

Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network

Newsletter Number 7
March 2003

Herps on Reserves

The results of an investigation into amphibians and reptiles on Wildlife Trust nature reserves indicates that all the Leicestershire species are to be found on these sites – with the possible exception of the palmate newt, not recently confirmed at its only site at Charnwood Lodge. Common frogs are to be found at at least 15 reserves, and toads, smooth newts, grass snakes and even lizards are well represented. The protected great crested newt occurs at five sites. Adders and slow-worms are probably at only one site each. The top nature reserve for herps is Rutland water with four amphibians and two reptiles.

Amphibians in Gardens

English Nature have produced a new booklet "Amphibians in your garden: your questions answered". This tackles all the regular queries, such as what to do about "excess" frogspawn, why frogs may be found dead, and how to make a good amphibian pond. Copies are available from English Nature Enquiry Service, telephone 01733-455101.

Adders

A questionnaire from the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland has sought information on adders in Leicestershire and Rutland. The response had to be a

negative one – that adders were rare in the two counties, with a decline in recent decades due to the isolation of populations. A question was also asked about persecution of adders – if anyone has any information, even historic, on this, please let me know.

A separate questionnaire from Froglife has asked about long-term monitoring of adder and slow-worm sites – those that have been studied since at least 1980, even if they are now extinct. Again, if anyone has any information to share in this regard, please contact me.

Incidentally, Froglife produce a useful leaflet entitled "Snakes Need Friends" - worth putting the way of anyone who expresses distaste for these much-maligned animals. Froglife telephone 01986-873733.

Marine Turtles

An advisory note "Marine Turtles in the UK" is now available from Marine Conservation Society, telephone 01989-566017.



Recent Records

Amphibian and reptile records continue to come in from around Leicestershire and Rutland. Here are just a few examples.

A LARN display at the Burbage Common Countryside Open Day in May 2002, featuring the reptile survey, attracted a lot of new records from local people. These were overwhelming of grass snakes, seen at a number of different sites – not just at Burbage, but with sightings from Market Bosworth, Bosworth Battlefield, Measham and elsewhere.

Records from New Lount Local Nature Reserve during 2002 included some very noisy frogs in breeding mood, confirmation of the presence of great crested newts, and a possible smooth newt (not confirmed).

A survey at Charnwood Lodge in April revealed not only frogspawn and tadpoles in various ponds, but also a female smooth newt actually in the act of laying an egg.

Nature Alive

The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers have been instrumental in creating a new pond at Nature Alive, the nature reserve in Coalville. This has been designed especially for great crested newts, with water of different depths, and a lot of wetland plants planted to encourage egg-laying. Great crested newts already breed in one pond on the site. A reptile hibernaculum has also been built here.

Coalville Concern

Just across the Coalville by-pass from Nature Alive, another population of great crested newts is being affected by the development of brownfield land on Thorn-

borough Road. In a pond on the site, maximum counts of 58 males and 85 females have been made – possibly the largest population in Leicestershire. In mitigation for the loss of the pond, another is being dug on adjacent land, and newts are to be translocated. Whether they will take to the new pond, or attempt to return to the original, remains to be seen.

Fish and Newts

It has always been thought that fish and newts do not co-exist, and guidance is being produced on fish control to protect great crested newts. However, there are instances of fish and newts living together –



if you know of an example, Will Watson would like to hear of it: willwatson@aquabc.freereserve.co.uk.

British Waterways

BW would like to know of any records of great crested newts, grass snakes or other protected species along the Grand Union Canal/navigated River Soar in Leicestershire: leila.griffiths@britishwaterways.co.uk

If you have any items for the next edition of this newsletter, do let me know. Andrew Heaton, 19 Rydal Gardens, Ashby de la Zouch, Leics LE65 1FJ tel 01530-467904