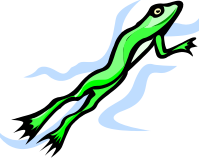


Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network



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NARRS Training Course

The National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme is kicking off in 2007, and still looking for volunteers to help with the survey work. To encourage this, a series of survey training courses is taking place around the country, and one has been organised for Leicestershire. It is happening in Coalville – an indoor session at the Marlene Reid Centre in the afternoon and fieldwork at Nature Alive. The date is Saturday 17th March and there is a maximum of 15 spaces available. If you are intending to take part in NARRS and would like to attend the course, please contact Andrew Heaton as soon as possible – details at the bottom of this newsletter.

For further information on NARRS, see www.narrs.org.uk

Great Crested Newt Prosecution

A case considered at Melton and Belvoir Magistrates Court in January has resulted in a rare and substantial penalty against a building company for damaging great crested newt habitat. McHugh Construction and its company secretary were fined a total of £8400 for offences at a site in Nether Broughton.

The company had purchased a building plot in the village, which included a pond containing great crested newts. Despite being informed of the presence of the GCNs, and even having a survey done which demonstrated this, the company carried out building and clearance work that caused significant damage to the pond.

Investigations by the Leicestershire Police Force Wildlife Officer, Neil Hughes, led to the prosecution under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Habitats Regulations. Congratulations to Neil and to Melton and Belvoir Magistrates for securing a result which will certainly make developers think before they contravene conservation laws.

Further details are available on the ARG UK website www.arg-uk.org.uk

Exotic Species

During 2006, there have been two reports of alpine newts in the county – one from a garden pond in Leicester and one from a ditch beside the M1 near Kirby Muxloe. These have presumably been brought into this country in the pet trade and released into

the wild. This comes on top of a recent record of a terrapin at Blackbrook Reservoir. If you have any other reports of non-native species, please let me know.

Grass Snake Deaths

In June 2006, Leicestershire Badger Group visited the Woodland Trust site of Willesley Wood, at the heart of the National Forest. Here they were astonished to find, on and near piles of wood chips, around a dozen dead grass snakes, each with the head chewed off.

I visited a couple of days later, and confirmed this rather gruesome sight. The woodchip piles, left after management work in the woodland and close to a lake/wetland area, were exactly the sort of place where grass snakes lay their eggs, and where gravid females will spend some time basking, so they might easily be caught and killed. It did not look like human persecution – the heads were not neatly cut off. I believe the culprit was actually a fox, which are known to kill grass snakes, and which might well consume the head if not the rest of the body. There was a fox dropping on one of the woodchip piles.

Thanks to Jenny Palmer and the Badger Group for drawing attention to this incident. It does at least show that there is a good population of grass snakes at Willesley Wood (or has been).

Slow-worms and Compost Heaps

The slow-worm appears to be uncommon, or at least little recorded, in Leicestershire and Rutland. As part of NARRS (see above), a “Slow-worm Compost Survey” is taking place. These lizards are regularly found in compost heaps. If you have any relevant records, please make them known via the website (www.narrs.org.uk) – or I can send you a paper survey form.



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

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