

### **Frog Models**

The Early Learning Centre is selling a set of five plastic models, called "Look How it Grows: Frog", which range from a tadpole to an adult frog. This provides an excellent visual demonstration of frog metamorphosis if you are explaining it to children - or adults! The set is currently in the ELC sale, and seems to be selling out fast.

### **Terrapins**

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles craze of a few years ago led to many terrapins being bought from pet shops, and later released into the countryside when people got fed up with them. Having recently heard of up to five terrapins being spotted in Groby Pool, I wonder how many more there may be around Leicestershire and Rutland - any records would be welcome.

### **Survey 1999**

As mentioned above, the priorities for survey this year must once again be to expand our knowledge of great crested newt distribution, and to confirm the presence of our elusive reptiles. Please do send in any records, direct to the Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre, Holly Hayes, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicester LE4 4DG, or through me if you wish.

### **Tailpiece**

The Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society Bird Report 1997 notes an interesting encounter on May 26 - a common sandpiper chasing a swimming grass snake along the shore of Saddington Reservoir!

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### **Charnwood Ponds**

During 1998, Charnwood Wildlife Project carried out a quantitative amphibian survey of 13 ponds in the Borough, which highlighted population clusters in Barkby and South Croxton. Details from CWP, Southfields, Southfield Road, Loughborough LE11 2TN.

### **Red Data Book**

The series of Red Data Book volumes for Leicestershire and Rutland which has been produced over the last few years has provided important background information for the county BAP. These volumes have now been summarised in a new publication "Rare Wildlife in Leicestershire and Rutland", a "popular" Red Data Book for the two counties. The herps section of this suggests that there are five critical species in the area - palmate newt, on the edge of its range; great crested newt, widely but thinly distributed and declining due to loss of ponds; and slow-worm, adder and common lizard, all rare as a result of habitat loss. "Rare Wildlife..." is available from the Wildlife Trust, price £4.95.

### **Dead Toads**

In April last year, I was called out to a farm near Twycross where the farmer was reporting large numbers of dead toads in a trout pond. By the time I got there, I could count 53 dead animals and just 4 live ones; apparently, a couple of weeks earlier there had been hundreds of toads present - far more than he had seen in the pond before. The pond was not a very large one, and I could only suggest that the mortality had been caused by disease or stress due to the overcrowded conditions. It will be interesting to see what the toad population is like on the farm this year.

### **Herpetofauna Workers Manual**

An important new publication is the "Herpetofauna Workers Manual" by Tony Gent and Steve Gibson of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. This covers surveys, conservation, the law, and various other issues concerning work with reptiles and amphibians. It is available from the Natural History Book Service, price £20, though discounts are available.

### **Herps Records**

The Leicestershire Biological Records Centre at Holly Hayes, Birstall, are always looking for volunteers to assist with putting data onto their computer system, to catch up with historical records and keep current records up to date. If you would like to help by inputting amphibian and reptile records, even if you can only manage a couple of times a year, contact Darwyn Sumner on 0116-267-1950 extension 24.

# LEICESTERSHIRE AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE NETWORK

Newsletter, January 1999

Once again, the time is quickly coming round when frogs will be returning to their ponds to breed, and time to plan amphibian and reptile surveys for the coming season. Despite requesting records for collation last year, I received very few, though I am sure there must be many people making casual records of both amphibians and reptiles. Some will undoubtedly have gone direct to Holly Hayes, whilst others will be made known to local natural history societies and in due course will find their way to the Records Centre. However, we still need a big push to increase our knowledge of the distribution of reptiles and great crested newts in particular. Luckily, there are a number of initiatives which should help improve things.

## **Biodiversity Action Plans**

The biodiversity initiative is generating a lot of thinking about and planning for conservation of key species and habitats, and hopefully in the long term is going to secure resources and bring about conservation action on the ground. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan concentrates on habitats, including special consideration of wetlands and heathlands, important for amphibians and reptiles respectively.

The separate BAP for the National Forest also looks at habitats, but its list of key species also includes one reptile, the adder. The Adder Species Action Plan identifies the animal as widespread but declining in the National Forest, and sets an objective to increase the number of sites and populations of adders in the National Forest by 2010. Actions to achieve this include ensuring that agricultural incentive schemes such as Countryside Stewardship promote the management of habitat for adders; undertaking a survey of the species to determine its range and centres of population; and considering the possibility of introductions to suitable sites.

## **Pondamonium**

Field ponds are one of the highlighted habitats in the LLR BAP, as large numbers of ponds have been lost to infilling, conversion to fishing ponds and neglect. The Leicestershire Countryside and Wildlife Initiative, backed by Blaby District Council and Severn Trent Water, has now set up the Pondamonium campaign to encourage people to take an interest in their local ponds; it includes a simple field pond survey, and literature about ponds is being prepared. For further information, contact LC&WI (0116-267-1377).