparents wishing to share the information in their families.

There was a significant cascade effect among nearly a quarter of the adults participating (and potentially the children), with examples including:

'Workplace awareness for colleagues.'

'Teach my children and their friends'

'Teach in my place of work (school)'

'Teach adults = friends'

'Talk to my Grandchildren!'

Staff notes regarding a teacher at a primary school demonstrate how the Dragon Fun days could lead to the Train the Trainer and then on to this cascade effect:

'She had done activities with us at Kids Country Fair previously, with some of her students (making pebble pals) and said she had since repeated this activity with her other students at school. Didn't know that frog tadpoles change colour and aren't just black - said she'd now include that in future teaching.'



Q3 What kind of habitat improvements did people commit to?

Commitments to improvements to garden or private habitat as a result of the workshops are examined in more detail across the different activity groups in the chart above.

174 people filled in the end of session survey forms expressing, among other things, their commitments to habitat action as a result of this workshop.

Group	Make a new pond	Improve my old pond	Make other improvements to my garden	Survey Group Size	Total Group Number
Dragon Boat Tour	9%	7%	47%	57	460
Volunteer Days	3%	29%	35%	34	1059
Wildlife Workshops (Landowner Groups only)	34%	16%	41%	74	729
Other	0%	33%	44%	9	

'Make other improvements to my garden'

Over a third of individuals across all groups expressed an intention to make other improvements to their garden, making this easily the most popular choice.

Some examples were given including a log stack, compost heap, wildflower meadows, hedgehog house, and bug hotels - all relatively easy to integrate into a garden of any size. While the 'just over a third' was consistent across all groups, it was most prolific from the Dragon Boat Tours, despite the fact that these people had not undertaken any of the relevant training included in the wildlife workshop. This suggests that engaging with Dragon Finder activities encourages and inspires individuals to care for wildlife in general, even when not providing a great deal of information.

'Improve my old pond'

This question was answered most by two groups:

a) 'Other' : 33% shown here actually represents 3 of the 4 teachers who attended Train the Trainers event - 2 of whom specified that they were referring to the school pond. It is quite feasible that this event would particularly attract teachers or school staff who have responsibility for managing existing nature gardens.

b) Practical Volunteer Days: 29% (10 individuals) committed to make improvements this way, while only 3% committed to build a new pond. This correlates with the earlier conclusion that volunteers are more likely to be already engaged in nature conservation, and may, like the teachers, have attended with the specific intention of learning how to improve and study an existing pond.

‘Make a New Pond’

In deciding whether to make a new pond, those attending Wildlife Workshops raced into the lead, with 34% making this commitment. Those who gave detail emphasised that they were referring to a ‘*small*’ pond.

This is dramatically higher than as seen for volunteer days (3% 1 person) and Dragon Boat tours (9% 5 people), emphasising again the importance of these workshops in both inspiring and educating people to introduce freshwater habitat to their garden.

As a further observation: those attending Wildlife Workshops were more likely to make a commitment to more than one area of improvement - with 10 people (13%) making this commitment.

174 people filled in these surveys, across three key groups.

This is a good number to begin to make some conclusions from, however as the surveys were almost exclusively collected from people in 3 main groups, we can only extrapolate across these groups. We have demonstrated this below, with some discussion on the next page.

Habitat improvements as a result of Froglife’s River Nene Dragonfinder <i>Assumptions of total numbers - extrapolated</i>			
Group	Make a new pond	Improve my old pond	Make other improvements to my garden
Dragon Boat Tour	40	32	218
Volunteer Days	31	311	374
Wildlife Workshops (Landowner Groups only)	246	118	296
Other	0	0	0
Total	318	462	887

A comparison can be made to the results from Froglife’s Wildlife Workshops in London, which ran as part of the London Dragon Finder project to a similar format, targeting allotment groups and community garden groups in particular. While in the River Nene area 34% of those attending Wildlife Workshops pledged to make a pond on their feedback

form, in London this was 46% by attendance. This total was investigated in several different ways and appeared to be a reasonable assumption.

While we cannot be certain if they will all be built, the total for River Nene Dragon Finder at 34% or 246 new ponds as a result of Wildlife Workshops appears to be conservative by comparison to London.

Cautious conclusions

As a result of Froglife's River Nene Dragon Finder, roughly

318 people will make a new pond in their private domain,

462 people will make improvements to their old pond,

887 will make other improvements to their garden.



Q4 Did people change their feelings about amphibians and reptiles as a result of the workshops?



We asked participants to use their own words to describe their feelings.

'As a result of this workshop, how do you feel about:-

a) Frogs, toads and newts

b) Snakes and lizards'

The question about feelings attracted more written results than any other question.

These answers might be used in future projects to enable grouping some responses to allow for numerical assessment. However, feelings being a very subjective matter, the actual words used are always very valuable. Below is a snapshot of the active words used.

Word count - common active principle in individual comments:

Informed/learnt/know/understanding	14
Interested	11
Love	7
Good/fine/nice	7
OK	5
Fascinated	4
Positive	4
Like	4
Want Some	3

Observations on feelings

- ***There were many positive responses for both groups***
- ***Many people listed 'like them' or 'fantastic'***
- ***A small number of people noted that their feelings had not changed for both categories, mainly in the positive***
- ***There were a few negative responses for 'snakes and lizards' (approx 7%)***
- ***There was only 1 negative response, and 1 mixed, for 'frogs, toads and newts'***
- ***Some people noted that they felt less negative about 'snakes and lizards' as a result of the workshop.***

Some of these comments regarding feelings about snakes and lizards shows that the workshop had helped people to overcome concerns about these:

- *Perhaps not so frightening*
- *I'm not a fan of snakes but I respect them!*
- *Much more aware. Would be wary of certain reptiles*
- *not scary and happy!*
- *Not keen on snakes but like to see from afar*
- *I still wouldn't cuddle them.*
- *Less afraid of them*
- *realise their benefits but don't like*
- *Still nervous of them but happy to hear they are not very big!*
- *more confident in identifying adders etc*
- *Less scared*

As additional evidence of improvements in feelings, we can see the high level of commitments made earlier to improving habitat for these animals as a result of this workshop. This commitment is particularly evident in that over a third of people across all groups committed to make an improvement to their garden of some kind - including those attending Dragon Boat Tours and other workshops which did not concentrate on garden improvements.

Conclusion

There is some gentle evidence of an improvement of many people's attitudes and empathy towards amphibians and to a certain extent towards snakes as a result of these workshops.



A selection of responses: as a result of this workshop, how do you feel about:

Frogs, toads and newts	Snakes and lizards
Like them	Like them too
We are excited to find them now	ditto
Want to make a space in our garden with info that we have been given	
Wish I had some in my garden	Perhaps not so frightening
They're cute but I wouldn't want to touch them!	As above
I feel I have a far greater understanding of frogs, toads and newts following this event	"
Appreciation of the variations in them, desire to find out more and potentially get involved in their habitat preservation	A continued interest, especially in lizards
Have loads in the garden and look after them already	Enjoy them, try to see them
Have always been interested in amphibians and reptiles since childhood	As above, particularly slow worms
I now know more what a newt looks like and the difference between them	I still wouldn't cuddle them
I can now tell the difference between different newt species	I know where to look for them
More appreciation of the types	An appreciation of their habitats and living conditions
Need protecting	
Very interested	Very interested
Learnt a lot more, feel they are very interesting	As above
Love em!	Love em!
Always liked them	Love snakes + lizards
Want some	Enjoyed seeing
More educated. Great, motivating, positive experience	Great for the kids
Interesting creatures - learnt a lot	Interesting creatures - learnt a lot
Good	realise their benefits but don't like
Useful in the garden	Ambivalent
Fascinated, will learn more	ditto
Much more knowledgeable about different habitats etc	Much more aware. Would be wary of certain reptiles
Sad not more	
I did not know a lot but now I know a lot more	ditto
Re-awakened my interest	Better informed
I just love them	ditto
would be very sad to lose these	ditto
Glad to have them in our pond	ditto
More positive	ditto
Still scared	Still scared
Looking forward to identifying	more confident in identifying adders e
Protective	Protective
Inspired and enthused	Inspired and enthused

Section Two

River Nene Dragon Finder

Project Details and Case Studies



5) Swimming with Dragons - Project Study

Catherine Duerden

Swimming with Dragons was designed to engage young audiences with conservation in an innovative way. The sessions were particularly targeted at areas of Huntingdonshire and Fenland where there were fewer nature reserves and country parks for other Dragon Finder activities to take place in.

The sessions were held at indoor swimming pools, and taught participants about food chains, life cycles and the pond habitat, as well as how to identify several amphibian and reptile species.

The session format and activities were altered from the original plan based on feedback from pools, and staff experience as more were delivered by both the River Nene Dragon Finder project and their counterparts in London and Scotland. The final activities used on the majority of sessions are described below.

The method of delivering public sessions had to be altered as swimming pools did not want the session to be in the open 'family fun' slots as the demonstration session had been. This meant that sessions had to be reduced to 1 hour to fit into pool timetable gaps, and public participants had to book to attend, instead of it being a 'drop in' session, to ensure enough people would be there outside of normal public times to make the session viable. Many centres, including some that had expressed interest during the development stage, also wanted to charge a pool hire fee, which there was not budget for, and so had to be rejected.

It was found that school groups provided larger participant numbers than the public sessions, and were slightly easier to arrange as the schools already had pool slots booked for swimming lessons. The school Swimming with Dragons session was generally condensed into 30 minutes so that two classes of ~30 could be accommodated in a one hour slot. The same number of games were included, but repeated fewer times. Learning was enhanced at some schools by delivering Wildlife Workshops to classes beforehand.

Swimming with Dragons activities

Based on recommendations from the established Dragon Finder projects, no inflatables were included in the equipment as they are not permitted in the majority of swimming pools, and no marginal habitat props were used due to health and safety concerns regarding access and obstruction of the pool side.

As the sessions were no longer 'drop-in' they could be delivered in a more structured way, with a staff member on the poolside giving instructions, and one or two staff members in the water to help facilitate. The use of A3 laminated species photos worked well to give more context before each game started, by illustrating life stages, for example, and provided additional identification learning opportunities which were tested in a quiz near the end.

The shallow end of the pool was roped-off to prevent floats and participants straying too far, and activities took place across the pool width.

The following games were found to be the most successful, and were generally run in this order:

Newt challenge (Figure 1)

This relay-race starts with three teams lined up, sitting on the poolside (the weakest swimmers are in the team closest to the pool wall). Each participant is a newt overcoming the obstacles of their habitat to get to the tadpoles on the opposite side of the pool to eat them (bring them back to their team). They first slalom in-between the reeds (weighted streamers), then swim through the weighted hoop, over or under the log (woggle), grab a tadpole float from the lily pad and bring it back through the same obstacles. The tadpole is placed on the side before the next team member starts, and the first team to put all their tadpoles on the side, wins!



Figure 1: Collecting a tadpole in the 'newt challenge' relay race.

Snake and frogs (Figure 2)

The in-water facilitator has a snake shaped float (Figure 3) and starts in the middle of the pool. Participants are frogs trying not to be eaten by the grass snake, and start in the water holding onto one pool edge (if there is a small number of participants they may hold on to a lily pad float instead). At the blow of the whistle, participants swim to the opposite side of the pool, avoiding the snake. If caught, they must join the snake, so the snake gets bigger the more it eats (they should link arms or hold the snake float and use team work to catch the rest). The game ends when there is one winner left, or everyone has been 'eaten'.



Figure 2: Participants as frogs, trying to avoid being 'eaten' by the grass snake.

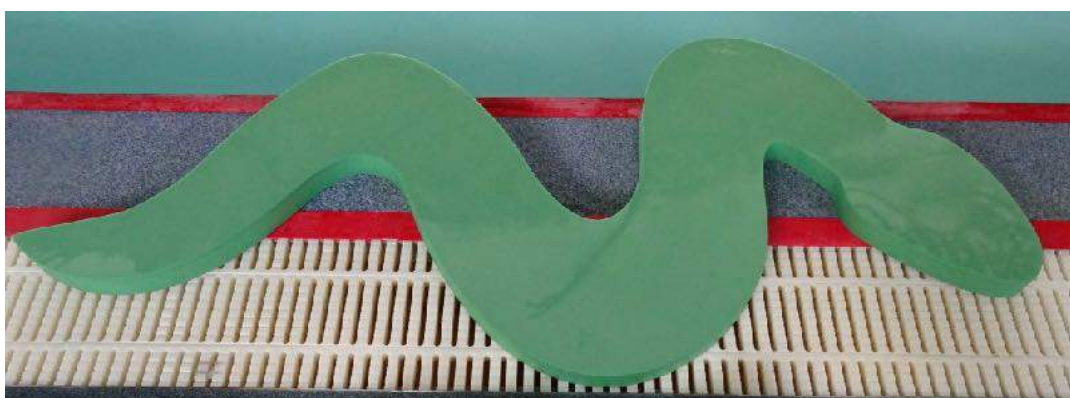


Figure 3: Snake shaped float used in the 'snake and frogs' game.

Tadpole treasure hunt (Figure 4)

Before this game starts, the in-water facilitator distributes the dive sticks/balls around the pool. Whilst this takes place the poolside instructor runs a series of quiz questions to distract participants and test their learning. They are shown a picture, then given a choice of two answers. If they are in the water they swim to either the left or right, if they are on the poolside they can put their hands up or on their head, according to which answer they choose. A follow up question of 'Why is this the correct answer? Which features does it have?' is also used.

The group is then split into their three teams, with each team assigned specific colours of dive stick/ball (representing a tadpole's food such as water fleas and algae). The participants are all hungry tadpoles (if there are enough tadpole floats for one each, these may be held onto throughout the game). When the whistle blows, everyone swims around looking for food. When a piece of food of the correct colour is found, the 'tadpole' must collect it from the pool floor, swim back and add it to their team's pile on the side before going to find another. Only one piece can be carried at once, and if it is the wrong colour it must be thrown back in (a member of staff monitors this). The first team to collect all of their food wins.



Figure 4: The 'tadpole treasure hunt' game in progress.



Figure 5: Examples of the dive sticks/balls and flame balls representing 'tadpole food'.

Host venues

The swimming pools where the sessions took place are shown on Map 1.

To summarise, Swimming with Dragons was hosted by:

- 1 pool in Fenland (Cambridgeshire)
- 1 pool in Peterborough
- 3 pools in Huntingdonshire (Cambridgeshire)
- 1 pool in Lincolnshire

Feedback

Feedback tokens

The use of feedback tokens began in the 3rd Swimming with Dragons session. Each participant was given a token as they exited the water and asked to put it in the pot that showed how they felt, represented by the coloured frog expressions on the side of the pots (Figure 6). In total from the 19 sessions, 90% of participants enjoyed themselves, 9% thought it was ok, and 1% disliked the session.

Verbal feedback

Does that mean it's nearly the end? Aww... this is fun!

School pupil, Park Lane Primary

It's something different for the children and they clearly enjoyed it! For a lot of the Year 3's, that was their first time in a swimming pool, but it went really well. Thank you.

School teacher, Park Lane Primary



Figure 6: Feedback pots containing the tokens given to participants as they exit the pool.

Outcomes around Learning, Awareness and Empathy

Learning during each game

The introductory talk before the 'newt challenge' covered the identification of frogspawn, toadspawn and tadpoles, followed by each of the three newt species, the terms 'predator' and 'habitat', and that newts like to eat tadpoles.

Before the 'snake and frogs' game, the identification of common frogs, common toads and grass snakes was discussed, and that grass snakes eat frogs. This in particular increased participants' empathy as they were put in jeopardy, like the frogs.

More detail about tadpole identification was mentioned before the final game, and that tadpoles will eat algae, then insects such as water fleas. The quiz then tested what had been learnt, and as discussed below, showed that awareness had increased.

Quiz results

In the school groups that had previously taken part in Wildlife Workshops, pupils almost always got all the answers correct, and many were keen to put up their hands with suggestions of identification features, often getting these correct.

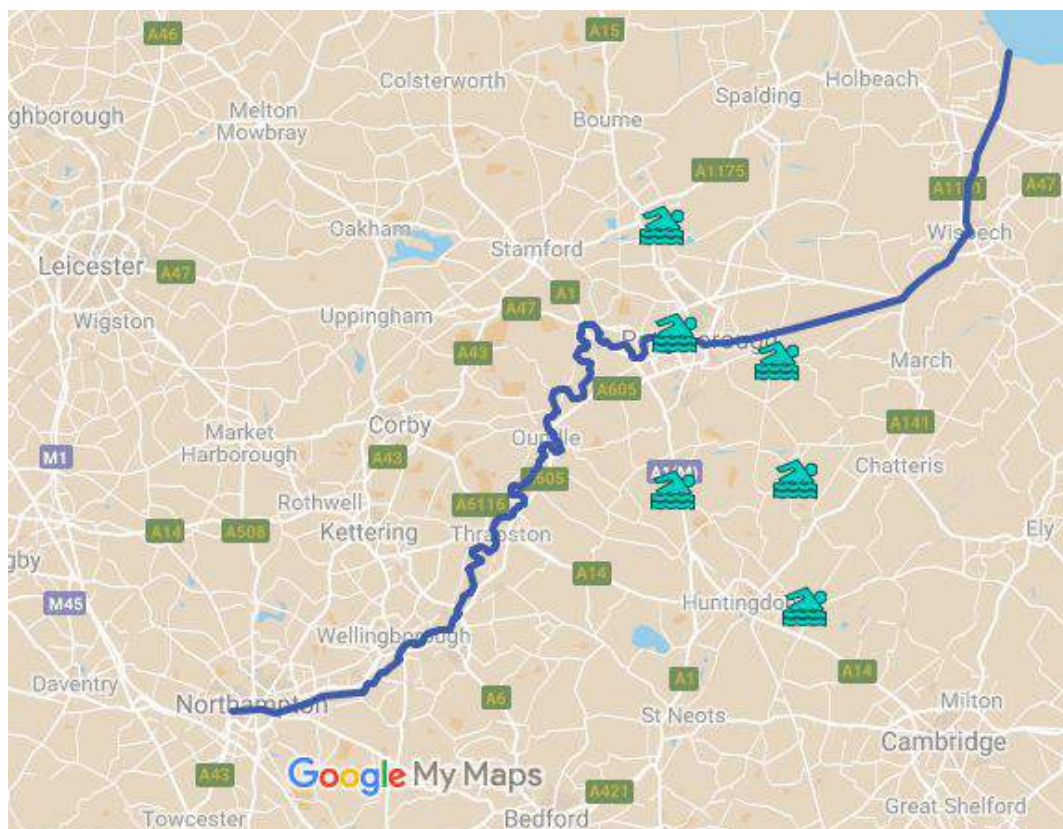
In the groups who had not had any previous involvement with Froglife activities, results varied depending on how noisy the pool environment was, how well the group paid attention and how close the participants were to the A3 pictures during the explanations. The smaller group sizes did the best, as they could all clearly see the images and were close enough to hear easily when the features were being described, even in noisier pools.

The first Sawtry group were the least successful in the quiz, as the poolside was cramped so participants couldn't see the photos very easily, and the close proximity to each other made them more difficult to keep quiet. This was corrected for the second group, who were in the pool for the talk, meaning the poolside facilitator could walk along the edge to show everyone more easily. Almost all these participants answered correctly.

Audience diversity

A record was not kept of audience demographics, but several groups included participants with additional learning needs such as autism. These participants joined in fully, although sometimes required extra encouragement from specific teaching assistants on the poolside.

Two groups were solely composed of children with disabilities taking part in the water with their siblings and parents. Combined feedback taken results from these groups indicated 18 participants enjoyed themselves and 3 thought it was ok, with no-one disliking the session.



Map 1: Swimming with Dragons session locations, from north to south, in: Market Deeping, Peterborough, Whittlesey, Ramsey, Sawtry and St Ives. **Project Study - River Nene Mapestry**

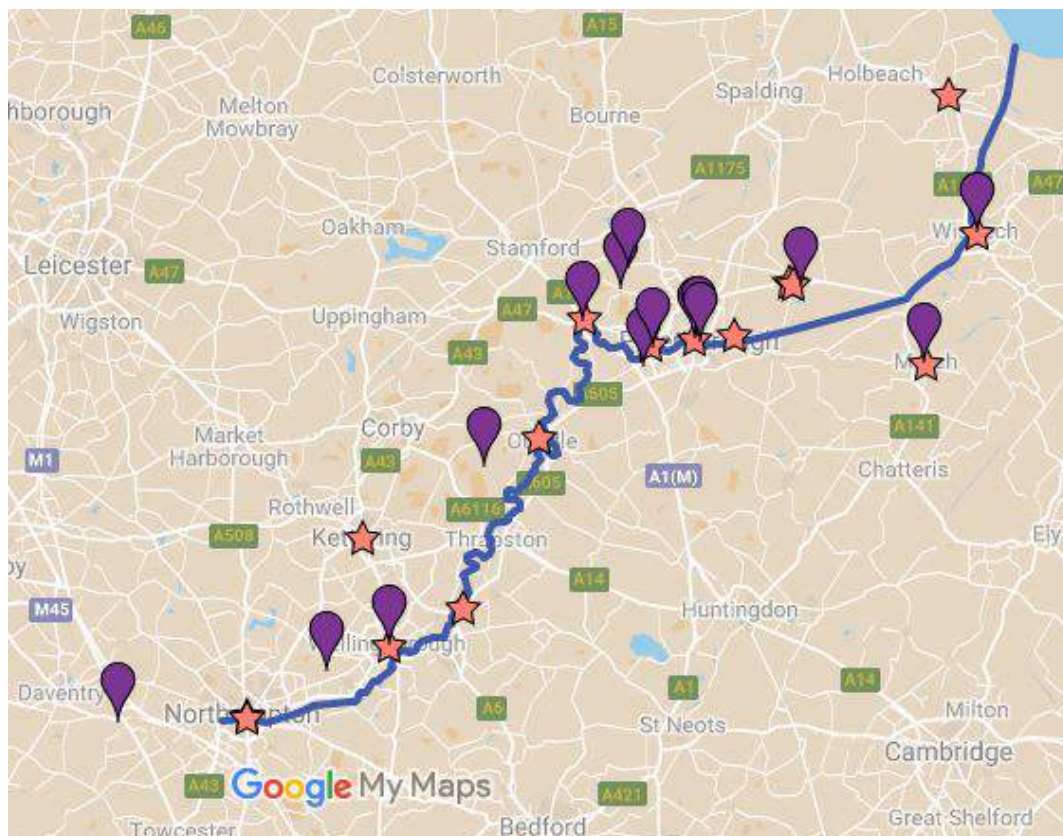
6) Mapestry - Project Study

Catherine Duerden

The Froglife River Nene Dragon Finder 'Mapestry' is a series of 12 textile panels illustrating the River Nene and its wildlife, history and culture.

The tapestry gathered together local people's memories and impressions of the area and highlights differences between parts of the river. The Mapestry was a new project for Froglife and it has successfully achieved its aim of bringing people together to celebrate and record the diversity of life in the Nene Valley.

The stars on Map 2 show all 15 venues that hosted the Mapestry creation workshops, contributing to the 12 location panels - one per month, representing: Northampton, Wellingborough, Kettering, Stanwick, Oundle, Sacrewell, Ferry Meadows, Peterborough, Thorney, March, Wisbech and Long Sutton.



Mapestry creation

Creative workshops were held in different locations along the Nene during each month in 2015, where 1019 local people put their own stamp on the project and represented their area and wildlife. The workshops were run by Liliane Taylor, a professional textile artist, and supported by the River Nene Dragon Finder team.

Method:

1. Cut the background material to size, draw the outline landscape in pencil then colour with fabric paint and leave to dry.



2. Get creative! Think about the key buildings and features of the local area, how to represent the season, or have a go at making an animal or person - you could create a paper template first, or just go straight for the fabric - sewing, gluing, cutting and drawing, anything goes!



3. Lay out everyone's pieces and arrange into a scene. When you're happy, glue it all in place so it won't fall off!



4. Finally, sew all the pieces onto the background, adding extra detail with the machine's stitches using a technique called 'free-machine embroidery'. Neaten the edges by sewing on a back panel, add hanging loops and it's ready to go on display!



The 12 finished Mapestry panels became a lasting reminder of the changing places and seasons they were made in and also depicted amphibian and reptile movements through the year. The display was then taken on tour around 16 different venues in the area, plus repeat visits to two well-attended country shows, and was seen by 58,613 people in total (see 2 purple markers)³

Completed River Nene Mapestry panels



Top: Jan – Northampton, Feb – Wellingborough, Mar – Kettering.
 Bottom: Apr – Stanwick Lakes, May – Oundle, Jun – Sacrewell Farm.



Top: Jul – Ferry Meadows, Aug – Peterborough, Sep – Thorney.
 Bottom: Oct – March, Nov – Wisbech, Dec – Long Sutton.

Feedback

Comments book

A comments book was placed alongside the Mapestry display during the tour.

The following is a small selection of the comments received:

***I'm delighted we've been able to show this beautiful tapestry here in St John's.
Thank you Froglife!***

A. Williams

***How lovely! What a fantastic way of representing your community so
creatively – very impressed.***

S. Gray

***Absolutely brilliant!!! Gorgeous final project & I bet the process was great fun
too! More please! 😊***

A. Cross

***A wonderful & inspiring piece of work by all concerned. A beautiful depiction of
our changing seasons. Love the newts!!***

R. Proudfoot

***Viewed the River Nene Tapestry. What a beautiful depiction of the river and
adjacent towns & attractions.***

G. Walker

***What a fabulous project celebrating so much of what is precious: wildlife,
communities & creativity.***

Y. Rogers

So colourful. Makes me glad to be alive and living near the Nene. Uplifting!

P. Larke

***A very informative exhibition – lovely collage work which truly represents the
area. V. well done.***

H. & J. Roberts

***This is the 3rd time that I've seen this exhibition – there's always something
different to discover. Well done!***

B. Werrington

***Brilliant to see how other people view the towns we live in, and appreciate the
significance of the river.***

C. Upwell

Mapestry tour display examples



St John's Church



John Clare Cottage



Peterborough Museum



Sywell Country Park



Thorney Park Farm



Cathedral Visitor Centre



Key Theatre



The Booksmith

Outcomes on awareness and empathy - reactions and learning points

Learning during the creation sessions

The format of the Mapestry creation sessions allowed Froglife staff time to explore the topics of amphibian and reptile conservation, how people feel about these species, and the importance and value of the River Nene and its surrounding landscape, during informal chats with participants. The relaxed environment meant discussions could continue freely without the pressures and time constraints normally associated with a talking at a stall or workshop. By engaging in the creative process, people also tended to stay much longer than they might at a traditional information stand, allowing them time to think of their own questions too.

People were encouraged to think about and make things that they already knew about and associated with the area, but also to learn about other animals, particularly through contributing to the calendar of amphibian and reptile behaviour. Books, guides and photos were available to use, and staff were on-hand to help and encourage. This allowed participants to learn about identification features, lifecycles and habitat preferences of various species that could be found near them, that they may not have known about before.

An increase in empathy for amphibians, reptiles and their habitats was encouraged by illustrating the different situations the animals have to deal with, such as hiding underground from the snow in January, amphibians crossing a road in the month of March, and a frog trying to escape from a grass snake in October.

Project Manager James McAdie comments: *"The most pleasing thing about the Mapestry has been its appeal to all ages and never was this more apparent than at a session run at Nene Park where three generations sat all afternoon happily contributing to the final panel. The lady after the session thanked us and said that it was a wonderful experience to be able to sit and craft things alongside her mother who suffered with dementia and to also have her daughter helping out enthusiastically."*

Reactions from the Mapestry tour

As can be seen from the comments book feedback (above), the Mapestry was very well received and appreciated, both for its beauty and creative depictions of the theme.

It appears to have inspired visitors to reflect positively on how they feel about the area and the river, as well as considering the views of the makers themselves. This would suggest an increase in empathy towards the subject, and a greater awareness of how important this landscape is, both for wildlife and the people who share it.

The Mapestry has also been used at several different Dementia cafés where participants are encouraged to discuss wildlife experiences, often prompted by items they recognise on the panels. Their memories are recorded and shared on Wildlife Memory postcards that have contributed to the project's Wildlife Memory video.

As well as the host of different wildlife creations on the Mapestry there are also many recognisable local landmarks that have been created and these have prompted participants to reminisce about places along the River Nene and share personal stories about growing up.

One session at a Sue Ryder run dementia café resulted in an individual, who had enjoyed drawing as a child, being inspired to pick up her pencils and to sketch the Mapestry in front of her.



Audience diversity

Participant and visitor demographics were not recorded individually, however there was a mixture of pre-arranged groups as well as members of the public, covering the whole spectrum of ages and abilities, from very young children, to experienced older sewing groups recorded on the project's spreadsheet.

Some of the groups that have participated and contributed to the Mapestry have included:

Women's Institute, U3A, Stitch clubs, Special needs Primary schools, Special needs Secondary school, Beavers, Cubs, Dementia cafés and Alzheimer's support groups.

Future of Mapestry

Due to the success of Mapestry as a project in the River Nene Dragon Finder, the project is being recreated in the new London project Froglife is carrying out - London T.O.A.D.

7) Wildlife Workshops - Project Study

The aims of the Wildlife Workshops were originally detailed in the River Nene Dragon Finder Activity Plan 2013/14 at the beginning of the project:

- *Engage all the different types of land owner / manager found along the River Nene and within the project area. This will include: farmers, council staff, community groups, friends of groups, gardeners, conservation managers, and allotment holders.*
- *Give participants the knowledge and impetus to make positive changes to their land for the benefit of amphibians, reptiles, and other wildlife.*
- *Enable participants to identify and record amphibians and reptiles on their land, thus helping to build a reliable data set for these species.*

The Wildlife Workshops were developed from a format found successful in London Dragon Finder, with the addition of the new large scale models of common reptiles and amphibians. These proved very popular in helping to identify animals, and creating a physical point of engagement. Participants also received paper guides to take away on pond building, garden ideas, and identifying amphibians.



Who attended?

The 2014 Activity Plan set a pre-project target of 675 people participating in Wildlife Workshops, with a target audience of landowners.

In fact, like all their targets on the Nene, Froglife exceeded this target substantially. and reached **1981 people with 104 workshops**, nearly three times as many as were originally expected.

Wildlife Workshop Attendance			
Segment	Groups	Events	Attendance
Landowner Groups 729 people	Adult & children (other)	30	503
	Adults group (other)	15	226
Disability Groups 259 people	Adults learning disabilities	2	14
	Children with disabilities + their families	3	63
	Dementia group	9	158
	Neurological Day Service group	2	24
	Young Adults Group	1	28
Children and young people's groups 993 people	Nursery	1	22
	Children's Group (other)	14	247
	School Group	27	696
Total			1981

The original target group for Wildlife Workshops of 'landowners' was set in order to support better landscape scale conservation of the River Nene area, including through farmers, conservation agencies, gardeners and allotment holders. The Workshops hence provide a crossover between enabling awareness raising alongside physical improvements.

Wildlife Workshops were highly popular. As a result they were delivered to a much wider range of groups than the original landowner group. To consider the impact on audiences, we have segmented these into 3 groups - delineated in the colours in the chart above and in more detail overleaf.

1) Froglife met, and exceeded the original target of 675 people in **landowner groups**, delivering 45 workshops to 729 adults, and accompanying children. These were through groups like Hampton allotment pictured above, or Friends of Worts Meadow, and through advertised drop in activities, at central locations for example, March Library. See discussion below, and the case study of the Yelvertoft group for an understanding of how these typically made an impact.



2) Froglife then used these workshops as a base to engage with **disability groups**, particularly, using its experience collecting memories to prompt reminiscence with Dementia Sufferers and people with different Neurological conditions, often affecting their communications. Through 16 workshops, 259 attendees were engaged, including three follow on workshops giving some cross over. See the case study of the Sue Ryder groups at Thorpe Hall for more discussion of how these helped.



3) In response to requests, in the final year Froglife delivered Wildlife Workshops to **school and children's groups**, like the Beavers shown left, engaging 993 children through 43 workshops. Unlike many of Froglife's other programmes, the River Nene Dragon Finder did not include a specific strand targeting school groups, and the Wildlife Workshops have been utilised to fulfil this need.



There is clearly cross-over between the three groups above, for example school teachers may be gardeners, manage school gardens, or belong to open space groups, and dementia sufferers or their carers might themselves have gardens, and smallholdings, children may take information home and lobby their parents to take action. Conversely, many of those attending the considered landowner groups may not themselves have any impact on the local landscape.

However the feedback forms and progress monitoring quiz assessments were exclusively used with the landowner groups only. For that reason it is this segment we have concentrated on in making assumptions and extrapolations about the impact of this project.

Wildlife Workshop Format

(based on notes from Catherine Duerden)

Individual Quiz sheet to test prior knowledge - used with around 40 of the students.

Identification and Behaviour Discussion

We start with a talk using A3 laminated pictures of the UK's commoner amphibian and reptile species and their various life-stages, sometimes we use the large models to support this as shown below. Participation is generally encouraged by asking questions throughout, such as 'Does anyone know what this is?', 'Which animal might have laid these eggs?', 'How might this animal escape from predators?', 'What differences can you see between these two animals?' etc. The pictures may be passed around the group for a closer look and we usually mention the Dragon Finder app at the end of this section.

Habitat Creation Workshop.

Following this, we go through a second set of A3 slides about features to include in a wildlife friendly garden, again encouraging participation where possible via questions. This leads on to the main activity where they split into four groups and create a model garden layout using a toolkit of materials – small pictures of the features mentioned in the talk, small sticks, lollypop sticks, green pompoms, blue foam pond shapes, small pebbles (some decorated as frogspawn), model hibernacula, and plasticine. Staff circulate around the room helping as needed, explaining and giving tips.

At the end one person from each group explains their garden to the rest of the room and staff can help to point out good features.

Final Quiz sheet, using the same questions to test learning. Self marking, This was filled in by 40 people.

Some groups received a follow up, either a surveying training, or a Mapestry session. All groups had plenty of time to ask questions. Participants all received lots of useful information to take away.



Wildlife Workshop Case Study 1 - Yelvertoft Pocket Park & Jo Gamble

Yelvertoft Pocket Park (YPP) is a vibrant nature-focused community in the village of Yelvertoft between Northampton and Coventry. In 2015, Froglife helped to install a new pond here as focused amphibian habitat, along with the original pond, which had since become colonised by fish. In 2018 Froglife ran a Wildlife Workshop and Survey training on a cold March evening in this public nature preserve.



Jo Gamble is a key facilitator for the YPP community, a long term local resident, committed and passionate volunteer. In between supporting her family, and her day job as a conservation professional in Northampton, Jo manages the site and works with other residents to fundraise and improve the habitat for people and wildlife, running appropriate events and raising awareness of the thriving habitats here.

Jo supported and attended with her sons, Harry and Charlie, and her retired parents. We spoke to her to discover the impact on her family and community a year on. All quotes and photos are hers unless specified.

Learning

Jo found the Wildlife Workshop and Survey training **really good**, she remembered everything and really liked the habitat design workshop and the different activities. She herself gained lots of ideas and information on how to run her own workshops at the Pocket Park in future.

'It was really good, the models stuck with me, really great hands on visual aids for the scale and detail, I would like some myself. Really good with the people, the little activities were fabulous.'

Another participant enjoyed the activities for different reasons, with relation to her own cottage garden in a nearby village, and the large pond she has in there. Every year she opens the garden for charity and receives many visitors:

'I've just found out the newts in my garden pond are Great Crested Newts - children love their orange bellies. I might do a sign this year.'

Lesley Ling

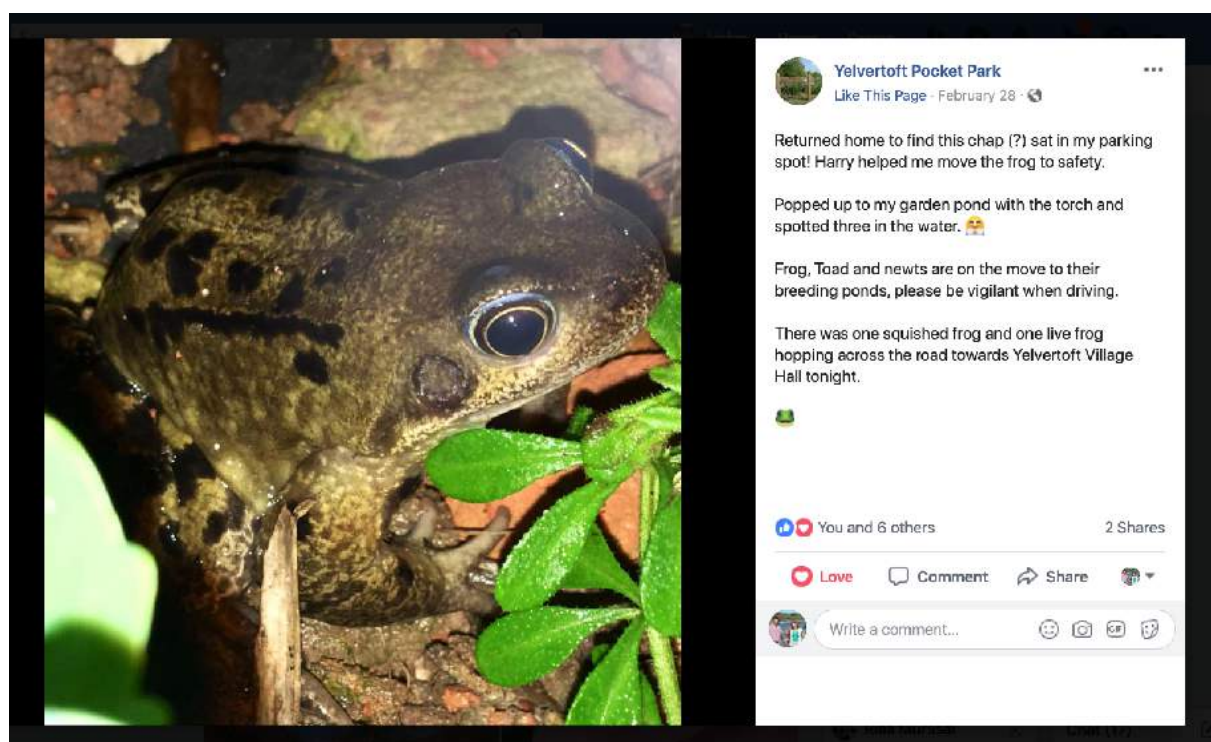
Jo's own parents spend a lot of time at a house in France and they were interested in the habitat creation advice in terms of how they might improve the garden to support the yellow and black salamanders they find in the woods there.

Awareness raising

The most important aspect of the workshop was increasing validity for the habitat creation work that has gone before. Jo and the volunteers she works with did not feel a need to make more habitat as they already had two ponds, a hibernaculum and wild areas of winter cover.

'There has been a lot of talk as a result, within the village on frogs and toads, its a drip feed to increase awareness. A lot of activity on the Facebook page, more people understand why we are doing it, particularly the scruffy bits of long grass some people don't like.'

Brian has been doing a toad patrol for a long time and more people are talking about frogs and toads and understand this'



We talked about the fact that Jo, and her fellow volunteers clearly have knowledge themselves on local wildlife, and the importance of the professional voice in helping to spread awareness.

'It is so helpful to have back up. I'm part of the furniture in the village, they just see me as 'Jo that likes wildlife'. It helps to have someone along who is recognised as an authority - and they'll feed back to you direct afterwards.'

Surveying

Jo herself has been monitoring the pond and environs since the workshop

'Sean and I popped up and checked the Froglife pond the other night. There were seven smooth newts in there! That went on Facebook and there has been a lot of talk as a result.'

The YPP committee is currently applying for funding for an interpretation project, including high power torches which will enable her to run the amphibian survey training herself. This will enable a vital cascade of information towards the specific target of increasing awareness of surveying and taking up surveying.

'I was watching how they ran their workshop. When I get some funding for torches I am going to have informal survey training here, and signposting people to other training'

Habitat Improvements

Jo is not planning specific habitat improvements at Yelvertoft for amphibians because it is already an exemplary site. She emphasised that the most important aspect for them is understanding of these habitats to help protect them.

Other attendees however used the opportunity to consider work they might take on in their own gardens.

'I just moved to a village nearby, and I have 6 acres to keep horses on - I ride with my daughters. I have a wild part I'm thinking of doing something with after this.'

The reason I came is because I'm looking to make contact with the local community as I am new to the area.'

Tania Laugier after the workshop.

Empathy

We explored whether anything could have been better about the workshops and Jo found it hard to make any improvements. However, with the workshop on a cold evening in March, participants only saw one single newt, making the surveying less fulfilling.

'Last time we had an evening with Nathan Coughlan from Froglife, they set some bottle traps and that helped as there was something to see.'

Jo continues to enjoy sharing the experience with her sons Harry and Charlie, aged 13 and 16.

'Every evening after they finish piano we slow down near the village hall looking for toads. I'm sure when they are driving they will slow down there too.'

Jo is ready to spread the understanding further through running her own survey training, however she is seeking funding for torches in order to do this.

Overall comments

The Wildlife Workshop at Yelvertoft Pocket Park helped 12 people of all ages to build their skills and understanding of amphibians, and their habitats, and to make contact with others who share their interest.

The 12 people represented different types of land owned including a small local nature reserve, horse paddocks, and private gardens, with one open to the public.

As a result of the workshop :

There is increased awareness of amphibians and reptiles in the village, through the participants, and through discussion of the publicity put out around it. Participants have learnt to identify the amphibians in their own garden - and corrected assumptions about these. Some participants are planning works to their gardens to improve these for wildlife.



Case Study 2 - Wildlife Workshops for Disability Groups - Sue Ryder, Thorpe Hall Hospice, Angela Exton



Froglife delivered a series of workshops in partnership with the Sue Ryder charity at Thorpe Hall. As day services supervisor Angela Exton represented the clients and their carers here.

'We have always found all the staff from Froglife enthusiastic & happy to share their knowledge with our members.'

They have made learning about frogs, ponds etc so interesting & have always brought tasks with them for our members to try & participate in, which they have all said they had found thoroughly enjoyable & that they had learnt a lot from the experience.'

Froglife brought these activities to Sue Ryder groups clients at Thorpe Hall in Peterborough within the Synergy Cafe for people living with dementia and their carers, as well as the Neurological Day Service for people coping with Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinsons motor neurone disease and other brain conditions.

The purpose of these groups is outlined on the Sue Ryder website:

Our specialist day services support people aged 18 and over with neurological conditions. Our expert staff work with each individual to understand their needs and create a personalised support plan. This includes therapeutic and social activities that provide emotional, social and spiritual support, whilst promoting people's independence and self-confidence.

Coming in for the day can give someone a chance to take part in a fun and stimulating activity, and meet others who understand the experiences they are going through.

<https://www.sueryder.org/how-we-can-help/our-care/neurological-care>

In addition to Sue Ryder, Froglife provided these workshops to groups including The Alzheimer's Society, The Spinney Dementia cafe, and adults with Learning Disabilities based at Huntingdon Community Centre. In total 216 people with disabilities or illness limiting their communication or their carers attended these workshops.

Froglife developed its Wildlife Workshop format, to provide activities suitable for people with difficulty communicating or co-ordinating, and with a focus on socialising.

The activities were based around using the props available to stimulate discussion and group co-ordination. Participants responded well to the excellent and stimulating models, the little tools for the garden design workshop, and the beautiful finished Mapestry, with each panel held up for discription and discussion. Froglife staff also offered pen and paper to those who would like this to help develop their garden designs and ideas.

Outcomes in Learning and Awareness Raising

With support from Froglife staff, clients, and their carers used the props, and the guidance to discuss their own experience of amphibians and their own gardens, usually in smaller groups. In doing so, this involved a strong element of reminiscence over past gardens and countryside experiences.

'It was all at table-top level, just a pleasure to see. Everyone was intent on doing what they were doing. The table-top gardens were like they were thinking about their own gardens.'

'I can't fault them, every time it was different, people were wanting to know more.'

'The best thing was the interaction with the clients, even the young ones interacted. Very approachable. A very good team.'

Study 3 Wildlife Workshops in Schools - Observations

Froglife made a very sensible move in the River Nene Dragon Finder project in using the excellent models, pictures, materials and focus of the Wildlife Workshops to deliver the same format to classes of school children and other children's groups - rather than designing a separate programme for children's groups.

The Wildlife Workshops hence enabled children to learn more about wildlife found in their local neighbourhood, and teachers to fulfil their curriculum requirements around this important area. Catherine Duerden noted these variations and observations:

Froglife staff gave an **introductory talk** as they did in the adult sessions, with the addition of refresher questions such as '*what is a predator?*', '*what does the word hibernate mean?*'. This would help children connect with their existing curriculum learning and ensured everyone understood the terms.

Children often put up their hands, as if answering a question, but actually wanted to tell staff about the school's bug hotel, or seeing a frog in their grandparent's garden etc. or to ask a question of their own, such as '*how long is a boa constrictor?*' This showed a high level of personal engagement, although it did sometimes make the talk quite a bit longer than normal – adult groups were more likely to save their questions for the end or during the practical.

When asked to guess what type of snake was being shown in the pictures, answers were often along the lines of '*boa constrictor*', '*corn snake*', '*anaconda*' suggesting that some children had not yet thought about snakes as wildlife in Britain.



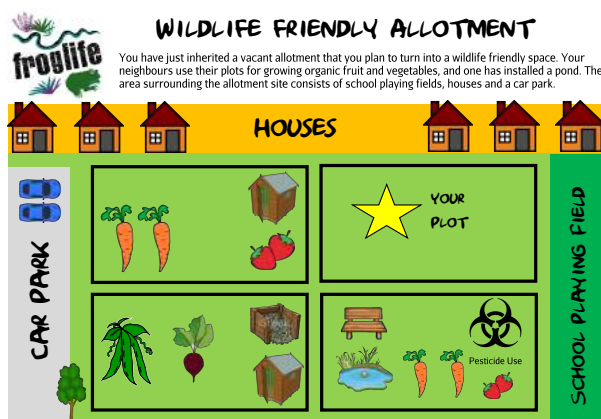
During the **habitat design workshop**, Froglife staff often highlighted issues including: having separate ponds for fish and wildlife; getting pupils to recognise a water butt, what it's for, and that it needs to be next to a roof (e.g. of a shed) to catch rainwater; having places for wildlife to hide; and re-capping some of the species' names and id.



Older pupils were encouraged to use an A3 sheet with a hypothetical garden plan to think about what was around the edge of their garden (e.g. a train track, car park, school, river, industry, or pesticides on a neighbouring allotment).

These scenarios (shown) introduced ideas about habitat connectivity and external influences which did prompt further discussion from some students, particularly about pesticides.

For the youngest groups, using the design kits, the talk was much simpler, with different slides showing fewer species and features. Their talk did involve more actions, however, re-enacting how the animals move. The design workshop was facilitated to get the children thinking about different features of a garden, what the animals look like and where they might live. These were then often followed by a colouring or mask making activity.



The design workshops finished with a 'show and tell' session, allowing staff to gain a good sense of children's learning.

The school teachers helping the groups often commented on learning new things, particularly frequently mentioning that '***fish aren't good for wildlife ponds***'.

At Beavers, Brownies or other groups where there was more time, there was often an outdoor activity such as building a bug hotel, or pond dipping to follow the indoor workshops.



8) Project Study - Dragon Fun Days

Summary

With the River Nene Dragon Finder project, Froglife wanted to reach a broader audience than those who traditionally engage in practical conservation activities, and Dragon Fun Days were developed as part of the strategy to achieve that aim.

Dragon Fun Days included a range of activities (see Figure 1), from crafts to pond dipping, alongside an interactive quiz trail and information stand, and were held at a variety of indoor and outdoor locations along the river.

Targets

Outputs taken from the Activity Plan

- To hold 10 Dragon Fun Days as part of River Nene Dragon Finder.
- To hold the Dragon Fun Days at 10 different sites.
- To engage 1250 people through Dragon Fun Days (125 people at each day).
- Provide a range of activities that will help to engage different audiences at the Dragon Fun Days.

Outcomes taken from the Activity Plan

- Increased public awareness of amphibian and reptile conservation and survey techniques.
- Increased public empathy for amphibians, reptiles, and their habitats.
- Diverse audiences involved in improving the dataset for amphibians and reptiles across the project area.
- People encouraged to take part in practical wildlife conservation.
- Reach audiences that would not normally engage in conservation activities.

Achieved outputs

All target outputs set out in the Activity Plan were exceeded, except the average number of people engaged per event, which was just 4% under the target of 125 (see Table 1). When calculated by location, however, the average number of people engaged was 161% of the target, as seven of the sites held more than one event, meaning this output can also be considered to have been exceeded.

This was primarily due to a change of strategy whereby additional events were held after the original target of 10 had been achieved, some at smaller or lower footfall locations, such as at the New Ark Eco Centre (18 participants). Interestingly, had the average been calculated after the

initial targets of '10 events' or '10 different locations' been met, these targets would have been exceeded, at 121% and 111% respectively.

The repeat locations and bookings at smaller venues were a result of requests for more Froglife events after a previous Dragon Fun Day, Wildlife Workshop or talk. This shows that the activities on offer must have been engaging and enjoyable, and were perceived as a success by venue staff.

Table 1: Dragon Fun Day outputs measured against the target outputs in the Activity Plan.

	Target	Actual	Difference	% of target
Total Dragon Fun Day events	10	27	+ 17	270%
Number of different locations	10	16	+ 6	160%
Total number of people engaged through Dragon Fun Days	1250 (10 x 125)	3324	+ 2074	266%
Average number of people engaged per event	125	Mean: 119.4 Range: 18 to 415	- 5.6	96%
Average number of people engaged per location	125	Mean: 201.5 Range: 18 to 779	+ 76.5	161%

Dragon Fun Day activities

Activities run at each Dragon Fun Day varied based on the location type, event size and expected age range of participants. The activities suggested in the original Activity Plan were modified, updated and built upon based on subsequent experiences, but as per the target a range of activities were provided at each event to engage different audiences.

Dragon Trail (Figure 1 a - e)

The core activity offered at almost all of these events was the Dragon Trail, which was suitable for all ages and evolved from an initial idea developed during the London Dragon Finder project. It comprised a series of interactive 'quiz' stages which taught participants about the lifecycle stages of amphibians (parts 1 and 2), how to identify and survey newts (part 3), how to identify and survey reptiles (part 4), where amphibians might live outside of the pond (part 5), and about the defence mechanisms of toads, frogs and grass snakes (part 6). Where space was limited, the trail was easily shortened to just parts 1, 2, 3 and 6. This flexibility allowed the activity to take place both indoors and outdoors.

It was initially attempted to make this a self-led trail, by giving a question sheet to participants to take around with them, however this was not felt to be effective. Everyone required assistance in using the unfamiliar torch and identification guides, and the trail often had to be repeated to allow staff to effectively explain the answers. The trail was also found to be more engaging when staff

posed the questions as they could give immediate feedback and provide additional interesting facts. This reduced guessing, encouraged participants to get more involved in the experience, and greatly increased the learning value of the trail.

Pond dipping (Figure 1 f)

At sites with easily accessible water, pond dipping could be offered in addition to some of the other activities. This always proved to be popular and helped to draw in people who weren't as interested in the craft activities.

Crafts (Figure 1 g & h)

The most effective and therefore most commonly used craft activities at the Dragon Fun Days were: frog and toad 'Pebble Pals', and colouring in headband 'masks' of frogs, toads and adders.

Both of these provided fun, creative opportunities to learn about species identification features such as the frog's dark eye mask, smooth skin and striped back legs; the toad's golden eyes and bumpy skin; and the adder's zig-zag pattern, red eyes and colour variation between males and females. The instruction sheets for the Pebble Pals and the reverse side of the masks were ideal places to include additional facts about each species as well as the Froglife and National Lottery Heritage Fund logos.

Host venues

A full list of venues are shown on Map 1.

To summarise, the Dragon Fun Days were hosted by:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| - 4 nature reserves | - 1 heritage location | - 2 country shows |
| - 4 country parks | - 1 eco centre | |
| - 1 local park | - 1 retail park | |
| - 1 museum | - 1 farm attraction | |

Discussion of outcomes

Awareness and empathy - public reactions and learning points

Dragon Trail (Figure 1 a - e)

The visual appeal and hidden nature of the Dragon Trail, particularly parts 1, 2 and 3, provided excellent starting points for engagement, with intrigued adults (even those without children), as well as young people, coming over to see what was inside the boxes. Upon being told it was part of a quiz, most people were keen to test their knowledge, especially in telling apart the different amphibian eggs in part 1, from which the other stages naturally followed. After this initial interaction they then stayed to ask questions, discuss relevant topics and pick up information booklets, thus improving their awareness further.

The presentation of the tadpoles and baby newt (left) in part 2 of the Dragon Trail was very effective in promoting both empathy and awareness, with many people asking if they were real. The cut-out laminated pictures were roughly life-size and looked 3D as they were slightly raised from the bottom of the tin using blu-tac, creating a shadow. Most people initially identified the frog and toad tadpoles the wrong way around, and were often surprised to learn the differences when explained by staff, perhaps because frog tadpoles are commonly uniformly black in children's book illustrations.

Awareness of survey techniques was built up through the Dragon Trail, particularly during parts 3 and 4. The use of an actual survey torch helped to add a memorable and intriguing aspect to the task, and the enclosed box effectively demonstrated how the identification of species could be difficult in a pond at night. The reptile survey in part 4 could have been more effectively demonstrated in a larger area if more mats had been spread out, with one species under each, as this would show the 'walking transect' aspect of a survey better. Just using two mats, however, was still a good introduction to the concept of surveying using reptile refugia, particularly with staff explanations of technique such as not to cast a shadow on the mat, approaching quietly, and lifting and replacing the mat gently.

As well as showing another possible survey technique, part 5 of the Dragon Trail aimed to make participants aware that amphibians do not live in the water all year round, and need good habitats on land too in order for conservation to be successful. These laminated pictures were hidden under a log, but other suitable environments were also explained by staff, encouraging participants to think about incorporating these into their own greenspaces.

The final part of the Dragon Trail, was designed for humour as part 6 showed a cartoon toad demonstrating a variety of potential defences (including 'using a helmet and sword for fighting') - they had to work out which was correct. Most of the incorrect answers were used by other species instead, which meant staff could discuss the strategies of frogs and grass snakes as well. This may have increased empathy in addition to awareness as it showed the species' vulnerability, with the toad's skin toxins being an ineffective defence against their modern threat of road traffic, particularly with their shorter legs meaning they can't jump away as quickly as frogs. Discussions sometimes followed about the toad declines research and Toads on Roads project, increasing participants' awareness of conservation issues.

Pond dipping (Figure 1 f)

During the pond dipping activity, young amphibians were found at several sites, which delighted everyone. Having that direct experience was designed to help to increase both empathy and awareness.

Even when there were no amphibians, the smaller water creatures still fascinated participants and provided good opportunities for discussion about food chains, how to use identification charts, and why ponds are important habitats.

Crafts (Figure 1 g & h)

An interaction with a nine year old girl whilst making a 'Pebble Pal' frog at the East of England Showground, illustrates the popularity of this craft activity:

Girl: I want to come here and do this every day! Will you be here again tomorrow?

Froglife staff: No, sorry...

Girl: What about the next day?

Froglife staff: We're only here today I'm afraid...

Girl: Do you only work on Fridays then? Will you be here next Friday?

Froglife staff: We do work every day, but we won't be here again - we go to different places and do lots of different things.

Girl: Ohhh, well can I make another frog now? I'll give it black stripes around its eyes like this one! And I'll make more at home too!

The 'Pebble Pals' were particularly good at encouraging empathy due to their cute appearance. This was not only effective with children, as shown by a lady in her 60's or 70's at the King's Dyke nature reserve Dragon Fun Day who made a pebble frog herself, then came back later to make a pebble toad as she liked the look of them so much. She also took publications, such as Just Add Water, in order to improve her garden for wildlife.

The crafts achieved their main purpose of engaging people with no prior interest in conservation, and also attracting young audiences, which meant that parents and guardians also became engaged. Adults often used the opportunity of their children being occupied to ask questions in more detail than would otherwise have been possible, and also paid a lot of attention to the publications whilst waiting for the craft activity to be completed. This greatly increased their awareness of Froglife and associated issues.

Encouragement in data collection and practical conservation

The Dragon Finder app was promoted at all opportunities during Dragon Fun Days, to encourage as many participants as possible to record the amphibians and reptiles that they see in future. The app cards were handy reminders and were always included on the information stand. The app was also advertised in most of the Froglife publications which were available to pick up for free.

Young people are not normally involved in surveying, so the Dragon Finder app, combined with the Dragon Trail, were great opportunities to introduce the importance of data collection and citizen science at an early age. As the app requires a mobile device, it also engaged parents and guardians as many children did not have their own phone, so they often started nagging the adults about the app immediately.

Equally, much older people may not consider themselves able to do a full survey, but they showed interest in the app as it would give them the opportunity to contribute sightings from their gardens or walks very easily (except those few individuals who 'don't do apps!')

There were plenty of questions from adults about garden ponds, and discussions about creatures and habitats remembered from the past. Many also showed concern at not seeing species as frequently as they used to, and at the declines highlighted by research. The 'Just Add Water' publication was given to everyone who expressed any interest in improving their greenspace, to show them what could be done and encourage them to take the necessary steps. This was well received, and many of the people who took the booklet said they felt inspired to achieve something practical as a result of the day.

As most of the public volunteer days were held in the autumn and winter, when there weren't Dragon Fun Days running, there were usually no upcoming volunteer days to tell participants about at the time of the events. Those who signed up to the newsletter would have heard about opportunities subsequently however.

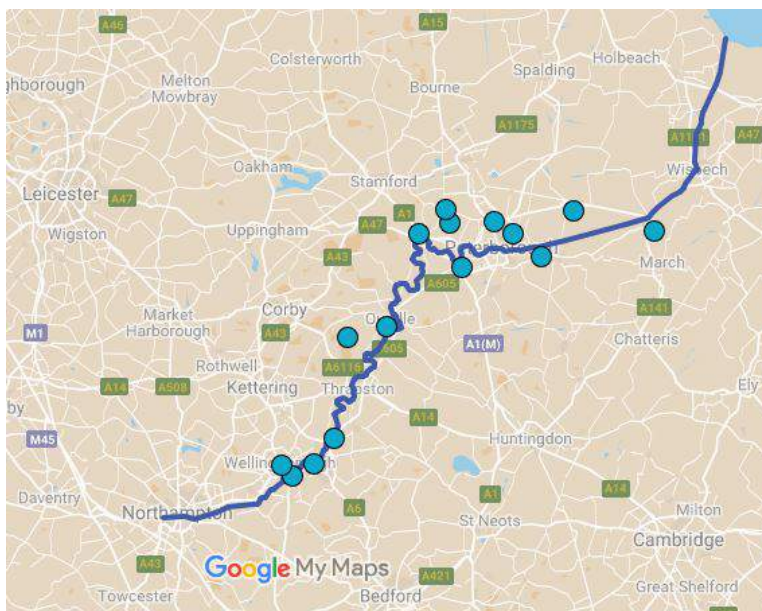
Audience diversity

A record was not kept of audience demographics, but these are some general personal observations:

The least represented groups of people were older teenagers and 18-35's without children. Most sites required car transport to reach them, which may have been a barrier, particularly to teenagers who had grown out of going on days out with their parents. Even at the very popular out of town retail park, accessible by bus, there were hardly any people in these demographics seen. This is in part due to the event taking place during the school holidays, when the 18-35's without children would still have been at work.

The Dragon Fun Day at Wellingborough museum appeared to attract the widest range of income backgrounds, and all with children, probably due to the venue being well known for running free school holiday activities.

Of all the project's activities, the Dragon Fun Days appeared to show the widest range of ethnic diversity in participants. This was partly due to the amount of people worked with, but also the drop-in nature of the days and that they were held at a variety of public locations, so anyone who happened to be there could join in.



Map 1: Dragon Fun Day locations along the River Nene.

9) Future recommendations

Helen Firminger - independent consultant

With the River Nene Dragon Finder, Froglife delivered a range of different activities, with dedicated knowledgeable staff working extremely hard to engage different audiences and exceed expectations.

Although this project achieved very high numbers, **we do not recommend that Froglife increases its base line targets for the next project**, as this will remove room for the element of contingency, for example for staff turnover.

Froglife produced **some highly innovative activities and tools**. It has established and added to the range of tools and learning aids, which help with delivery of these discovery activities. Along with the Dragon Finder monitoring app, and the publications such as 'Just Add Water' Froglife now has models, and the deeply tactile Mapestry project. Froglife should retain and add to these materials, utilising them in further geographical projects (as can already be seen in the London T.O.A.D. project):

The Mapestry project as a resource both to engage and provoke debate in a much wider audience than is possible through direct staff-lead activities, and to create memorable sensory links and catalyse reminiscence among different groups.

The Wildlife Workshops, successful in raising aspirations and understanding among gardeners and private landowners to transform habitat, and to certain extent to teach others about this - Froglife should continue to deliver these workshops in different areas.

Education: Froglife may want to consider developing the work it has carried out **utilising the Wildlife Workshop design and identification materials to deliver workshops to schools**. This could develop to the extent of providing materials to schools and groups to enable them to deliver their own workshops.

Areas that Froglife may want to invest in to a greater extent in future are:

Impact measurement.

Froglife should allow a greater budget to work more closely with an evaluator from an early stage, and to ensure both that feedback forms or other impact measurement is collected across the all project areas, and that there is a strong element of follow up and ground truthing in some of the projects. This will enable a firmer report of the excellent work that Froglife is carrying out, with more definitive impact assessment. It should in addition actually help with staff mentoring to increase these skills in the team.

Work with the farming community.

The audience of 'farmers' was repeatedly mentioned at the Activity Plan stage, however there was very little indication that this audience had been engaged in learning activities. Having contributed so greatly to habitat conservation through those who manage gardens, school gardens, nature parks, and horse paddocks, Froglife might consider how to use its considerable creative powers to develop a specific project to engage more of the large scale landowners and create habitat on a landscape scale.

Work with the Horticultural Industry

'Garden Centres' were initially considered a target venue to deliver Wildlife Workshops. Staff quickly established that most garden centres did not have capacity to support these. However, having established that gardeners are an appropriate and interested audience, Froglife might like to consider other work with the industry to target garden owners at scale. For example, a demonstration pond in a garden centre, a show garden at one of the relevant Garden Shows, talks at some of the garden and home shows, a partnership with a supplier of pond materials.

10) Credits

Thanks are due to all Froglife staff who made this project the multi-faceted success it has been:

- James McAdie
- Ross Edgar
- Nathan Coughlan
- Catherine Duerden
- Alex Kirby Lambert
- Michelle Branson
- Kathy Wormald
- Jenny Tse Leon (*who oversaw the evaluation process*)

With huge gratitude to all the project funders, supporters, and donors, particularly the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Appendix 1 Feedback Form



LONDON T.O.A.D. FEEDBACK

We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Thank you!



Have you ever been involved in nature conservation or action before?				
Yes	A little	No	Yes, I work in nature conservation	Yes, I studied nature conservation
Please give an example of your previous involvement in your own words:				

Awareness and learning: Do you now have more knowledge of the following?				
Threats to UK toads	Yes	A little	No	I knew this already
How to help toads locally	Yes	A little	No	I knew this already
How to survey for toads	Yes	A little	No	I knew this already
How to record sightings using the Froglife app.	Yes	A little	No	I knew this already

Action: As a result of this event, do you plan to take any action? (please circle all that apply)				Please tell us more here:
At home	Make a new pond	Improve my old pond	Make other improvements to my garden	
In public	Use the Froglife App.	Take up surveying	Join a volunteer group	
Learning	Learn more myself	Teach adults about this	Teach a children's group about this	
Other				

Your feelings: As a result of this workshop, how do you feel about toads crossing roads?

Can we contact you through our independent evaluator over the course of the project to see how you are doing. (Privacy statement available) Please leave your details if you accept this:		
Name	Email (optional)	Phone (optional)
And we would be very grateful if you wouldn't mind leaving some demographic information in your own words:		
Ethnicity:-	Any Disability: -	Male/Female
Age - Under 25	Age 25-45	Age 45 and up

Internal use - Allotment **PonDoc** Volunteer MapWork

Appendix 2 - complete list of Wildlife Workshop venues

Huntingdon Community Centre
Little Miracles
Excel Care home
Thorpe Hall
St Botolph's Church, Longthorpe
Ferry Meadows
The Spinney Dementia Café
Sue Ryder Café Stanground
Longthorpe Dementia Café
Thorpe Hall
Noah's Ark
Norwood Nature Reserve March
Hinchingbrooke
Rectory Farm
Ferry Meadows
Green Backyard
Boardwalks NR
Green Backyard
OCAG MS Centre
Hinchingbrooke
Etton-Maxey Pit
Swaddywell
Willow Tree Fen
Parsons new Drove
Stanwick Lakes
The Green Patch
Lyveden New Bield
Barnwell
Rectory Farm
Exotic pet Refuge
Rings End
Sacrewell Farm
Olive Branch Community Garden
Ferry Meadows
March Library
Werrington
St James Ladies Group
Engage Whittlesey

Eye Village group
Cotton Hall, Girton
Hampton allotment
Yelvertoft Pocket Park
Worts Meadow
Engage
Trefoil Whittlesey Library
Sawtry Friends group
Eye Friendship group
Crowland Community Hub
New Ark ECO
Finedon Pocket Park
Beavers Hampton
Cotton Hall, Girton
Park Lane Primary School
Tallington Lakes
Finedon Pocket Park
Hampton CSK Church
Herlington Community Centre/Orton Por
Gretton School, Girton
Hampton Hargate School
Hampton Vale Primary
Park Lane Primary School
Old Fletton Primary School
Hampton Vale Primary
Hampton Gardens School
Stilton Primary School
Nene Valley Primary School
New Road Primary School, Whittlesey
Peterborough Regional College