

Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network



*Newsletter No. 10
September 2005*

Spawn Spot

Following the success of “Snakes Alive”, the Community Heritage Initiative at Holly Hayes has produced a new survey form – “Spawn Spot”. This is to encourage people to record frogs, toads and especially spawn, to help elucidate distribution and populations (through spawn clump counts) of these two species in Leicestershire and Rutland. Although the form came out a little late in the season, over 50 records came in from 2005, and there is still time to submit. Survey forms are available from the Community Heritage Initiative, Holly Hayes Environment and Heritage Resources Centre, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall LE4 4DG, tel. 0116-267-1377.

Frog Death

On Easter Saturday 2005, there was a mass mortality of around 70 dead frogs at Sheepy Wood, Burbage. They seem to have been washed out from a pond on the adjacent golf course, and may have been the victims of chemical use. Apparently the Environment Agency made investigations, but there is no explanation yet.

Correction

In Newsletter No. 9, the telephone number given for Neil Hughes, Police Wildlife Officer, was incorrect – it should have been 01664-568864. Apologies.

Adders

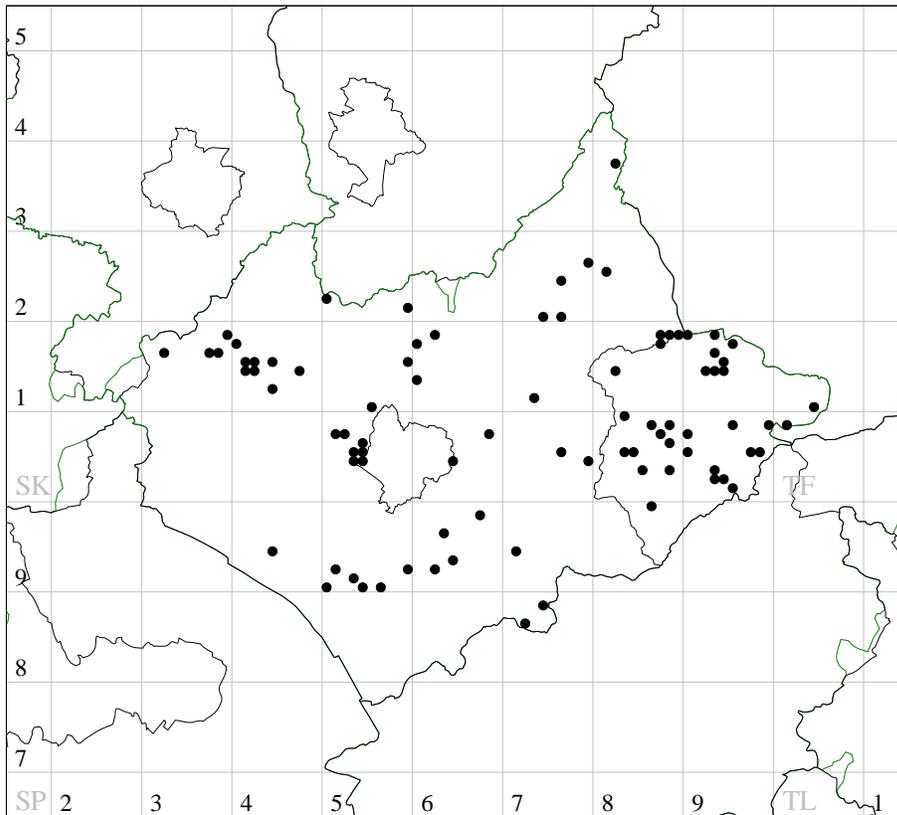
English Nature Research Report No. 546 “Status of the Adder and Slow-worm in England” suggests that the evidence shows declines nationally in adder populations, with the Midlands as a region of particular concern, showing the greatest declines. (Slow-worm populations are generally more stable, but have also shown declines in the Midlands). As suggested by the map in the last Newsletter, adders seem to be reduced to three populations in our counties - Bradgate, Launde and Ketton. There have been a number of suggestions recently of adders in the Aylestone area, though no definite confirmation (it seems much more likely as grass snake habitat). If anyone can confirm this, it would be excellent.

A pilot survey of adder populations, “Make the Adder Count”, was undertaken in 2005. If anyone wants to join in if this continues in future years, contact John Baker, jbherpconsult@yahoo.co.uk

Great Crested Newts

There are increasing numbers of requests, from consultants doing environmental assessments, for information on the presence of amphibians and reptiles. Just recently, that has included a query relating to proposed M1 widening in Leicestershire. Great crested newts are often of particular concern because of their protected status – so it is vitally important to have comprehensive records available. Please do submit any GCN records you may have. The map below show the data I hold, but there are bound to be gaps.

Warty Newt / Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)



Reptile Translocations

I have had a request from a research student for any information on reptile translocations which have been undertaken and monitored in Leicestershire and Rutland. I am not aware of any – if anyone can put me right on that, please let me know.

English Nature have produced a useful booklet “Reptiles: guidelines for developers”, dealing with reptile biology, legal protection and planning for development and mitigation. Copies are available from EN’s enquiry service www.english-nature.org.uk

New Reserve Records

A new species has been recorded for the Wildlife Trust nature reserve of Blacksmith’s Field at Markfield. A lizard – unfortunately dead – was found by Trust staff member Neill Talbot in July. The reserve, consisting of heath grassland and rock exposures, had always seemed right for lizards but they had not definitely been seen there before. Lizards – or at least one – have also been confirmed after a long period without records, at Newfield Colliery reserve in Moira. Anne Heaton spotted one in May. A smooth newt found, and photographed, at Great Merrible Wood is also a notable new record.

Wildlife Products

The ACO Wildlife range of barriers and tunnels, designed to keep amphibians, reptiles and small mammals from harm around roads and new developments, are now supplied by Hy-Tex (UK) Ltd of Ashford, Kent. Details on www.hy-tex.co.uk

Coalville Pond

There has been some concern over a pond in a Coalville housing estate containing great crested newts, The pond, on the site of the old greyhound stadium, is said by local residents to be an eyesore and a danger due to inadequate fencing. Residents, and councillors, hope that the newts have “moved on” so the pond no longer needs to be retained! Watch this space!

Pool Frog Return

The pool frog, which recently became extinct at its only East Anglian site, has been deemed to be a native British species, and has been the subject of a reintroduction by English Nature. Frogs have been brought across from Sweden and released at a site near Thetford.

Discussion on this, and many other, issues relating to amphibians and reptiles in Britain can be found on the forums of the RAUK (Reptiles and Amphibians of the UK) website www.herpetofauna.co.uk



Froglife

The Froglife website, www.froglife.org, now carries downloadable copies of Froglife advice sheets. There are twelve on different topics relating to herps conservation and survey, as well as the great crested newt conservation handbook. Look on the website under “Information Service”.

Froglife are also looking for frogspawn records from garden ponds – details on the website.

Herpetofauna Conference

“Herpetofauna Ecology and Conservation” is a scientific meeting being held at Bournemouth on Saturday 3 December. Details from Chris Gleed-Owen chris.go@herpconstrust.org.uk

HGBI

HGBI (Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland) is relaunching itself as ARG UK (Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the United Kingdom). Its role is to coordinate and represent the local ARGs across the country (including LARN). The first gathering of ARGs under the new umbrella will be at the national Herpetofauna Workers Meeting on 4th/5th February 2006 at a venue in the Midlands – further details will be sent out as they become available.

Fish

Whilst you are exploring ponds for amphibians, you might like to contribute to another new Community Heritage Initiative survey. “Fish Finders” is asking for details of fish from the two counties, especially from stillwaters, so if you come across an eel or a stickleback, do fill in the form, available from Holly Hayes (as above).

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Apologies if you have been waiting for this issue to arrive – time seems to have slipped by. If you have any news for the next edition, do let me know.

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