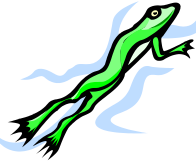


Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network



*Newsletter No. 17
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New Season

In the last few days, towards the end of March, the first clump of frogspawn has appeared in my garden pond – just one day later than last year. Malcolm Dawson at Newbold Coleorton, who usually has up to 40 frogs in his pond, was, at the beginning of March, reporting a complete absence.

It will be interesting to see if the very cold winter has affected amphibian populations. Have you noticed a delay in returning to your breeding sites, or a significant decline in numbers? Do let me know.

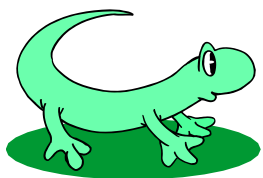
Volunteers are needed once again for the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme (NARRS), which is intended to track population changes – details from the NARRS website: www.narrs.org.uk

Reptile Habitat Management Handbook

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) has produced a comprehensive new publication, the “Reptile Habitat Management Handbook”. Starting with a review of the conservation needs and habitat requirements of British reptiles, it then includes sections on habitat management methods, habitat restoration and re-creation, and creating reptile habitat features. It also includes information on species management, reptiles and people, and survey methods. The handbook is available from the ARC website:

www.arc-trust.org

ARC is offering training courses in support of the handbook. The nearest one to us is in Worcestershire on 14 April. Details on the ARC website.



NARRS Report

ARC has produced an interim NARRS Report 2007-2009. Covering 294 amphibian surveys and 230 reptile surveys, this suggests more effort is needed for a comprehensive monitoring scheme. It highlights the worryingly-low occurrence of adders. The Central part of the country, including Leicestershire and Rutland, has the lowest species richness of amphibians. The full report is available on the ARC website.

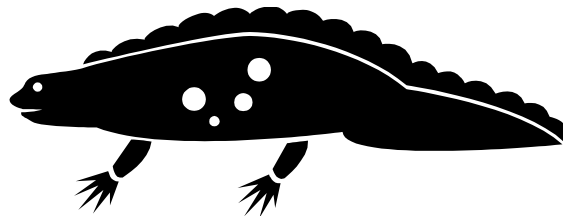
In the Newts

A great crested newt garnered headlines in the Ashby Times when it was “found on a country path in Appleby”. Thought to be suffering from a broken tail and possible spinal problems, the newt was, at the RSPCA’s suggestion, sent off to a wildlife centre near Nantwich in Cheshire! There is no word on its recovery or otherwise!

ARG UK Newsletter

The ARG UK website www.arguk.org has the latest newsletter (ARG Today 8, Winter 2010), as well as the details of activities of ARGs all around the country.

ARG UK will be initiating a “Great Easter Newt Hunt” – further details to follow.



RDB

The Red Data Book of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish in Leicestershire and Rutland was first published in 1997. Now there are moves to update it in the light of new information. The original publication highlighted great crested newt and palmate newt of the amphibians, and, for the reptiles, adder, common lizard and slow-worm. The new edition is likely to add common toad (a new BAP species) to the list, given the serious declines seen across the country. How are toads doing in your area?

Ranavirus

Ranavirus is a disease affecting frogs, toads and newts, especially the common frog. Symptoms include general poor condition, bleeding/haemorrhaging, reddening of the skin, ulcers and breakdown of the limbs.

If you think you have an outbreak in your frog population, please let me know. The information will contribute to a national study of the disease.

European Threats

The recently-published European Red List highlights reptiles and especially amphibians as amongst the most vulnerable groups across the continent. Of the amphibians, 23% of species are in the threatened categories and 59% are declining. For the reptiles, the equivalent figures are 21% threatened and 42% declining. There were some conservation successes highlighted, such as the Majorcan midwife toad.



If you have any news for the next edition of this newsletter, do let me know.

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