

natterchat

Froglife's newsletter - amphibians, reptiles & nature news
spring/summer 2017

the volunteering issue

Exploring the benefits
of volunteering and
celebrating our Froglife
volunteers



Plus...An interview with the Froglife Trustees : The volunteers of Froglife nature reserves

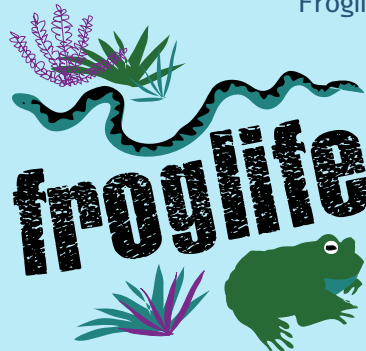
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Help us find dragons...

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

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





I once started off my introduction to a Natterchat edition by saying 'well spring is here again' and asked a writer friend of mine, to review it for me. He instantly

burst into laughter saying 'it is such a boring, but also the most common way to introduce a seasonal newsletter, and quite frankly it is a non-statement'. Well I don't like to think of myself as either boring, common or making non-statements so I am not going to mention the season. Actually that same friend of mine has written the Toads on Roads article for this edition. Have a look at page 16 and please feel free to laugh out loud at any 'boring, common or non-statements'.

This edition is focusing on the dedication, commitment and hard work of an enormous volunteer task force that achieves so much for nature conservation in this country and abroad. Froglife, like every other wildlife conservation charity, would not be able to achieve anywhere near as much as we do without our volunteers. We have volunteers helping us on Hampton and Boardwalks Nature Reserves. On both reserves the volunteers assist with a huge amount of

habitat management and also ensure that a wide range of species including amphibians, reptiles, bats, butterflies, birds and mammals are recorded and monitored for conservation purposes. One of our volunteers, and trustee, Frank Clark has set up cameras across the reserve to record the wildlife using it, and it is fascinating to see how much and varied wildlife there is on this urban reserve which is surrounded by housing. Not to mention the amount of human action, mostly inappropriate, that has also been recorded.

All of our projects rely heavily on volunteers. Our Dragon Finder and Living Water programmes would not have managed to improve the habitats of some 544 wildlife sites in 2015/16 without droves of people turning out, from volunteer groups, friends of and community groups to companies sending out teams of their staff. Together they have transformed 511 hectares of land for wildlife, and completed 1,530 species surveys. In total during this period 3,589 volunteers gave a total of 28,453 hours helping Froglife. It is quite unbelievable.

The Toads on Roads project always generates a lot of interest at this time of the year. Not surprising as it is the time that people are most likely to see the armies of toads crawling along to their breeding

sites. We get lots of requests to help at patrol sites, to give media interviews and just general enquiries from concerned members of the public. We are indebted to our toad patrollers who during the 2016 season rescued 54,148 toads. Our guest writer, Nick Larkin, has featured the Norfolk toad patrols, Toadwatch, in this newsletter. I am sure you will be equally impressed with the number of toads that they are rescuing.

In this newsletter we have brought together articles written by volunteers who have contributed in different ways to nature conservation. The options are huge and as you will see some want to focus on physical habitat work whilst others have guided young people who have strayed off the track to get back on it with a new interest in wildlife conservation. At Froglife everyone is welcome to volunteer in whatever way suits them. This may be hard core conservation but equally as important is creative input such as artwork, photography, literature or film making. So a very big thank you to all of our volunteers. NATURE CONSERVATION NEEDS YOU NOW and more than it has ever done in the past.

Kathy Wormald, CEO
kathy.wormald@froglife.org

K. Wormald





10 good reasons to volunteer

by Jenny Tse-Leon

1. Makes you feel good

You get to meet other people, socialise and try something different. Not to mention the warm fuzzy feeling of making a difference.

2. Help to make the world a better place

Your hard work can change the life of a young person, improve a habitat for wildlife or even help a charity to achieve more by supporting them behind the scenes in the office.

3. Learn new skills and knowledge

Whether it's to improve your CV and chance of employment or

just for fun (although learning new skills in later life is also linked to reducing the risk of dementia) there's always something new to discover.

4. Improve your health

Volunteering can help to improve your health and wellbeing by getting you active and hopefully outside!

5. Get to know your local area better

Whether you are new to an area or have lived there for decades it's amazing what you can discover on your doorstep.

6. Allows you to give back to a cause that's important to you

You may have grown up exploring the countryside or watching David Attenborough documentaries and want to do your bit to protect the environment or you might have had a tough start in life and want to support other young people finding their way in life.

7. Make real connections

Meet other people from all sorts of different backgrounds who share similar interests and values.

8. Get inspired

By trying out new things you may get ideas for improving your garden for wildlife, activities to do with friends and family, or places to visit.

9. Have a new outlook

By having a greater understanding of the world around you and other people's lives you might find that you get a whole new perspective on life.

10. It's fun!

To find out how you can volunteer with Froglife please visit www.froglife.org/volunteering/



My experience as a volunteer

by Alex Kirby-Lambert

When I was around 14 or 15 I decided to take my lifelong interest in conservation and the natural world a step further by volunteering with Froglife at their Hampton Nature Reserve. My first experience with the volunteer team was on a cold, snowy morning in winter. As I made my way through the slush to come across a small circle of people surrounding a tree I wasn't initially sure what to think. But I was greeted by the friendly warden and what followed was a fun and educational experience that helped shape my career path and my plans for the future.

Week after week, rain or shine, I turned up on a Thursday morning to work with a small but enthusiastic band of volunteers. In the winter we tackled lots of willow clearance, hedge management and even coppicing in the snow. Bonfires were a particular treat, cooking bacon over open flames, baking potatoes in the embers and huddling round to keep warm.

In the summer the volunteers undertook butterfly surveys, and over the course of these I learnt to recognise nearly all the British species. Green hairstreaks, with their metallic green wings and striped antennae were a favourite of mine. It wasn't all fun and games however. Prior to pond restoration using a digger, destructive

searches had to be carried out, which involved scrabbling around in the cold mud on hands and knees looking for newts, ensuring they weren't harmed during the restoration.



As well as the wealth of informal training and practical experience I received as a volunteer, Froglife also put on more formal training courses. Over the course of my time I attended sessions of amphibian survey techniques, mammal signs, water vole surveying and site management.

At seventeen I decided to go to Shuttlesworth College to do a BTEC Extended Diploma in Countryside Management. Initially I thought this would cut into my volunteering time, but in the end it provided an opportunity to further my work with Froglife. As part of the college syllabus, work experience was required and I decided to continue my volunteering work with Froglife to gain the necessary hours.

During this time I undertook my first more in depth scientific project

into the correlation between the management of ponds at Hampton Nature Reserve and the impact it had on stonewort populations. This involved trekking around ponds, taking stonewort samples with a weed rake and then identifying them under a microscope back in the lab. The conclusion was that pond restoration had a major positive impact on both diversity of Stoneworts and populations of the rarer species, particularly Bearded Stonewort, which is specially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. This project was in some ways a turning point for me, opening my eyes to the scientific side of conservation.

My continued partnership with Froglife eventually led me into short term paid work with them carrying out things like scrub removal, reed raking and pond clearance. Nothing glamorous, but at the time it was a huge deal for me, even though on at least one occasion it meant working in the rain all day, at one point costing me both my phone and iPod. After that came a bigger, longer term contract undertaking newt surveys which was a dream come true for me. This involved being out on Hampton Nature Reserve working through to the middle of the night, and using high-powered torches to count the newts in a sample of the ponds, which was a fun and occasionally frightening experience. I found that I was good at spotting newts and enjoyed the work immensely.

And finally after 7 years of volunteering I got my first ever full time position with Froglife as a trainee with the River Nene Dragon Finder project. This has allowed me to build on the skills I've gained, explore new avenues of learning and given me a chance to interact with the public, hopefully passing on my interest and enthusiasm in wildlife and conservation.



Volunteering for amphibian research



by Dr. Laurence Jarvis

Pursuing a career in amphibian research is competitive and there are few employment opportunities, so volunteering is a positive way to enhance skills, develop collaborations and gain practical experience. My career in amphibian research started in Epping Forest, Essex, where I completed a PhD on the microhabitat requirements of the great crested newt. During this research I gained insights into the interesting population and terrestrial ecology of this species. Although there are various funding options available for post-doctoral research I considered volunteering as a way to further my experience and develop my CV in the field of amphibian ecology and conservation. An opportunity arose to undertake an unpaid internship with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Amphibian Specialist Group. I was able to work part-time to enable me to complete the internship which involved examining the threat status of amphibians in Peru. I developed collaborations with the Amphibian Specialist Group as well as partners across Peru. After completion I was able to work with these collaborators on a research paper titled: "A re-assessment of priority amphibian

species of Peru" which was published in the journal Tropical Conservation Science. During this period I also volunteered as Managing Editor for the British Herpetological Society's Herpetological Bulletin and for the Amphibian Specialist Group as Recent Publications Editor for their international publication Froglog. Both these opportunities enabled me to develop my CV as well as knowledge and experience in amphibian research.

Following my internship with the IUCN, I was able to secure a three year research position as a Field Wildlife Ecotoxicologist based in Yorkshire, examining the impacts of pesticides on vertebrate populations. During this time I looked for ways of further developing my skills and experiences in amphibian research in my spare time. A voluntary position became available working with Froglife on their research project to monitor the effectiveness of under-road mitigation tunnels for amphibians using camera monitoring. I met with Dr Silviu Petrovan, who was then the Conservation Coordinator, and I agreed that I would be involved in the practical camera maintenance, changing batteries and downloading data from the Monk's Cross development in York. In the periods March-May and September-October each year for the

next three years, I visited the site every five days to collect data and change the camera batteries. In addition to gaining experience in conducting research in this field of research, I developed collaborations with Froglife and university partners. I assisted a PhD student, who Silviu was co-supervising, to collect soil samples from Monk's Cross. This research aimed to examine the presence of pollutants in under-road tunnels and the possible impacts on amphibians. As a result of furthering my voluntary activities, I gained more experience and increased my collaborations. At the start of 2017, I was able to gain employment with Froglife as the new Head of Conservation. In this role, as well as managing a range of conservation projects, I have the opportunity to develop further research into the ecology and conservation of amphibians and reptiles.

Overall I have found my experience of volunteering in amphibian research interesting and valuable and it has enabled me to gain experience and skills which I would not have otherwise developed. I have enjoyed working with a range of people, often from countries worldwide, and I have gained valuable insights into amphibian research.



An interview with key nature reserves volunteer Judith Turner



Judith Turner is a uniquely dedicated volunteer, helping numerous conservation organisations. Not only does Judith participate in regular sessions in all weathers, but Judith plans and leads sessions and puts in extra days to help out. Here we ask Judith about her volunteering experiences

Judith, how long have you been volunteering?

It must be about six or seven years now.

Who do you volunteer for?

I volunteer for Froglife, I work on the Hampton and Boardwalks Nature reserves. We do all sorts, surveying: newts, reptiles, butterflies, hedgehogs, pond habitats as well as all sorts of habitat management work.

I volunteer with the Wildlife Trust surveying in summer with the ecology groups. I survey for bats, nectar sources, meadow wildflowers and water voles.

I also lead sessions for the Peterborough Conservation Volunteers. We work on nature reserves throughout Peterborough doing practical habitat management from August to April.

What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering?

Previous experience not required!

So what inspired you to become a volunteer?

I have always had an interest in nature study. It went in to the background during my work and child upbringing years. When I retired I started doing more walking - my interest in wildlife was renewed!

So you knew a bit about wildlife then?

What I knew was what I had learnt from books as a child. Enid Blyton's Nature Lovers book inspired me to study zoology and botany at school.

Were you aware of conservation issues before becoming a volunteer?

Yes, but not nearly as much as I am now. I had heard of things like Dutch elm disease and issues with development on habitats.

How has your knowledge changed since becoming a volunteer?

Something that really hit me when doing site management was finding out that nutrient poor soil is a vital part of rare habitats.



I've learnt a lot from more experienced people about plants and animals, about conservation issues and about the ways in which sites are managed.

Also I have taken advantage of wildlife training courses offered by Froglife and the Wildlife Trust, free to volunteers.

Froglife have given me training in first aid and in working with young people. Over the years I have become experienced and confident enough to lead volunteer groups safely.

So you've learned a great deal and gained friends:

what else have you gained?

Volunteering provides me with an interesting hobby which helps me keep physically fit. It is very useful to the environment and provides companionship among friendly, like-minded people.

Describe a typical day volunteering.

Once a week in summer the volunteer groups at Hampton and Boardwalks do a butterfly survey of the areas (a transect walk). People new to it all soon learn to recognise each species. We have a picnic half way around.

A winter's day could include cutting down scrub such as hawthorn, willow, bramble that is encroaching where it is not wanted. Then sometimes burning it and enjoying baked potatoes cooked in the fire.

What are your favourite activities, if you had to choose?

Have I got a favourite? (Laughs). I honestly enjoy everything we do!

What about the weather?

We don't go if it is VERY bad - say heavy rain or blizzards - but a little drizzle doesn't bother us!

Judith thank you so much for sharing your experiences. Now a little bird tells me there is a special event coming up!

Oh yes! For my 80th birthday next month, I will be doing a sponsored 10-mile walk to raise money for Froglife! So please sponsor me!

www.everyclick.com/judiths80thtenmilewalk



The volunteers of Froglife nature reserves

by Liz Morrison

Our nature reserves are managed by wardens and a dedicated team of volunteers. I worked out that for every hour I spent on the Hampton or Boardwalks nature reserves last year, volunteers contributed three! I should give a shout out to our volunteer warden and trustee, Frank Clark, at this point, he alone does the same number of hours as me surveying terrestrial newts, monitoring the temperatures and rainfall, mammal activity and keeping an eye on the place. He's usually on site before me too!

It's a chilly morning in late February. The wind reminds me winter hasn't quite left us yet but the warm sun and the sight of brilliant yellow coltsfoot flowers are a sure sign spring is beginning. I am processing the brash from the very last of the scrub clearance works and I can hear the birds twittering all around.

I am joined in the early afternoon by Judith Turner one of our regular reserve volunteers and she confirms it is a great tit we can hear - I learn something from every volunteer I work with! We plan the group volunteer session for the following day. Judith often leads sessions if I am working elsewhere with contractors, but happily tomorrow, I'll be with the group. We get a few regulars who come most weeks in between other commitments and

they are such a good bunch.

Looking forward to tomorrow's session, Judith and I plan where to have our last bonfire site of the year. There has been some scrub removal in the woodland to the north of the Hampton reserve to open up a sunny glade and let light in to a pond. The scrub has been laid in windrows and most of it will be retained and part covered with soil to keep it moist.

Sadly this reserve is targeted by some irresponsible trespassers and several unauthorised summer 'campfires' have got out of hand and burnt extensive areas of scrub-grassland mosaic. So, every time we cut vegetation we have to plan how to deal with it to protect it from catching fire.



Burning dry bramble and sloe brash

Between us we decide to have a small fire to burn some of the thorny dry bramble and sloe brash which doesn't sit in compact windrows the way willow does. It accounts for about one sixth of the total mass of brash we are dealing with, the

rest of which will be kept for habitat piles.

Whilst it's only a sixth of the mass it's about a third of the volume with its twisted spikey branches jutting in all directions! We know there may be a few expletives uttered whilst trying to handle the thorny stuff tomorrow! But the best bit comes at lunchtime, when hot baked potatoes are shared and we all sit down for a well-earned cup of tea, biscuits and toasted marshmallows. The event is as much a social gathering as it is a conservation activity.

With spring upon us and summer around the corner we look forward to butterfly walks starting next month. This time lunch takes the form of a picnic on the pond dipping platform in the woods. The canopies of mature oaks providing much needed shade from the sun and the aptly named speckled wood butterflies keep us busy counting, even on our break!

Judith pointed out that the last leg of the butterfly transect walk could really do with a big log somewhere for a mid-way break. She doesn't know it yet, but our arborists Finn and Ross kindly stayed on a bit late last week to help me shift two ENORMOUS ash logs to the perfect spot as a thank you present for all her hard work. Even our contractors volunteer!

Contractors David and Chris often go the extra mile giving a bit of



Boardwalks butterfly volunteers



Dead hedging carried out by youngfact volunteers.



Reptile survey volunteers

extra time to help us get scrub work done and we recently welcomed the River Nene Dragon Finder team to the Hampton reserve. They hosted a corporate volunteer day with staff from Volvo who carried out a colossal amount of scrub clearance work from our ponds this winter.

Work in kind is a real asset to Froglife reserves; several complementary projects frequently pool resources to help one another's work. The young volunteers working with the Froglife Active Conservation Team (FACT) and the Green Pathways project often play a key role in reserve work. Only last month our new conservation youth worker, Gail, brought a team of young people to our Thursday scrub clearance session and they learnt a great deal about how we manage the site.

Fellow warden Ross undertakes a wide range of practical conservation tasks on our reserves with his young volunteers. Just one of his latest projects is constructing a dead hedge on the Boardwalks reserve. Young people learn about how dead hedges can protect areas of habitat vulnerable to disturbance whilst acting as habitat for amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, fungi, mammals and birds.

There are many brilliant reasons to volunteer, the social aspects just one benefit. CV boosting was a big appeal for our sixth form volunteers. The opportunity to learn more about our amazing species and see more wildlife, such as our native reptiles, is a big attraction and we have some excellent volunteers that help us undertake reptile surveys. A survey

transect too big to be effectively undertaken by staff alone.

We learn new things from one another. While Judith helped me improve my ornithological knowledge, the lovely Trish Thompson helped me to get to grips with the joys of dragonfly and damselfly identification. Photography is a popular pastime amongst our volunteers and where better to take photos than a nature reserve with abundant wildlife?

Volunteering opportunities are advertised on our events page:

www.froglife.org/what-we-do/events/





My Froglife journey from volunteer to employee

By Ashlea Jarvis

My journey on the path to employment with Froglife began way back in 2011. I had been looking for work for almost a year at this point, and having no luck at all, it was starting to get me down.

After one of my many visits to the job centre in Peterborough, I was making my way home when I saw a Froglife promotional stand on Cathedral Square. It immediately drew me in as I remember there being a toad lollipop lady made from papier maché standing proud.

Froglife were looking for members of the public who were not in education, employment or training for a new project named 'Wildlife Ambassadors'. I remember thinking this is something that is right up my street, so I signed up straight away.

My particular group spent most of the time on Hampton Nature Reserve participating in reptile surveys, site maintenance and doing some pond dipping. I had a new found sense of happiness and purpose and I looked forward to our weekly sessions. Twelve weeks on that project flew

by, this included a 6 week personal project where I continued with reptile surveys and took my camera along to take photos of the species I found there.

After my time participating in Wildlife Ambassadors, I was then encouraged to complete my volunteer training so I could further my skills and volunteer on more Froglife projects. I did so, and I continued to volunteer on Wildlife Ambassadors as well as My Wild Life from that moment on.

I had been all over Peterborough,



London and Glasgow. I was involved in celebration and promotional events such as the RSPB Bird Fair, The Peterborough Green Festival and National Science and Engineering Week. I had helped to improve more green spaces than I care to count and met some great people along the way, including the odd celebrity!

I found work in early 2012 at a local garden centre which was fantastic. I still continued to volunteer for Froglife on a regular basis when I had some spare time.

Some of my proudest achievements are creating a huge pond at the Green Backyard and turning a piece of scrubland behind Peterborough Museum into a medicinal herb garden. Looking at the before and after pictures is always really inspiring.

I also:

- Won the Peterborough Telegraph Green award for Best Green Volunteer in 2013
- Won the Better Together and YMCA Young Volunteer award in 2012
- Was a finalist in the Access to Nature Volunteer awards 2013

- Was a finalist and runner up in the Cambridgeshire Young Person of the Year awards 2013
- Accumulated over 500 hours of volunteer work with Froglife



I became pregnant with my daughter in late 2013 so I made the heart-wrenching decision to stop volunteering until a time came when I was able to do so again. When my daughter was 2 the opportunity arose.

I spotted an article featuring Froglife in my local paper stating that they were looking for volunteers for their Leapfrog Schools Project. I jumped at the chance to become involved again. I worked on this project for a few months when I came across an advertisement for a trainee conservation youth worker on the Green Pathways project. I thought it couldn't hurt to at least try.

I applied and was called for an interview. I managed to get through it with as little nerves as possible and was contacted the exact same day to be told I had the job. I'm not embarrassed to say I became a little bit tearful with the delight, simply because Froglife has always been close to my heart.

I have been employed by Froglife since June 2016 and I have already learned so much, from leading education sessions, to applying for funding, conducting presentations and lots, lots more.

Volunteering can bring so much enrichment to your life as you never know what you will be doing from one day to the next. It helps you to expand your education, skills and self-esteem. If you have a passion for something, there is always someone out there who is willing to turn that into something you can use to gain future employment in a career you love.

Volunteering has definitely aided me in finding work as, even though you aren't paid to be a volunteer, it shows you have commitment and passion in a particular field and personally, I think that shines through on paper more than anything.



Volunteering from an employer's perspective



by Dr Victoria Larcombe

A survey carried out by Volunteer Scotland has shown that volunteering amongst young people has increased from 33% in 2009 to 52% in 2016. Employability is often cited as a reason for encouraging people, particularly young people, to volunteer but what impact does volunteering really have on your chances of getting a job? Froglife sent out a survey to organisations in Scotland to see how they view voluntary experience when recruiting new staff.

Does volunteering experience make an applicant stand out from the crowd?

From my perspective volunteering is a very positive aspect of someone's CV helping gain experience and skills that could be desirable or even essential for a role. **RSPB**

Yes, it certainly does. For me, when looking at an application, the longer a person has volunteered and if it has been in the UK (not just 2 weeks helping at a turtle sanctuary) and with more than one organisation, really helps them stand out. **Buglife**

Absolutely! Getting jobs in the sector is becoming very competitive so we are always looking for things which show people's commitment to the sector and experience levels - volunteering experience is a great way to show these - it's fairly rare for us to even look at applications from new applicants who have no past experience of volunteering in the sector. **TCV**

I would say that we definitely look for volunteering experience. A lot of applicants have very similar qualifications and skills in things like bumblebee identification and surveying are strengthened through experience. Quite a few of our current staff members actually started out as volunteers for the Trust. Volunteering awards such as Duke of Edinburgh can also indicate transferable skills such as team work and leadership which are desirable. **Bumblebee Conservation Trust**

It certainly helps to show commitment, and is a tangible demonstration that an

individual is serious about an interest or potential career direction.

University of Glasgow

It depends what volunteering they have done and how much, but generally yes it will give them an advantage. Sometimes people put down a lot of different volunteer roles and it makes you wonder how they can manage to do so much volunteering and this will then make you wonder if they are a committed volunteer or simply dipping in and out of various options. The latter can reflect on the person and could indicate that they will treat work in the same way. In some instances it will be best if someone can show a commitment to volunteering for one organisation rather than a spread. **Froglife**

Can volunteering ever damage your credibility as an applicant?

I would say no, unless you are applying to the person you are volunteering for and you haven't worked as hard as you thought and they use this to judge your application. Always tell the truth and volunteering is an



opportunity to learn and show people how amazing you really are. **Buglife**

No, I don't think so at all - sometimes if people have volunteered in one role for a very long time, and don't appear to have progressed it can raise a questions as to why. So I'd advise people volunteering (at least if they are doing it with the aim of getting a job in the sector) to make sure they are continuing to progress, to take on more responsibility in their volunteering and getting a variety of experiences. **TCV**

No - as an employer I have a sense of how very tough the job market is, and there is no way that volunteering could be damaging to anyone's credibility in my view.

University of Glasgow

Possibly if you have done a lot of volunteering but have little paid work experience, it could raise questions as to why the person has been unable to get a permanent position after gaining experience through volunteering. However, generally I don't think it will often damage credibility.

Froglife

Have you ever made the decision to employ somebody because of their volunteering experience?

Yes, especially when advertising for TCV Natural trainees, their volunteer experience shows a lot about themselves and how willing they are to work hard and learn. **Buglife**

Yes - definitely - it can be the difference between two closely matched candidates,

or key for someone new to the sector showing they have the enthusiasm, commitment and experience required. **TCV**

No, but it is a compelling confirmation of an applicant's seriousness. Words are easy, actions speak over them!

University of Glasgow

Yes, we have employed a few people who have volunteered for



Froglife, most recently Alex and Ashlea have been employed as former volunteers. We have also chosen trustees on the basis that they have been volunteers for Froglife i.e. Frank Clark. **Froglife**

Do you actively look for volunteering experience when reviewing candidate applications?

Yes we do. **Buglife**

Not specifically - but it is often a key feature which provides the evidence of the persons skills and commitment. **TCV**

No, not in academic roles. But it does play a significant affirmatory role in decision making. **University of Glasgow**

Not necessarily, it depends on how much paid for work experience they have. If they have a lot of work experience I may not be worried about whether they volunteer or not, but if they do not have a lot of work experience then the volunteer experience will certainly be an important factor. **Froglife**

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Kathy Wormald
CEO, Froglife



An interview with

The Froglife Trustees



*Lin Wenlock
(Chair)*



*Prof Roger
Downie
(Vice-Chair)*



Frank Clark



Inez Smith



*Richard
Donoyou*

Why did you join the Froglife board of trustees?

I met the founder of Froglife when I was trying to poach ideas from a course he was running, and he later approached me to hop from the Board of Essex Wildlife Trust to join Froglife. **Lin**

When Froglife developed a project in Scotland for the first time, I got involved as a local contact for the project team, so it seemed a natural move to become a trustee when I was invited. My herpetological research has mainly been abroad, but in recent years, I have done some more local work, and that also made joining the Froglife trustees a logical step. **Roger**

Having worked for Froglife and been a long standing conservation volunteer this seemed like the next step to influence the strategic direction of the organisation and ensure that it continues to grow and develop. **Inez**

I found that I had a keen and developing interest in nature conservation after moving to live in a mountain village in Italy when I first retired. I continued this interest when I moved to Hampton (Peterborough) and became a volunteer with Froglife. When the opportunity arose to join the trustees I accepted. Something I

haven't regretted. **Frank**

I joined Froglife because firstly, it is very professionally run and this enables it to do great work. Joining a winning team sounds easy, but running small charities is very hard work and if my experience can help the staff, I am pleased to contribute. **Richard**

How long have you been a trustee for Froglife?

Oh dear such a long time - about 14 years. **Lin**

Since 2010; vice-chair since 2013. **Roger**

Cant remember - a long time! **Inez**

I have now been a trustee for over 7 years. **Frank**

Must be 3 years now! **Richard**

What expertise do you bring to the board?

On the ground knowledge of Amphibians and Reptiles, and have held a Natural England licence for GCNs for even longer than I have been on the Board of Froglife. **Lin**

I'm an academic zoologist, with special interest in amphibians and reptiles, so I bring that expertise. I also have considerable experience as an NGO trustee/board member e.g. secretary to the Board of Friends of the Earth Scotland for some years; president of Glasgow Natural History Society. **Roger**

Knowledge and understanding of the community and voluntary sector; staff and volunteer management; participation of children and young people; safeguarding; leadership. **Inez**

I spent my working life in engineering or sales and I like to think that this business experience helps with the overview of Froglife's work and aims. **Frank**

I have worked for public, private and voluntary sectors and have been CEO of a charitable trust. I hope this experience brings some understanding of the inter-relationship of these sectors and their respective commercial / financial imperatives. **Richard**

What is the best thing about being a trustee?

It is very fulfilling to see how hard the staff work and how dedicated they are, and I am so proud of them all for the success they have achieved. **Lin**

I have found it rewarding to be able to contribute to the running of an NGO that is having such a positive impact on wildlife conservation and education, and one, particularly, which works so much with people, often outside the usual 'target groups' for conservation work. In particular, interacting with Froglife's dedicated and enthusiastic staff has been a very

positive experience. **Roger**

The staff and volunteers, their incredible commitment to their species, the organisation and each other. **Inez**

The best part of being a trustee for me has been seeing the growth of Froglife's profile in the scientific world. **Frank**

As a trustee I feel I am far more than a token Board member. the most important thing is that trustees and staff work well together and whilst the staff do the great majority of the work, as a trustee, I feel I have some influence in guiding as needed. The worst thing? Too many crisps and chocolate biscuits at board meetings! **Richard**

Do you volunteer for any other organisation(s)?

I am Vice Chair of Essex Wildlife Trust, which involves very much the same as on the Froglife Board. **Lin**

I'm a member of several, but my practical roles are with the local Glasgow FOE group, which I chair monthly, and GNHS which I also chair; this latter is quite

time-demanding - monthly public meetings; quarterly committee meetings; a trust; liaison with kindred organisations in Glasgow etc. **Roger**

Not currently. I have previously been a secondary school governor, a welfare officer for a gymnastics club, a special constable and an army cadet instructor. **Inez**

I am also a volunteer Custody Visitor in Peterborough. This involves checking on the well-being of detainees in custody at the local police station. **Frank**

I am a trustee of 2 other organisations and also am active in practical environmental and fund raising work as a parish councillor. I also teach historic building skills, particularly drystone walling, to young people (NEETS) and adults. In addition to being important historic and landscape features, ancient walls make wonderful habitats and hibernation sites for newts, lizards, toads, frogs and snakes! **Richard**

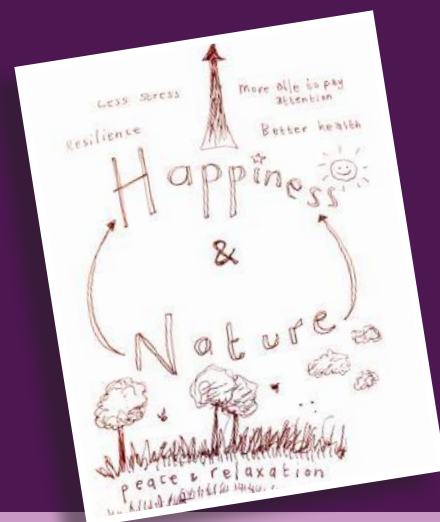
Is there anything else you would like to add?

I am amazed that after all the years I

have been involved in conservation, going back before I was on any Trustee Boards, but involved in volunteering, there is still so much more for me to learn! **Lin**

The trustees are a diverse bunch coming from across the UK and I have it easy being Peterborough based. **Inez**

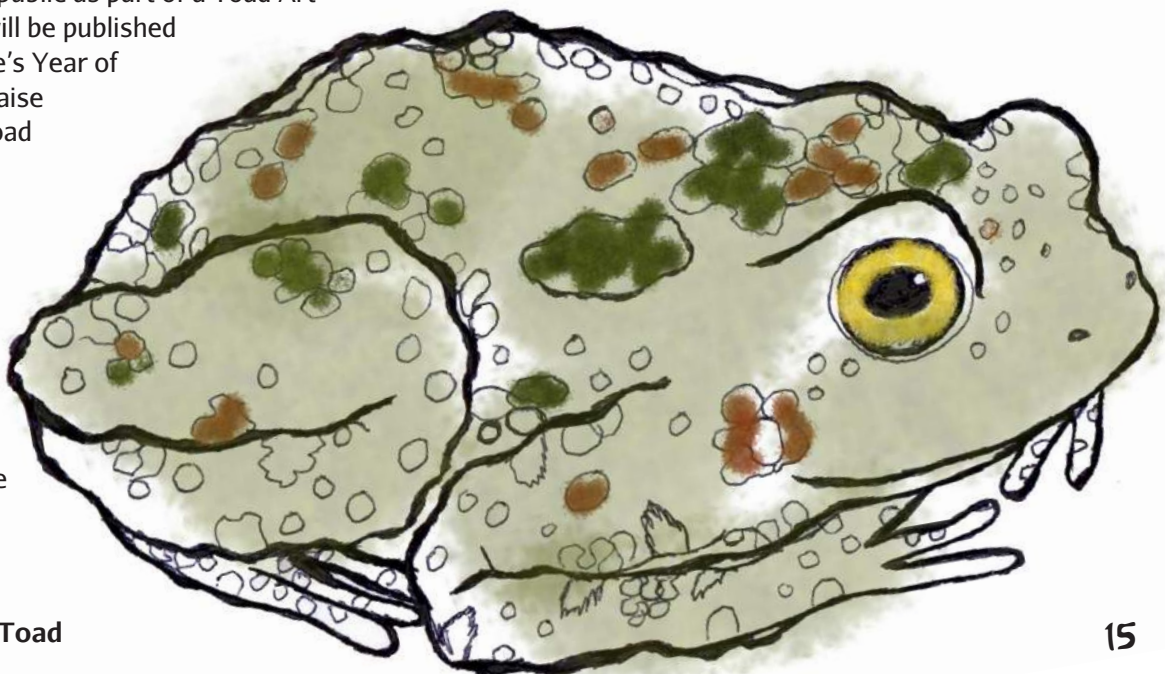
Volunteering can lead in all sorts of surprising directions. I now spend a considerable amount of my time involved with photographic projects with time lapse and p.i.r. (trail cams) cameras. Something that I had never been involved in previously. **Frank**



Coming Soon! Toad Art Colouring Book

This delightfully educational, beautifully drawn toad colouring book is being created by Froglife with artwork submitted by their members of the public as part of a Toad Art competition. The book will be published to commemorate Froglife's Year of the Toad which aims to raise awareness of common toad declines in the UK and raise funds to carry out further research into the causes of these declines and deliver practical conservation projects on the ground to help protect important toad sites. Please keep an eye on our Year of the Toad webpage for news of its publication

<http://bit.ly/YearoftheToad>



Toads are a major asset for your garden, so why not join in the fight to stop millions being killed on our roads every year?

Nick Larkin, freelance journalist, explains how

What on earth motivates thousands of people from all walks of life across the country to don a hi-vis jacket, leave their warm homes and, armed only with a torch, bucket and maybe a whistle to alert others, spend dark, cold evenings scouring their local roads?

They are on toad patrol, which may sound vaguely ridiculous, but is anything but. Indeed it's vital work to save as many of these fascinating animals as possible from being killed or mutilated on our roads, particularly from around February to April, when they head en-masse to ponds to breed. Many gardeners have much to thank toads for. Toads eat slugs, spiders and other insects, playing a vital part in Britain's ecological environment.

But 2017, to put it bluntly, is not a good time to be a toad. Their decline is astonishing. A study by amphibian and reptile conservation charity Froglife, working with the University of Zurich, has shown that the common toad population of the UK has fallen by 68% over the last 30 years. The decline is more

pronounced in the South East, which is also the region with the highest volume of traffic.

"There is a lot stacked against them", said John Heaser, who has been on toad patrol since 2004. "I was appalled to see possibly more than 200 dead frogs and toads on the road one night and felt I had to do something."

John works with Toadwatch in Norfolk, one of Britain's most successful operations to save the creatures from being killed by traffic. Around 70 people are involved in the patrols which John reckons saves half or more of the country's toads each year.

This may seem unbelievable, but in 2016, Toadwatch saved 22,256 toads, just in Norfolk. Sadly, 1,704 were known to have been killed. In Selbrigg, a village few have heard of, the figure saved was 5,492. In addition, 1,336 frogs and 256 common newts also got in on the act.

All this merely down to people with those buckets and torches who scoop up the amphibians, taking them

across the road or to the pond where they want to go. John commented "the problem is getting far worse. Toads are losing their habitats as so many sites are being built on. Toads need to live somewhere frost-free, ideally subterranean. The problem is that a lot of gardens are being tidied up, so again this reduces the places for toads to live."

Cynics can argue that toads don't help themselves much. They migrate to their breeding ponds from normally February to April, depending on the temperature. They normally move from dusk (i.e. around rush hour) and need the temperature to be above five degrees centigrade. The weather needs to be wet or humid.

What is worse, John reveals, is that male toads genuinely do wait on the road surfaces to pick up a female, which, just as is the case with humans, is deadly. They also tend to move in droves, making a journey of up to a mile and half to their pond. They are not happy with any watery destination - it needs to be the pond in which they were born. Toad

patrollers tend to know where these are, and when toads are most likely to try to get to them.

People of all ages and backgrounds are involved. They tend to not merely be hardcore conservationists - John works in IT. "It's people who are united in not wanting to see these animals killed in huge numbers" he said. "Things can only get worse, even the change in cars is contributing by giving their occupants more insulation from the outside environment" John added.

Froglife coordinates these efforts across the country, supporting people wishing to set up patrols and most importantly holding the Department for Transport database of amphibian migratory crossings. Registering a crossing with Froglife (crossing can only be registered if there are more than 100 toads crossing), can mean that local authorities will put up toad crossing warning signs during the migration period, unfortunately nowadays most local authorities say that they are too

cash strapped to do this.

Froglife has a Year of the Toad Campaign a www.froglife.org/yearofthetoad/ and there are plenty of ways in which you can get involved. CEO Kathy Wormald said: "Our work with toad patrols is one of our most important roles and we are proud to co-ordinate the efforts nationally which save many thousands of these wonderful animals."

Some facts and how you can help

- There are no official figures of the number of toads killed on British roads annually - it is quoted as 20 tonnes.
- Toads began to evolve 20 million years ago, they can live for 20 years or more and do not breed until their fourth season.
- You can provide a toad habitat in your garden. Ideally a subterranean environment of bricks and branches covered by old carpets or similar. You will probably find that you attract a lot of other wildlife as well, including frogs and newts.
- Richmond Council is the only known authority to close roads at times of toad migrations. Warning triangles featuring toads are also put up.
- If you live in Norfolk and would like to get involved or learn about a toad crossing, Toadwatch can be contacted via www.toadwatch.org
- You can find your nearest toad crossing by visiting Froglife's website www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads
- Froglife's Toads on Roads work is unfunded, you can help by making a donation www.froglife.org/what-you-can-do/donate



Toads on Roads statistics 2016

Number of toads saved: 54,148

Number of toads killed: 4,914

Toad sites submitting data: 125



Eye of newt, and toe of frog, adder's fork and lizard's leg: the lore and mythology of amphibians and reptiles

Marty Crump, University of Chicago Press (2015). 320 pp. ISBN 13:978-0-221-11600-6 (hardback, also available as an e-book). \$ US 35.00.

by Prof Roger Downie

The distinguished American herpetologist Martha Crump (named Marty here for a more general readership) has written this beautiful book in collaboration with photographer Dante Fenolio who is credited for the large number of stunning plates. The high production standard has been made possible through many donations from organisations and individuals, contributing to the very reasonable cover price.

The book's fourteen chapters focus on particular themes such as creation myths, myths related to weather, religion and sex (the number of snake and frog parts reputed to enhance virility is amazing). There are also chapters on the uses people make of amphibians and reptiles: food, medicine, hunting, and culture. Crump relates the worldwide occurrence of myths and folk beliefs relating to amphibians and reptiles to aspects of their biology: their sudden appearance after rain, the longevity of some, the ability to regenerate lost and damaged parts, the transformation from tadpole to adult in frogs, the lethality of some...Some of the religious practices she describes are quite bizarre: some Pentecostal churches in southern USA still practice a snake-handling ritual where venomous snakes (mainly copperheads and rattlesnakes) are handed around the congregation as an act of faith. She also discusses the roles of amphibians and reptiles in traditional medicine, distinguishing between folk medicine (where, in some cases, modern research has

discovered real pharmacological activity, as in snake venom and frog skin), from shamanistic rituals where a snake or frog is used in some way to banish an evil spirit.

The final chapter relates conservation to folk beliefs. Where a species of snake is traditionally revered, this helps to protect it; but in some countries, traditional

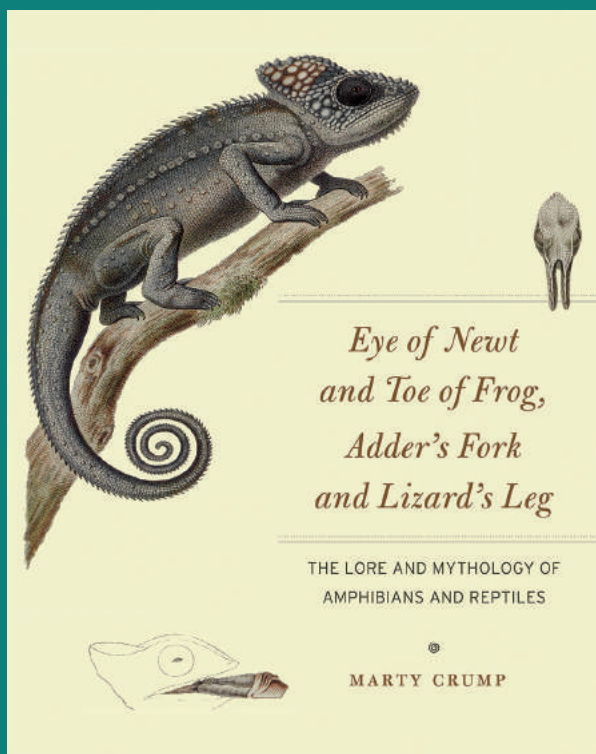
adhesive pads, so it is hard to understand how such a story originated.

Crump discusses the issues related to combatting harmful traditional beliefs, and reports an encouraging educational project from Portugal which altered perceptions; very much in line with Froglife's aims.

Crump has been interested in reptile and amphibian folklore since her student days in the 1960's and this book represents a selection from 50 years of accumulated research. It is not the first book to have approached the subject: Robert de Graff's similarly beautiful 'Book of the toad' (1991) does a similar job on a single group, but with more emphasis on art and literature, reflecting his position as a Professor of Literature. One surprise for me in Crump's book is the relative lack of documentation; it is common these days in semi-popular science and history books for superscript numbers in the text to refer to extensive source notes at the end, aimed at readers who wish to follow

up. Although there is a substantial reference list, much of the book is short on documentation. For a future edition, perhaps? I would also hope that the author re-thinks some colloquialisms, such as crocodiles getting 'a bum rap', or snake venom giving 'more bang for the buck'.

All in all, I thoroughly recommend this wonderfully illustrated book for its mine of fascinating and thought-provoking information.



taboos and totems are in decline and any protection is disappearing. Unfortunately, in many traditional societies, too many species are regarded negatively, and Crump gives many examples. My own experience is of several species of lizard in Trinidad, collectively known locally as 'twenty four hour lizards'; the belief is that the lizard can jump on to people, sticking irremovably for twenty four hours, after which the victim dies. These lizards are not toxic in any way, nor do they possess



Photo: Ron McGill

Why I volunteer...

by John Bailey

My Name is John Bailey and I volunteer for Froglife, and have for about 12 years, working with young offenders. I was asked to tell you why I volunteer and what I do.

Why? Is a good question because I want to give something back to the community and to do some good. Really? Is that the real answer or does it look good on a CV or will it get me a job? I think there is more to it than that.

I started at Froglife with Inez Smith at Dogsthorpe allotment, an empty allotment with one shed. Then I helped with digging ponds and planting a hedge.

Andy Mortimore took over the position from Inez and we planted new beds for veg and built a path round the pond which we have done

many times since. We planted more veg and dug more ponds.

Then James McAdie takes over who is more into building so we started the large shed, built from scratch with no plans. At the same time a school wanted their nature garden sorting out, just a small job, a new pond to dig straight on top of builders rubble, a bridge to move, an old pond to re shape, dipping platform to build, rockery and waterfall, pumps and filter to install. Not forgetting a blackboard, archway, new plants and a small shed.

Ross Edgar takes over, now we work more on the Nature Reserves and help with new ponds, clearing and putting in signs, but all the time find new things to look at such as adders, newts, grass snakes, deer and kingfishers, all of which I'd never seen before. Of course the best thing

is the young people who get up early on a Saturday morning and spend three hours with us in all weathers. This tests the young offenders - some work hard, asking 'What's a spade for?' but they get stuck in. Even if they don't admit it some even enjoy it.

Back to why again. I work during the week in a shop, A lad comes to my till and says, do you still work with Froglife? We stood and talked and then he left to go to college. While walking home one day a young lad tugged on my arm and said I know you from the allotment, we had a chat then he turned to his friend and said, he's a nice bloke, met him doing my community service. Now that's why I volunteer at Froglife.



Support Froglife by Walking 4 Wildlife



www.walking4wildlife.com/schools-walk

On May 19th 2017, a truly unique event will be taking place all across the UK. Hundreds of thousands of primary school children will be taking part in an attempt to break a Guinness™ World Record. On that day, primary schools up and down

the country will be joining together to try and break the world record for a mass sponsored walk. (The current world record is 231,635 people all walking at the same time!)

As well as attempting to break the world record, schools will also be raising money for wildlife protection and conservation. Unlike other organised sponsored walks however, you choose where to walk and more importantly where the money goes. You can raise money for any wildlife charity, big or small. There is no set distance or pace, you can walk for 30 mins or 3 hrs, it's up to you. The only criteria we set is that everyone will need to be walking at 2.15pm on the 19th May, to be included in our Guinness World Record™ attempt.

We have a range of cards, books and gifts for all occasions in the online Froglife shop at www.froglife.org/shop. All funds raised support our conservation and education work.



Dora Designs. Please see shop for details. Prices vary and start at £8.00

Ever wondered what could be hiding in your garden? Why not pick up this useful FSC information guide for £3.00



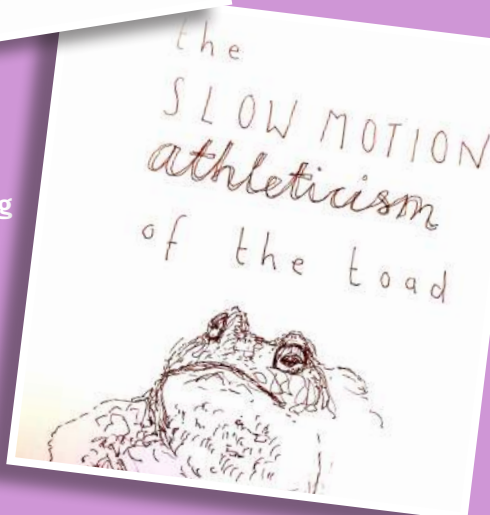
Friendship: Not sure what to buy someone? Why not give a Froglife Friendship as a gift, and your friend will receive a pack of goodies. £18.00



The Perfect Pond
reduced to
£4.95



What would you like to see in our online shop? We are always looking for new ideas for our online shop and we would like to gather some input from our supporters and volunteers. If you have any ideas please email Info@froglife.org



BBC Children in Need ~ Cambridge Community Foundation ~ Biffa Award ~ The Bromley Trust ~ City Bridge Trust ~ The Ernest Cook Trust ~ Cory Environmental Trust ~ Esmee Fairbairn ~ John Ellerman Foundation ~ Garfield Weston ~ The Heritage Lottery Fund ~ The Woodland Trust ~ Clarke Bradbury Trust ~ GrantScape ~ Natural England ~ The Robertson Trust ~ SNH ~ The Gannochy Trust ~ The MacRobert Trust ~ The Mackintosh Foundation ~ SITA Trust ~ People's Trust for Endangered Species ~ Western Riverside Environmental Fund ~ Peterborough City Council ~ Sheffield City Council ~ Towcester Town Council ~ Enfield Borough Council ~ Bromley Borough Council ~ Richmond Upon Thames Borough Council ~ Lambeth Borough Council ~ Ealing Borough Council ~ Tower Hamlets Borough Council ~ Camden Borough Council ~ Brent Borough Council ~ Haringey Borough Council ~ Kensington & Chelsea Borough Council ~ Waitrose ~ Angus Environmental Trust ~ Central Scotland Forest Trust ~ Falkirk Environment Trust ~ Glasgow Nature History Society ~ Score Environment ~ SSE ~ West Dunbartonshire Council ~ Aberdeen Council ~ Action Earth ~ Clackmannanshire & Stirling Environment Trust ~ East Ayrshire Leisure ~ Tesco Bags of Help

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Lin Wenlock (Chair), Roger Downie (Vice Chair), Frank Clark, Philip Wheeler, Gordon MacLennan, Richard Donoyou, Inez Smith and Silviu Petrovan.

VOLUNTEERS:

And finally, but certainly not least, a big thank you to all of our volunteers especially all those toad patrollers who did such a terrific job again this year.