

natterchat

Froglife's newsletter - amphibians, reptiles & nature news
Issue 32: Spring/Summer 2026

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors edition



TRANSFORMING LANDSCAPES

TRANSFORMING LIVES

TRANSFORMING RESEARCH

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Garden Wildlife Health (GWH) is a collaborative project between the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Froglife and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), which aims to identify disease and monitor the health of British wildlife.

Visit:
www.gardenwildlifehealth.org
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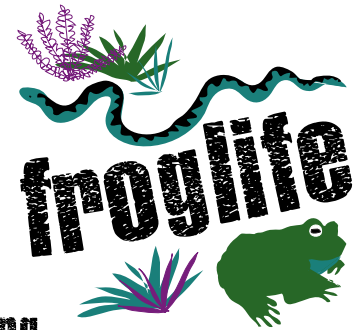
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Our free **Dragon Finder smartphone app** will help you to identify all the different amphibians and reptiles you might spot in the UK. You can also use it to record your sightings, adding to our living atlas of where the animals can be found.





Dear Supporters,

Welcome to this edition of Natterchat where we're shining a spotlight on

Froglife's Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor projects.

Across the UK, amphibians and reptiles face increasing pressures from habitat loss and fragmentation. Many species depend on a network of connected ponds, hedgerows, rough grassland, and sunny basking spots to feed, breed, shelter and to safely move through the landscape. When these habitats become isolated – separated by roads, fences, developments, or intensively managed land – it can leave populations cut off and vulnerable.

That's where Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors come in. These are an exciting and practical way that communities are helping wildlife thrive right on their doorsteps. By working with local people to improve and link up habitats in gardens, parks,

school grounds, and shared green spaces, we can create stepping-stones for wildlife that help frogs, toads, newts, lizards, slow worms and snakes find what they need, when they need it. Even small actions, when joined together across a neighbourhood, can build a corridor that supports movement, boosts biodiversity and strengthens resilience in the face of climate change.

It's not just about where wildlife lives, it's also about how they travel. That's why we're also featuring Toads on Roads, where volunteers help toads safely cross during their breeding migrations. Soon after, the next generation takes to the land: tiny juvenile toads head out from ponds in huge numbers, scattering into nearby habitat to feed and grow. Without safe routes and connected cover, many never make it.

To date, Froglife has completed the creation of 27 Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors and as you will read in this newsletter, we have plenty more in the pipeline to be delivered through our Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor: Boston & Beyond project and the Coalface to Wildspace projects

pending funding in Yorkshire and Scotland. During the 2025 toad migration season, the gallant toad patrollers rescued 155,768 toads from road mortality.

In this issue, we'll share updates from our corridor projects, celebrate the brilliant work being done by communities and toad patrollers, and explore how simple habitat improvements can make a big impact for amphibians and reptiles. We look forward to sharing with you how we've been building a better-connected landscape, one toad-sized step at a time.

All the best

Kathy Wormald, CEO



The Value of Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors can include continuous habitats that connect green and blue spaces. Sadly there are often barriers between these spaces such as buildings or roads that split up these habitats. The value of neighbourhood wildlife corridors is often underrated because tendencies exist to belittle or deride urban conservation as the habitat area can be considered too small, the quality poor, or the habitat isolated. However, evidence suggests many species can persist in small habitats.

Small patches of habitat can be used by birds¹, bats², insects³, pollinators⁴ and urban mammals⁵. Populations of reptile and amphibian species also inhabit small urban habitats and expand into larger green and blue spaces as they become available. In a study in Oxford in the late 1980s⁶, five species of amphibian and four species of reptile were found using habitat patches within the city. Species richness increased the larger the habitat patch, but more species were found in two small patches than in a single patch of the same combined area, highlighting the opportunities for species to exploit the right conditions.

Though isolated, small patches of habitat can support numerous species of value. Citizen scientist surveys of cemeteries in Vienna identified many species that were not known to be present in the city and surprising beneficial habitats (such as gravel paths for basking sand lizards)⁷. Similar findings in an urban setting in California⁸ confirmed that area was an important factor in determining the species richness of

amphibians and reptiles, but also that small patches are important in maintaining opportunities for some habitat specialists.

In a survey of reptile and amphibian responses to urban environments⁹, gene flow between populations was identified as an issue that could impact species, leading to reductions in genetic diversity, inbreeding depression, reduced adaptive potential and even local extinction. The opportunity for colonisation following local extinction is also limited in most species of amphibian and reptile. If there are disease outbreaks, high levels of pollution or predation that led to the loss of a species, then fragmentation is certainly a problem. This is why in Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors, the drive is to create as large a habitat patch as possible by engaging communities and through enhancing not only community spaces, but also local gardens.

Amphibian presence is a good indicator of environmental health. Examples exist of citizen science monitoring programmes, such as in Alberta, Canada (where 90% of ponds have been removed), that showed improvement of individual ecological knowledge and engagement in urban design and planning for biodiversity enhanced conservation opportunities¹⁰. The team working in Alberta were able to generate an 8-stage framework that was then used to engage statutory bodies in planning for biodiversity.

Work by the University of Leeds¹¹ proposed that



gardens are the starting point for urban conservation and that various methods can be used to encourage wildlife-friendly management of collections of gardens and urban green space for biodiversity conservation.

The value of Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors is to generate a 'conservation drive' within a community and to see a collective view of urban biodiversity within an area. This incorporates gardens, allotments, river corridors, road verges and more. They enhance biodiversity and opportunities for urban reptiles and amphibians, but also for other species of plant, fungi, invertebrate and vertebrate.

Engagement of local communities as citizen scientists and urban habitat managers generates substantial benefit that offsets the challenge of barriers along our neighbourhood corridors. The use of smartphone technology and identification and recording apps (such as Froglife's Dragon Finder app), have been shown to generate a high level of success in identification of frogs, lizards, and snakes¹². However, more camouflaged individuals and juvenile stages were often missed. In the UK we have few species and most adults are quite distinctive so people can quickly recognise 'our' species.

Further, the additional benefits in terms of confidence-building, communication, and wellbeing of the individuals involved in our Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor projects is something of great importance and should not be taken for granted.

By Andrew Smart. Andrew is Froglife's Head of Science & Research.

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- ¹ Puan, C.L. *et al.*, 2019. Influence of landscape matrix on urban bird abundance: evidence from Malaysian citizen science data. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Biodiversity*, 12(3), pp.369-375.
- ² Lewanzik, D. *et al.*, 2022. Evaluating the potential of urban areas for bat conservation with citizen science data. *Environmental Pollution*, 297, p.118785.
- ³ Collins, C.M. *et al.*, 2024. Insect ecology and conservation in urban areas: An overview of knowledge and needs. *Insect conservation and diversity*, 17(2), pp.169-181.

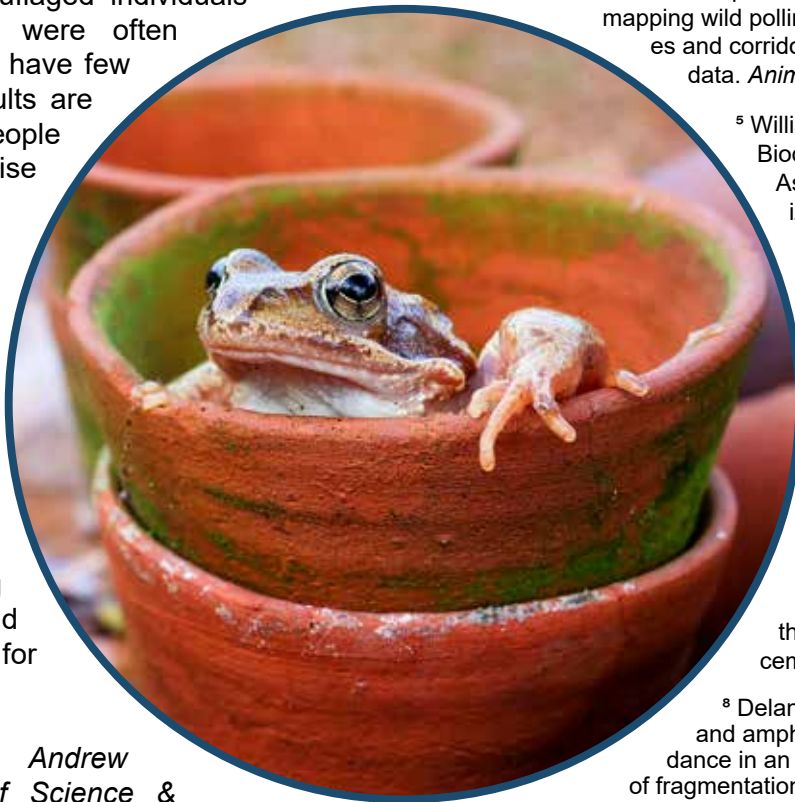
In our Froglife strategy, we refer to two types of landscape 'corridors':

Wildlife corridors between key habitats

A continuous habitat that connects green and/or blue space so that amphibians, reptiles and other wildlife can move between breeding and hibernation sites, and foraging grounds, allowing mixing of populations.

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors are linked reptile and/or amphibian habitats created and restored by local community groups, schools and other stakeholders that, where possible, join 'blue' and green habitats and engage local communities to support conservation and improve health and wellbeing.



⁴ Serret, H. *et al.*, 2022. Towards ecological management and sustainable urban planning in Seoul, South Korea: mapping wild pollinator habitat preferences and corridors using citizen science data. *Animals*, 12(11), p.1469.

⁵ Williams, R.L. *et al.*, 2015. Biodiversity in urban gardens: Assessing the accuracy of citizen science data on garden hedgehogs. *Urban Ecosystems*, 18(3), pp.819-833.

⁶ Dickman, C.R., 1987. Habitat fragmentation and vertebrate species richness in an urban environment. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, pp.337-351.

⁷ Nagel, D.C., 2022. Trails of hidden life - Involving Citizen Scientists to show the biodiversity at Viennese cemeteries.

⁸ Delaney, K.S. *et al.*, 2021. Reptile and amphibian diversity and abundance in an urban landscape: impacts of fragmentation and the conservation value of small patches. *Ichthyology & Herpetology*, 109(2), pp.424-435.

⁹ French, S.S. *et al.*, 2018. Town and country reptiles: a review of reptilian responses to urbanization. *Integrative and comparative biology*, 58(5), pp.948-966.

¹⁰ Lee, T.S. *et al.*, 2021. Advancing amphibian conservation through citizen science in urban municipalities. *Diversity*, 13(5), p.211.

¹¹ Goddard, M.A. *et al.*, 2010. Scaling up from gardens: biodiversity conservation in urban environments. *Trends in ecology & evolution*, 25(2), pp.90-98.

¹² Wittmann, J.L., 2017. *Use of Citizen Science Smartphone Technology in Herpetofauna Monitoring* (Doctoral dissertation, Sonoma State University).

From Garden to Garden

How one street became a haven for wildlife



I live in a terraced Victorian house in Brighton. In these old railway workers' cottages, the back gardens are small and they are linked by an old coal route, or 'twittern' as they say here in Sussex. These days there's no coal and so the twitterns are largely overgrown, but they make the perfect wildlife corridors for amphibians, reptiles and mammals.

When I first moved in, I spoke to my immediate neighbours about making sure our gardens were accessible to wildlife, and they were on board! Mine has a metal gate with plenty of gaps that wildlife can crawl through, but I also dug a hole beneath it so larger animals can pass under. Some neighbours had impenetrable wooden gates, so we made holes in them for hedgehogs, through which amphibians and reptiles can also travel.

A few months later, I did a talk at the local Scout hut. It was largely focussed on hedgehogs, as everyone loves them and wants to help them, but the changes people make to their gardens for hogs benefit other species, too. I set up a hedgehog group on Facebook so we can all encourage each other to create habitats and open our gardens, ultimately to form a network of connected gardens linked together via the twitterns – which means wildlife has less need to travel on the road.

There's a park nearby where there are areas of long grass, nettles, a bee bank, some wooded areas and a bit of scrub. There are also five hedgehog boxes and several bird nest boxes made by the local 'Men in Sheds' group, which I helped to organise. The park is connected to our gardens via the twitterns, so the space wildlife has to roam is actually quite big. More of us are now actively opening our gardens, creating habitats and providing food – both natural and supplementary. This is great news for wildlife.

Several neighbours have also put up swift boxes and some of them play swift calls, as I do. This means swifts have a range of nesting options on my road, which makes me happy. Sometimes I'll be working in my front garden and neighbours will come and chat to me about the swift or sparrow boxes, or about frogs and hedgehogs. Sometimes that's enough to get people interested in doing more for wildlife.

My dream is to persuade the council and neighbours to let us dig a pond in the park. This would act as a main breeding pond for local amphibians that our garden ponds could then connect to as 'satellite ponds'. It would be such a win for other wildlife, too, from foxes and hedgehogs that need to drink, to bathing birds and of course the many insects that use ponds for breeding. One day, maybe.

I write about all the things I do for wildlife in my book, *One Garden Against the World*, which is now out in paperback. Despite the title, it's actually about all our gardens – the more there are, the better for wildlife.

By Kate Bradbury. *Kate is a writer and author, specialising in wildlife gardening. She is also a Patron of Froglife.*



A Small Pond, a Massive Difference



By James McAdie. *James is Head of Operations for Froglife Ecological Services.*

In my time at Froglife, I have been lucky enough to create and restore well over 300 ponds ranging in size and location and I can honestly say (sometimes with a little prompting) that I can recount them all. Some ponds come to mind much more readily than others: successful school ponds, beautiful woodland ponds, enthusiastic community group ponds and family ponds are extremely memorable.

The beauty of a wildlife pond lies in its simplicity. Unlike ornamental water features, conservation ponds are designed with function and not necessarily form in mind. Shallow margins warm quickly in the spring thus encouraging breeding activity and supporting developing tadpoles. Gently sloping sides allow amphibians to enter and exit safely – essential for creatures that are excellent swimmers but surprisingly clumsy mountaineers.

For our native amphibians, a garden pond can be the difference between a population persisting or quietly fading away. Many amphibians return faithfully to the same breeding ponds year after year, only to find

them drained, filled in, or stocked with fish. A new pond in a garden, school, or community space, can quickly be colonised, sometimes within the very first spring. We have previously found that we had an inquisitive frog watching from the shallows of a new pond before we had even planted up!

I was fortunate and trusted enough after some years of experience to be enlisted to create a wildlife pond for my brother to compliment his outside office and the results have been spectacular (see photo above). Each visit to his home now requires a mandatory pond survey and informal questionnaire, with tea in hand, on any recent pond visitors he has observed.

After the pond's shape and location was decided to offer a splendid view from the office, we set about digging, and with the help of a mechanical excavator, our backs were spared. Once the desired depth and shape had been achieved, a geotextile layer was added to protect the liner that went in. A geotextile overliner was then placed on top of the liner to add further protection and the sides softened with subsoil from the excavation. Stones, rocks and log piles were used to give a more natural feel and to offer some excellent additional habitat for our desired guests.

In the years since its construction, the pond has, like my brother and I, matured and softened around the edges, and now looks as if it has been around

a lot longer than it actually has! Common frogs and smooth newts are regular visitors, and a pair of ducks return annually, sometimes to the detriment of the frogspawn laid in the spring. The pond has cemented itself at the top of my list of beautiful features in my brother's garden, which is no easy feat as it continues to move towards Gardener's World exhibition status each year.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for garden ponds is how quickly they deliver results. Unlike many conservation actions that take years to show impact, ponds can support wildlife almost immediately. One spring, a hole in the ground; the next, a swirl of

frogspawn and the satisfaction of having made space for nature to recover.

In uncertain times for wildlife, the message is refreshingly clear: dig a pond and nature will do the rest.

If you are interested in wildlife pond creations, restorations and habitat enhancements, please visit the FES webpage here: <https://www.froglife.org/froglife-ecological-services> or scan the QR code to the right..



London Blue Chain

Increasing connectivity in London



The concept of Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors was developed as a response to the fragmented and 'island-like' nature of many urban green spaces. Researchers now agree that solely conserving biodiversity within small, isolated nature reserves is an ineffective approach and the best way forward is to place an emphasis on connectivity by creating stepping-stone habitats joined up via networks or corridors of green and blue space.

Froglife's London Blue Chain project spans six boroughs in South London and has adopted this approach to maximise the availability of good quality habitat for the city's amphibian and reptile species – many of which are increasingly threatened because of habitat fragmentation and degradation. Our goal is to create six corridors across the project catchment area involving 60 'interventions' for wildlife, and to include over 450 people in the process.

So, what constitutes an 'intervention' for wildlife and why are they important? A principle focus of London

Blue Chain is on the creation and restoration of 85 small ponds, in collaboration with community groups and partner organisations. At the time of writing, we have worked on 55 of the 85 ponds and you can see their locations on the project webpage. We have plans for Lambeth and Southwark later in the project, so keep your eyes peeled for ways to get involved.

Small ponds (typically 1m x 2.5m) are brilliant for a range of mammals, invertebrates and reptiles – not just amphibians. We have created butterfly banks using the subsoil excavated during pond digs, and incorporated buried wood, branches and logs to create useful overwintering sites for newts, toads and frogs at our sites.. Alongside this work, such as in Lambeth's Archbishop's Park, we have buried terracotta piping to create tunnels for amphibians to use during their brumation period.

Where possible, our focus is always on emulating a natural environment for wildlife – leaving patches of undisturbed scrub for shelter, allowing leaves and

other plant matter to decompose next to ponds and collecting piles of branches and deadwood to attract many of the species that our amphibians and reptiles feed upon.

Elsewhere on the London Blue Chain, we've been heading into schools to run educational sessions for large groups of young people. We're hoping to inspire the next generation of conservationists through this work and we've been genuinely impressed by the knowledge, enthusiasm and respect that many of these groups have shown. As well as linking these sessions into the school curriculum, we've included creative elements to ensure we engage with a wide variety of learning styles and accessibility requirements. Working with young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is a core focus for us, and this approach has been particularly effective.

We've also used the creative arts to run Blue Chain Links Sessions within adult community settings. These have been included in Peckham's Joe Richard's House, a provision for low-income individuals to use as an alternative to street-level homelessness. We've run multiple sessions in New Eltham's Roots4Life centre, where they host a monthly community meal and warm hub during the colder months. These sessions include ceramic work, painting, clay and origami. For our participants, we have seen the gentle positive impact that doing something creative can have on their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of pride. This, alongside discussion about our species and what they can do locally to get involved in their protection, has proven a good formula for grass-roots level community engagement with new audiences who have not often been engaged by the sector.

We've been developing our approach to embedding knowledge into the communities of south London through training and translation work. We've identified many non-English language speaking communities that we're looking to work with in a variety of ways to ensure that the habitat works taking place now are maintained and looked after for years to come, so that they can achieve the maximum benefit for wildlife.

Across our work on habitats and work with people, the project is progressing well towards achieving its overarching mission of fusing conservation work with community engagement, in a way that is contemporary, progressive, and which will be socially sustainable for years to come.

By Harry Forshaw. *Harry is Froglife's Project Manager for London Blue Chain.*

The London Blue Chain is made possible by National Lottery players and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.





Garden to Greenway

Community-built wildlife corridors in Walsall

As Coalface to Wildspace, Midlands has drawn to a close, I reflect on the past three years of the project and what we achieved in that time. The concept of 'Coalface to Wildspace' was all about working with local people to help make a post-industrial, ex-mining area more wildlife-friendly through education, art and making new habitats.

We worked to co-create eight Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors (NWCs) across Walsall. Each corridor aimed to include one pond and four other small habitats that would increase the connectivity between some of Walsall's abundant green spaces.

By the end of 2024, we had already exceeded the expectations of the project. We worked with over 2,000 people to create nine new ponds and 80 smaller actions including wildlife homes, meadows and hibernacula. These habitats span across school yards, church yards, allotments, community gardens, private gardens and public green spaces. We've worked with people from ages 3-93 to plant bulbs, sprinkle wildflower seeds, dig ponds and hang bird boxes.

Additional funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority enabled a major pond restoration at Reedswood Park and the planting of 800 trees across Pleck Park and Canal Park. These green spaces are vital refuges for wildlife in an otherwise urbanised area. Government statistics show that residential gardens cover approximately 4.9% of England's land, which is more than all nature reserves combined. It was fantastic to find last spring through surveys of our urban garden ponds, that at least five were being used by breeding amphibians!

As part of the NWC work, we also delivered over 40 wildlife gardening workshops to 760 people. When possible, these sessions

included planning specific habitat actions. When that wasn't feasible, we taught participants how to manage their gardens, green spaces or balconies with wildlife in mind. One participant's comment particularly stands out: 'Years ago, I wouldn't have seen myself at something like this, I used to think wildlife stuff was boring, but it's actually really interesting'. That for me, is what it is all about, opening people's minds to different ways of thinking that may benefit the greater good.

It would be remiss not to mention our 'Speaking Sculptures'. Each corridor has one and they are community-made celebrations of nature that we are proud of. Toads, newts, adders, hedgehogs and dragonflies each received painted tributes and words of admiration, set against the backdrop of eight of Walsall's urban parks and nature reserves to inspire those who pass by. It was a joy to find that half of the sculptures had families of blue tits nesting in the affixed bird boxes last year, which were also made by local people.

In the wake of this project, I hope people will continue to think about how best they can act for wildlife, whether that is creating a new pond, using natural methods of pest control on their vegetable patch or simply leaving leaf piles for the critters. Each small act makes a difference and adds to the corridor consciousness.

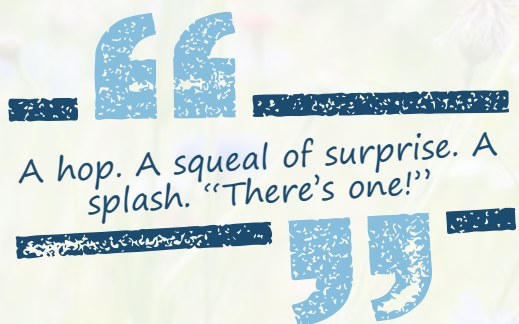
By Christina Nijjar. *Christina is Froglife's Project Manager of Coalface to Wildspace, Midlands.*

We would like to thank our funders and National Lottery players for making this project possible.



Stepping Stones through the City

The wildlife highways hiding in our allotments



It's early spring: birds noisily compete for nesting sites, green buds on branches unfurl into fresh leaves, early bumblebees hunt for nectar and a common frog just hopped out of the undergrowth into the shade of the pond's marsh marigold.

We're not out in the countryside, a national park, or even a nature reserve. We're in a community growing space in Zone 2, London, where one of the gardeners just saw her first frog of the season at Clapham Common Bandstand Beds.

Moments like this are becoming more common in city growing spaces, and not just because more people are gardening. Urban food growing is booming, offering organic, zero-mile fruit and veg, an escape from the bustle of the city, and a local community that grows and learns together. Research suggests that older allotment gardeners enjoy better health and wellbeing. With many allotments facing long waiting lists, movements like Right to Grow advocate for turning unused public land into food growing and community greening projects to meet that need.

But it's about more than just a bountiful harvest. Froglife's Leaping Forward for Dementia project in south London runs sessions at two community growing sites. In between sowing and growing, we run citizen science surveys, build homes for nature, learn about wildlife and create art, but perhaps most importantly we spend time together outdoors – making a difference and enjoying ourselves. For people living with dementia, and for wildlife navigating fragmented cities, these connected green spaces offer something bigger: a sense of continuity.

Like stepping stones across a busy city, growing spaces managed with nature in mind offer a variety of habitats for amphibians and reptiles – water, damp shelter, safe places to forage, and warm, insulated spaces to overwinter – and because of that, what beautiful places to meet! At Streatham Common Community Garden, companion planting for our tomato beds helps our fruit yields but also benefits pollinators. Our ponds give us a peaceful vista for relaxation, but also a breeding ground for local frogs, newts and toads, as well as hoverflies, dragonflies and more. Our open-sided compost piles create free nutrient-rich earth for next year's veg beds as well as refuges for these amphibians to shelter.

As cities become increasingly built over, these growing spaces are vital stop-off points for amphibians and reptiles, and often perfectly placed to help them move through the landscape. Many of the UK's allotments sit alongside railway lines – a legacy from the Second World War when rail companies' unused land was requisitioned and repurposed as allotments in order to "Dig for Victory". Railway sidings, with their stony basking banks edged by overgrown scrub and linear routes, provide excellent wildlife corridors for reptiles.

Back at Clapham Common Bandstand Beds, later in the year, a toad has been spotted in the compost pile. "Where do you think they came from?", a gardener asks, before we're firing up Google maps to check out potential nearby ponds. I'm immediately struck by the busy roads enclosing every side of the Common, the criss-crossed tarmac paths, and the vast expanses of frequently mown amenity grassland. I imagine this travelling toad, smaller than my palm but capable of covering distances up to 5km, somehow reaching this oasis of biodiversity in the urban sprawl, and wonder if it would've survived without it. The gardeners and I wave at the toad as we leave and resolve to build another log pile nearby next week.

By Rose Williams. *Rose is Froglife's Project Manager for the Leaping Forward for Dementia London project.*



Toads on Roads

Why habitat connectivity matters

A spring migration with deadly consequences

Each spring, as nights grow warmer and rain softens the ground, toads emerge from their winter refuges and begin an epic journey. Drawn by instinct, they migrate from their terrestrial habitats to the ponds, wetlands, and slow-moving waters where they breed. For millennia, these routes were shaped by streams, forests and meadows. Today, many of them are bisected by tarmac.

“Toads on Roads” represents not just a UK conservation problem, but a global one: wildlife forced to navigate across roads during seasonal movements, often with fatal results. For toads and other amphibians, roads are not just barriers, they are among the leading causes of population decline.

Why are toads especially vulnerable?

Toads are well adapted to life both on land and in water but are poorly equipped to survive encounters with vehicles. They move slowly, often ‘freeze’ when threatened, and migrate en masse during a few key nights each year. This means that a single rainy evening can result in thousands of animals attempting to cross the same stretch of road. When adults are killed on roads during breeding migrations, the loss ripples through future generations.

Several biological traits increase their risk:

- **Seasonal fidelity:** Many toads return to the exact pond where they were born, even if safer alternatives exist nearby.

- **Low reproductive replacement:** Although females lay many eggs, only a small fraction survive to adulthood, making adult mortality particularly damaging.
- **Permeable skin:** Amphibians absorb pollutants directly through their skin, so roads pose chemical as well as physical threats.

Roads as barriers, not just hazards

It is tempting to think of roads simply as dangerous crossing points, but their impact is much greater. Roads fragment landscapes, dividing once continuous habitats into isolated patches. For toads, this fragmentation can mean breeding ponds are cut off from feeding and overwintering areas, reduced genetic exchange between populations, and increased vulnerability to disease, drought, and climate extremes. This is where habitat connectivity becomes essential.

Habitat connectivity refers to how easily animals can move between the places they need to survive, such as breeding sites, foraging areas and shelters. For species like toads, connectivity is not a luxury; it is a requirement. Connected habitats allow populations to maintain healthy genetic diversity, recolonise areas after local extinctions and adjust their ranges in response to climate change. When roads sever these connections, populations may persist for a time but often decline slowly and quietly.

Toads as indicators of ecosystem health

Protecting toads does more than save a single group of animals. Amphibians are often described as indicator species because their sensitivity to environmental change reflects the health of entire ecosystems. When toads disappear, it can signal problems such as pollution, water mismanagement or broader habitat degradation. Measures that improve connectivity for toads, like wetland restoration and greener infrastructure, also benefit birds, mammals, insects and people.

Solutions that reconnect landscapes

The good news is that the problem of Toads on Roads is well understood, and many effective solutions already exist.

- Amphibian tunnels and underpasses: small tunnels or culverts installed beneath roads can provide safe passage during migrations. When combined with guiding fences that funnel animals toward entrances, these structures can reduce road mortality.
- Seasonal road closures and traffic calming: in some areas, temporary road closures on peak migration nights have proven highly effective. Where closures are not possible, reduced speed limits and warning signage can significantly lower mortality.
- Volunteer-led Toad Patrols: community volunteers play a vital role in many regions, helping to carry

toads across roads during migration periods and collecting data on population trends. While not a long-term solution on their own, it's thought this annual volunteer effort has substantially reduced the rate of decline in areas where patrols are in place. They enable most adult toads at those sites to successfully breed, which is key to the species' success.

- Smarter planning and design: integrating wildlife crossings into new road projects is far more cost-effective than retrofitting existing roads. Considering amphibian movement at the planning stage helps prevent future conflicts between infrastructure and biodiversity.

A shared responsibility

The story of Toads on Roads is ultimately about coexistence. Biodiversity conservation often depends on maintaining connections, not just protecting isolated sites. Roads are essential to human societies, but they do not have to function as ecological dead ends. Through acknowledging the movement needs of wildlife and prioritising habitat connectivity, we can transform roads from barriers into permeable features of the landscape. By embedding habitat connectivity into policy and practice, we can reduce wildlife mortality, safeguard ecosystem health, and design infrastructure that works with nature rather than against it.

By Ashlea Mawby. *Ashlea is Froglife's Communications Manager & Toads on Roads Coordinator.*



Travelling Toadlets



Common toads are a migratory species. Adults are often spotted during early spring crossing roads, cycleways and footpaths on their annual mass migration from their hibernation sites back to their ancestral breeding ponds. Across the country, hundreds of 'Toads on Roads' volunteers help them get there safely without being run over.

But what happens later in the year, when the eggs they laid have turned from tadpoles into tiny toadlets that are ready to leave the pond themselves? How do they decide when to leave and where do the little toadlets go?

Natural England are supporting a brand-new partnership project to answer some of these questions. The 'Travelling Toadlets' project is a collaboration between Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (ARG UK), Froglife, the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), Natural England and the University of Chester. It's funded by Natural England's Species Recovery Programme.

A key aim of the project is to find out more about how newly metamorphosed common toadlets behave after they move away from their breeding ponds. We know they sometimes move en masse, with hundreds or even thousands of tiny toadlets moving together as a big group. But what triggers these movements, when do they happen, and why?

We also know that newly metamorphosed toadlets face many threats. They are only 5mm long and are extremely vulnerable to predation from birds, mammals and even large insects. Like their parents, they are also at risk of being inadvertently crushed by pedestrians, cyclists or road traffic. Mortality is high, with few surviving to reach breeding age, so a better understanding of their behaviour can help us

to better support thriving common toad populations in the future.

But where to start? As ever, it was Toad Patrollers and citizen scientists to the rescue!

We started by asking you, our amazing citizen scientists. We set up a new Record Pool portal 'Travelling Toadlets' (visit www.recordpool.org.uk/travellingtoadlets). This provides a place for people to log metamorph sightings, the number seen travelling together, plus additional information about the circumstances including date and time, rainfall and weather conditions, habitat types, distance from the natal ponds, plus anything else that was noticed.

We were overwhelmed by the response with over 82 reports of toadlets on the move during 2025 across England, Scotland and Wales. In almost all cases, the toadlets moved during or immediately after a period of rainfall. Toadlets were recorded from late May right through to November. We expected toadlets in southern locations might move earlier but the timing of their movements did not appear to be related to geographic location – toadlets from Scotland, Derbyshire and Bath were all recorded leaving their ponds during the period of 11–13 June 2025, which was a period of rainfall after a prolonged dry spell.

Assessing mortality risk for toadlets

For each location where people reported metamorph sightings, we ran the 'amph4pop' computer model to simulate the local toad population. This model was co-designed by UKCEH and amphibian researchers, practitioners and volunteers, including Toad Patrollers. It predicts where the most suitable terrestrial habitat resources are around a breeding pond, predicts where adult toads are likely spending

their time, and estimates the toad population size. It accounts for the amount and distribution of habitat resources in the landscape and how accessible those habitats are, given the risk of road mortality.

Using this model, we could estimate the percentage of metamorphs expected to perish due to setting off in an inadvisable direction (e.g. towards poor habitat or risky roads). Losses of 50–70% were typical for the sites we modelled. However, some sites were predicted to have very small population sizes and much higher losses, ranging from 75–98%, suggesting these are places where it might be important to introduce conservation actions to improve toadlet survival chances.

How can we help them? Gathering clues from detailed studies

We also conducted more intensive studies at specific locations, including at Stonydelph Lakes in Staffordshire and at Worcester College in the City of Oxford. Worcester College is an important site for common toads. Its large ornamental lake, plus ponds, shrubby borders, an orchard and areas of longer grass all provide great toad habitat, while its glass houses and other garden buildings offer a multitude of places for them to shelter. It's surrounded by urban areas and roads, except for a green corridor along the canal (see maps in Figure 1 below).

The College are keen to support the toads and have already changed their garden management to benefit wildlife, including leaving un-mown areas to encourage wildflowers and invertebrates, leaving leaf litter and creating an amphibian hibernation structure. We monitored toadlets at Worcester College through their first active season, from when they left their natal ponds in June until they entered hibernation in late November, using artificial cover objects surveyed at weekly intervals. By late autumn the metamorphs were often found sheltering with older juveniles and even adult toads, as they collectively sought out

suitable safe, frost-free spots to overwinter.

The study at Worcester College demonstrated that the tiny toads were moving from their ornamental natal ponds to nearby floral or shrub beds (20–30 metres away), the orchard area (80–120m), areas of longer uncut grass on the college lawns (150–250m) and to the buildings (circa 250 metres). Meanwhile, the study at Stonydelph Lakes revealed that metamorphs congregate in shallow beachy areas and areas of scrub or long grass on the bankside, before leaving their natal pond, suggesting that modifying pond sides could help encourage toadlets to leave in directions where suitable terrestrial habitat can be found.

For advice on how you can use our findings to help toadlets in your area, see the next page.

By Angela Julian and Jasmine Gandy from ARG UK (Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK), Tim Baker from Natural England, and Emma Gardner from the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of our project partners, especially: Tim Baker at Natural England, Andrew Smart at Froglife, Jodie Gruber at the University of Chester, and Simon Bagnall and Allison Leslie at Worcester College. We would also like to thank our two amazing interns, Maiya Evans at Nottingham Trent University, and Jasmine Gandy, as well as the People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) for supporting Jasmine's internship.

Most of all we would like to thank our Travelling Toadlets recorders, without whom none of this would have been possible, and all of the dedicated toad patrollers who brave the wet, wind and rain to save amphibians. Travelling Toads was funded by Natural England under the Species Recovery Programme 'SRP107 Understanding the ecology of the common toad (*Bufo bufo*)'.

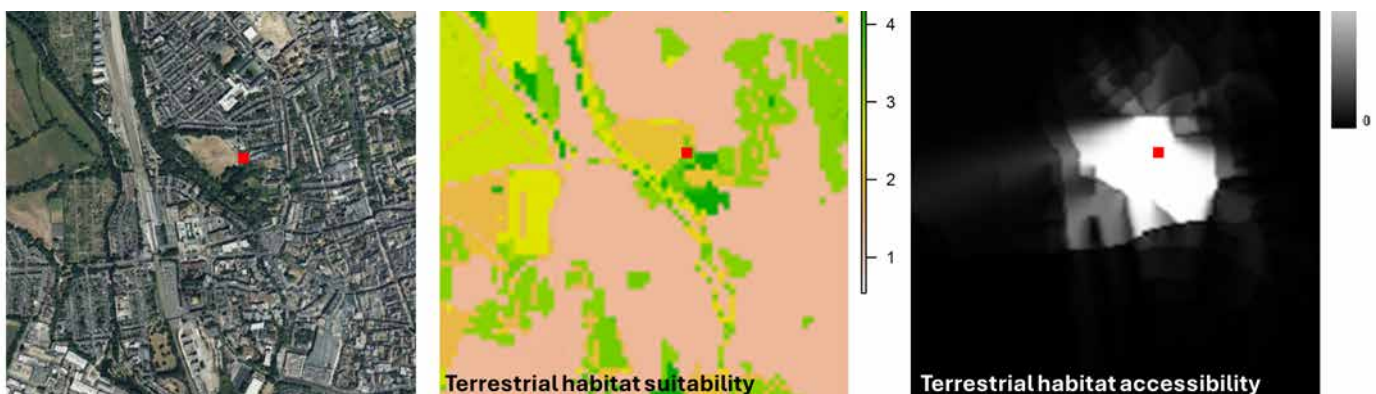


Figure 1. Maps of common toad habitat suitability (where darker green represents more suitable habitat) and accessibility (accounting for road mortality; where lighter colours indicate more chance of toads from the breeding pond reaching the area safely) around the Worcester College breeding pond (red square), as predicted by the amph4pop model.

Help travelling toadlets near you

We were delighted to have had such a great response to our Travelling Toadlets survey and that so many people were keen to share their experiences with these charismatic little animals. These tiny but determined amphibians seem to show a strong will to survive, against such big odds. We can all help the emerging metamorphs by:

SHELTER

Improve the habitat around their natal ponds. If toadlets can find places to shelter near the pond margin, they will be able to forage to build up their reserves immediately after leaving the water, potentially increasing their chances of survival.

EXIT

Create ramps, beaches or other aids, to encourage them to exit the pond in areas where there is better vegetative cover.



COVER

Put down temporary cover to help them cross paved/tarmac areas or short turf grass. These are risky places with little cover from predators, where they are more likely to be eaten, desiccate or get stepped on. Any shelter you can give will help protect them.

REPORT

Report when you see toadlets on the 'Travelling Toadlets' portal (scan code for: www.recordpool.org.uk/travellingtoadlets), which will remain open so we can continue gathering information to help us better understand and support common toads throughout their lifecycle.

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor: Boston and Beyond

Bringing communities and wildlife together

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor: Boston and Beyond is Froglife's new project in Lincolnshire, aiming to connect green and urban spaces across the Boston region. Launched in August 2025, this two-year project will create a network of habitats that allow amphibians, reptiles, and a wide range of other wildlife to move, feed, breed and shelter more easily, while also engaging local communities through hands-on conservation and creative activities.

The project has already completed the large habitat works, which include three new ponds at RSPB Freiston Shore and three new ponds at RSPB Frampton Marsh, and the restoration of two existing ponds at Jenny's Wood. These works provide vital breeding and feeding habitats for amphibians and reptiles, species often overlooked in wider conservation initiatives. The surrounding terrestrial areas will also be enhanced with basking banks, hibernacula, wildflower strips and other wildlife-friendly features to create a supportive landscape for

reptiles, invertebrates and other wildlife.

The Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor will run from the west of Boston through the town and on to Freiston Shore in the east. This corridor will connect the newly improved sites and additional green spaces, such as allotments and school grounds, providing safe routes for wildlife while creating accessible green and blue spaces for local communities.

Why Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors are needed

Biodiversity in the UK is in crisis, and amphibians and reptiles are among the species most severely affected. The 2023 State of Nature report assessed all thirteen UK amphibian and reptile species and found that nearly a third are threatened, with common species declining at alarming rates. Habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, chemical pollution and climate change are key drivers of this decline.



Freshwater habitats, particularly ponds, are essential for these species, yet during the 20th century, the UK lost around 50% of its ponds, and many remaining sites are in poor condition. Ponds support over two-thirds of Britain's freshwater species and provide vital ecosystem services, from flood mitigation to carbon sequestration. Urban and peri-urban areas, however, often lack high-quality ponds and connected green spaces, further isolating wildlife populations.

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors (NWCs) address these issues by linking habitats across the landscape. By connecting ponds, wildflower strips and other wildlife-friendly features, NWCs allow amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates and other species to move, feed, and breed safely. They also help prevent inbreeding and population decline by enabling dispersal between sites. In urban areas, NWCs provide people with accessible green and blue spaces, supporting wellbeing, education, and a connection to nature, particularly in communities that are under-served or economically deprived.

Engaging the community

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor: Boston and Beyond places communities at the centre of its work. Over the two-year period, the project will directly engage schools, youth groups, community groups and residents through a wide range of activities. These include "Amphibian Hops," where participants will explore local ponds through wildlife surveys and Wildlife Gardening Workshops hosted in allotments, community gardens and other green spaces. Delivery has already begun, with initial Wildlife Gardening Workshops taking place and practical habitat creation activities underway.

A key creative element of the project is the installation of two 'Speaking Statues'. These sculptures will be designed in collaboration with local participants through a series of workshops where people will create an expressive appreciation of wildlife through art. The statues will incorporate QR codes linking to wildlife information, creating an interactive and educational experience that celebrates Boston's natural heritage while encouraging people to value and protect it.

Volunteer involvement is also central to the corridor's success. Training sessions will equip participants with skills in amphibian and reptile surveying, habitat management, and conservation techniques, while volunteer habitat days will allow communities to actively contribute to the creation of ponds, basking banks, hibernacula and other wildlife-friendly features. This hands-on approach ensures that local people develop a lasting connection with the natural environment and gain the knowledge to continue supporting wildlife in their neighbourhoods.

A vision for the future

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor: Boston and Beyond represents a landscape-scale approach to urban conservation, linking sites across Boston to create a living network for wildlife and people. By restoring and creating ponds, enhancing terrestrial habitats, and working with communities to design art and wildlife features, the project ensures that both amphibians and reptiles – and the people who share their environment – have a sustainable future.

Whether it is building a hibernaculum, planting wildflowers or helping to create a 'Speaking Statue', participants will play an essential role in shaping Boston's natural heritage. With the Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor as its backbone, the project aims to inspire connection and action, leaving a legacy of biodiversity, education and community involvement.

By Rachel Burton. *Rachel is Froglife's Project Manager for the Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor: Boston and Beyond project.*

Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor: Boston and Beyond is made possible with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Lincolnshire Community Foundation. Thanks to National Lottery players, we can engage the local community with nature and enhance the local environment.



Coalface to Wildspace

Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire & the Lothians



Thanks to lottery players, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund) awarded us a grant to develop a new exciting project for Scotland.

The development phase of our Coalface to Wildspace: Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire & the Lothians project was completed at the end of October, and we have submitted our Activity Plan along with several appendices to Heritage Fund for a delivery phase grant. The project was developed by me with support from a fantastic consultant, Faye Wilson and a wonderful volunteer, McKenzie Rayner.

Working across 14 sites, the project will deliver 87 pond creations and restorations, alongside 24 terrestrial habitat improvements. These will be connected by nine Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors (NWCs). The project aims to directly engage 32,540 people through public engagement activities, events and digital outputs.

This project builds on Froglife's established reputation for combining habitat creation and restoration with wide-ranging community engagement activities tailored to diverse interests. During the development phase, we conducted comprehensive community consultation through presentations and workshops with young and older people from varied backgrounds and groups including Queer by Nature and Seeds of Disruption, asking them to present ideas

for the NWCs and suggest neighbourhood locations. We also gathered feedback at large-scale events and festivals. These contributions significantly informed planning for the NWCs and other delivery phase elements.

We collaborated with various artists to inform the project's creative elements, with each artist creating activity plans to support the delivery phase. Some elements are adapted from successful previous projects: 'Speaking Sculpture' workshops (which produced Speaking Sculptures in the Midlands) and the 'Mapestry' from our Come Forth for Wildlife project (which attracted over 200,000 visitors on tour). Other elements are new to Froglife, particularly the Movement & Sound performance art planned for schools. All creative elements will be overseen by specialist artists: a Fabric Artist, Performance Artist, and an artist managing nature-focused installations for the NWCs.

The Coalface to Wildspace: Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and the Lothians project will build momentum to conserve Scotland's iconic reptile and amphibian species and freshwater resources, while providing training opportunities as Nature Guardians and Trainees, and engaging communities throughout Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and the Lothians. This project benefits both nature and people, it is a win-win.

By Kathy Wormald. *Kathy is Froglife's Chief Executive Officer.*

Yorkshire



The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded Froglife funding to develop a new project for the Yorkshire area. Coalface to Wildspace Yorkshire is an ambitious project to engage communities from across the region in action that will support our native amphibians and reptiles.

The project will operate across North, South and West Yorkshire delivering an engaging and creative programme of community engagement activities as well delivering large scale habitat works.

Since April 2025, Froglife have been involving communities from across the Yorkshire area to help shape the project and ensure it meets the needs of

communities and our species. The consultation has involved nearly 1,000 people and included schools, community organisations and businesses. The information collected has been used to shape the final funding application that will be submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in February 2026. It has informed the locations of the wildlife corridors, helped to set the direction of a 3D film and has been instrumental in the design of the wildlife gardening workshops.

One of the overriding themes from the consultation has been people's desire to act to help amphibians

and reptiles. While out and about, people have approached the Froglife team sharing stories of their encounters with amphibians and reptiles and it has been truly amazing to see and hear the enthusiasm that people have for our species.

The development of Coalface to Wildspace Yorkshire has been made possible with a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, with thanks to National Lottery players.

By Andy Goff. *Andy is Froglife's Development Manager for Coalface to Wildspace Yorkshire.*



Peterborough Green Talent

Peterborough Green Talent is a three-year project funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund that runs from June 2025 to June 2028. The project aims to restore and create over 110 wildlife habitats at Froglife's managed nature reserves, and green spaces in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Peterborough. The wildlife habitats will have a strong focus on improving conditions for reptiles and amphibians, whose populations are at risk from habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation.

The Green Talent team started work at Boardwalks restoring ponds that had become heavily shaded and silted (see before & after pictures below). They have now moved over to a neighbouring green space at Thorpe Meadows where they are restoring a struggling pond threatened by willow encroachment (see picture on the bottom right). Plans include assessing opportunities to extend a wildlife corridor

from Eye Green to Dogsthorpe Star Pit to improve habitat connectivity in this area.

An equally important element of the project is our programme of three-month Placements and our longer-term Traineeships that are designed to help people new to conservation gain the skills and confidence needed to enter the sector. If you would like to know more about the project or get involved, please contact the Green Talent Project Manager at Hannah.Keeley@froglife.org.

By Hannah Keeley. *Hannah is Froglife's Project Manager for Peterborough Green Talent.*

The team would like to give a huge thanks to National Lottery players and the National Lottery Heritage Fund for funding this valuable work.



Peterborough Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors

Connecting communities through conservation

In the heart of Cambridgeshire, the Peterborough Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors Project (PNWC) is transforming the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people through wildlife conservation activities. As urban development continues to fragment natural habitats across the UK, our project demonstrates how local communities can play a vital role in protecting our native amphibians and reptiles whilst providing meaningful opportunities for young people to connect with nature.

PNWC represents a powerful model of eco-therapy that benefits both wildlife and people. The project serves young people aged 4 to 18, helping them improve local green spaces whilst developing confidence, social skills and environmental knowledge. This is done over 5–10 weekly sessions tailored to the needs of the group and the available space, which implements a plan to increase biodiversity through hands-on conservation tasks.

Understanding Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors

The concept of Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors (NWCs) lies at the heart of Froglife's conservation strategy. Wildlife corridors provide habitats that connect areas where isolated wildlife communities cannot easily survive. This connectivity is crucial for amphibians and reptiles, among other species, living in urban environments where natural spaces have become increasingly isolated.

In cities and towns across Britain, gardens are becoming vital refuges as wild areas disappear or become fragmented. By creating interconnected networks of wildlife-friendly habitats, NWCs function as 'green stepping stones' that allow species to move safely across the landscape in search of food, shelter and breeding sites. This approach addresses one of the most pressing threats to amphibian and reptile survival: habitat destruction and fragmentation.

Common toads for instance, breed in ancestral ponds they return to year after year. They also require good



connections to foraging and overwintering areas, including allotments, gardens and woodland. Without these corridors linking suitable habitats, even protected species struggle to maintain viable populations in urban settings.

Practical conservation activities and habitat creation

PNWC engages young people through hands-on conservation work that delivers tangible benefits for local wildlife. Activities include pond creation and restoration, constructing wildlife homes such as hibernacula, toad abodes and bug hotels. We also create basking and butterfly banks, wildflower meadows and log piles, among other craft and learning activities.

Wildlife conservation education

Education forms a cornerstone of this project, transforming how young people understand and relate to wildlife. The project fosters young people to be interested in wildlife with an eagerness to create and improve habitats in their local area. The hard work the young people put in creates a legacy that will improve biodiversity in their community and something tangible they can be proud of.

Sessions consist of practical outdoor activities in green spaces where young people gain confidence, social skills, and knowledge of the environment and conservation. This hands-on methodology proves particularly effective for engaging young people who may struggle in traditional classroom environments.



These activities also provide therapeutic benefits, reducing stress and increasing happiness by fostering connections with nature. For many participants from urban areas with limited exposure to nature, these sessions represent their first meaningful interactions with wildlife.

Skills development

Beyond ecological knowledge, the project develops practical skills that serve young people throughout their lives. Participants learn to work as part of a team to plan and complete projects, whilst engaging with their local community. They gain hands-on experience with conservation techniques including pond construction, habitat management and wildlife monitoring.

The project also introduces young people to wildlife identification and recording. Using tools such as Froglife's Dragon Finder App, participants learn to recognise and document local amphibian and reptile sightings, contributing valuable data to national monitoring efforts.

Young people leave the programme equipped not only with knowledge about amphibians and reptiles but also with the confidence to continue exploring and protecting nature in their own communities. Perhaps most importantly, the project cultivates a generation of environmental stewards who understand their role in protecting local wildlife.

Community impact and wider benefits

PNWC demonstrates that conservation can be a vehicle for positive social change. Thanks to funding from The Simon Gibson Charitable Trust, the project is offered as a free scheme to vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.

The therapeutic benefits of nature-based activities extend beyond individual participants and bring young people together working towards shared

conservation goals. The project builds social connections and community pride. The wildlife habitats created through these efforts become community assets that benefit all residents whilst enriching local biodiversity.

The future of wildlife corridors in Peterborough

As urban development continues across Peterborough, the need for NWCs becomes ever more pressing. The project's success in engaging young people demonstrates that conservation need not be the exclusive domain of specialists, and that local communities can play active roles in protecting wildlife.

The network of habitats being created across Peterborough offers hope for the future of the region's amphibian and reptile populations. Each pond dug, each hibernaculum built and each wildlife-friendly garden established, adds another link to the chain that allows species to thrive in an increasingly urbanised landscape.

For the young people involved, the project offers an opportunity to make a real difference in their local environment, to develop skills and confidence, and to forge lasting connections with the natural world. In doing so, PNWC creates a legacy that extends far beyond any single habitat improvement as it nurtures a generation that knows the importance of conservation and are equipped with the knowledge to protect it.

By Clare Middleton. *Clare is Froglife's Reserve Warden & Learning Officer.*



Creating Wildlife Corridors at Home

When it comes to amphibian and reptile populations in the UK, habitat connectivity isn't just a 'nice to have', it's essential for their survival. Habitat connectivity refers to the ability of our species to move between different areas of suitable habitat, allowing them to find food, shelter, breeding sites and places to brumate.

As towns and cities become increasingly urbanised, these natural routes are often broken up by roads, fencing, paving and intensively managed gardens. The decline of many native species is being driven by habitat loss and fragmentation – but by rethinking how we manage our gardens and outdoor spaces, we can play a direct role in helping wildlife recover, survive and thrive!

This is why Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridors are so important. By creating links between green spaces, gardens and other small patches of habitat, wildlife corridors give native species easier access to the resources they need to survive. While some corridors cover large areas, no action is too small when it comes to improving wildlife connectivity at home.

Garden by garden, street by street, when people add simple wildlife-friendly features, they create stepping-stone habitats that reconnect formerly isolated areas.

Added together, gardens in the UK take up more space than all our national nature reserves combined. This means that what happens in our gardens and outdoor areas really matters. This guide offers practical ideas that anyone can try, showing how any piece of outdoor space can contribute as a Neighbourhood Wildlife Corridor to help amphibians, reptiles and other wildlife move more safely through the places we live.

By Billy Ward. *Billy is a Trainee on Froglife's London Blue Chain project.*

For more information on how to create habitats in your garden, visit the Froglife website by scanning the QR code for one of our many free wildlife guides.



Scrubby habitats

Creating scrubby areas using native plants and wildflowers is one of the best ways to form wildlife corridors within and between gardens. These slightly wilder patches allow animals to move through a space while remaining hidden from predators. Embracing a slightly messier, natural look in your garden will make a big difference to biodiversity and wildlife connectivity.



Toad abodes

Amphibians and reptiles need safe, undisturbed places to rest during the day and to shelter during colder or drier periods. Toad abodes provide exactly this and can be created by partially burying plant pots or knocking a hole in the side of one big enough for an amphibian to get in and out. You could go the extra mile and decorate the pots as well! While they may not be used immediately, toad abodes often become well-established refuges over time, especially when similar shelters are available across multiple gardens.



Compost heaps

Adding a compost heap is one of the most effective ways to boost garden biodiversity, provided it is designed with wildlife in mind. The key consideration is access. Compost containers made from untreated wood are ideal, as they naturally allow gaps at ground level for wildlife to move in and out. Fully sealed plastic compost bins are less accessible, as they prevent wildlife from entering and leaving freely.

A well-built compost heap offers valuable refuge, particularly during the winter months. Grass snakes are known to use the warmth generated by decomposing material to incubate their eggs, while slow worms, toads, hedgehogs and other species are attracted by the abundance of insects. Positioning the heap in a quiet corner and avoiding frequent disturbance will make it even more beneficial.



Rock and log piles

Rock and log piles are simple, low-effort additions that can make a garden far more wildlife-friendly – and yes, they're as easy to make as it sounds! A pile of rocks placed in a sunny spot creates warm basking areas for reptiles such as common lizards and slow worms, while also providing crevices for shelter. Log piles on the other hand, offer cool, damp conditions that are particularly attractive to amphibians.



Bog gardens

Created by lining a shallow depression with pond liner and filling it with moisture-retentive soil, bog gardens remain damp throughout the year. When planted with native species such as marsh marigold, sedges and rushes, bog gardens will attract insects and provide cool, humid conditions that frogs, toads and newts rely on. When placed near other wildlife-friendly features, they act as important hubs within garden corridors, helping amphibians move safely between feeding and sheltering areas.



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And last, but certainly not least, a big thank you to all our volunteers including all those toad patrollers who continue doing such a terrific job each year.