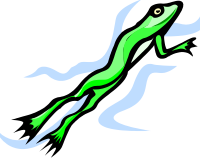


Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network



*Newsletter No. 14
March 2009*

GCN Training

A training session for great crested newt survey is being held on Saturday 28 March at Coalville, organised by Nathalie Cossa of Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. The day will include indoor work and fieldwork at the nearby Nature Alive site. It will also serve as an introduction to the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme for those who are interested in getting involved with the National Amphibian Survey. Contact Nathalie at the Trust (0116 272 0444) for details.

GCN Survey 2008

A small group of volunteers took part in a survey in 2008 looking for great crested newts in North West and East Leicestershire. A total of 23 ponds were visited, chosen as being the closest unknown ponds to existing known GCN populations. Unfortunately, the results were disappointing: although several other amphibians were identified, no GCNs were seen in any of the ponds. Even more worryingly, a high proportion of the ponds were unsuitable for GCNs, due to various factors: fish, wildfowl, siltation, shading or total disappearance of the ponds. This shows what an effort is needed to improve the landscape for amphibians. Thanks go to the Herpetological Conservation Trust for providing funding for this project, which will continue in 2009 – if you are interested, contact me.

Protection for GCNs

In the middle of 2008, Andrew Robathan, MP for Blaby, introduced a Ten Minute Rule Bill into the House of Commons to remove legal protection for great crested newts (and bats), because he felt they were overly protected and damaging economic interests. LARN wrote to Mr Robathan, making clear why GCNs needed protection in this country (we have the strongest populations in Europe and thus have a special responsibility to look after them). We received a rather dismissive reply, but the Bill did not progress further.

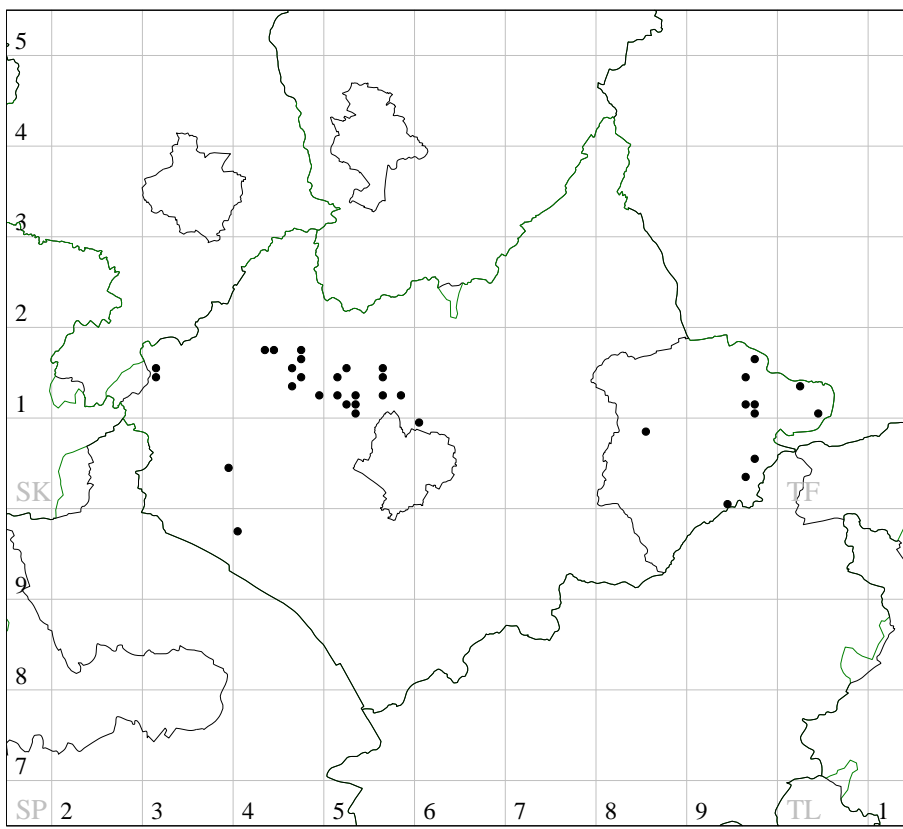
ARG UK

Details of amphibian and reptile groups around the country are available on the ARG UK website www.arguk.org. You will find information and the latest newsletter there, as well as details of the annual Herpetofauna Workers Meeting.

Lizards

A number of lizard records came in during 2008, including confirmation of their presence at Stonepits, Moira, where it had been rumoured that local cats had been bringing home lizard tails – a live lizard was finally spotted by Joe Kirkwood who lives adjacent to the site. Steve Woodward has been particularly busy recording lizards, with sightings at Charnwood Lodge (Colony Reservoir dam), Cademan Moor and Ulverscroft.

Viviparous Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*)



Rutland Amphibians

In the last LARN Newsletter, we passed on some information on reptiles in Rutland from Dr Charles Gallimore, amphibian and reptile recorder for Rutland Natural History Society. He has also supplied detailed information on Rutland amphibians.

Frogs are to be found in most parishes, with regular breeding records in Empingham, Langham, Oakham and Wing. Conversely, they seem to have disappeared from Little Casterton and South Luffenham, where they were formerly regular breeders. Toads are also fairly widespread, with recent records especially from Braunston, Brooke, Exton, Hambleton, Oakham and Wing.

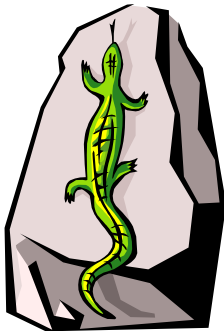
As might be expected, great crested newts are the most restricted in distribution; there have been regular recent records from Empingham, Hambleton, Lyddington and especially Wing. Smooth newts are of medium distribution, with regular sightings at Barrowden, Edith Weston, Eggleton, Hambleton and Lyddington.

Surveys

The Community Heritage Initiative at Holly Hayes has now finished, but the surveys it set up (“Snakes Alive”, “Spawn Spot” and “Pondamonium”) continue to run – see the Holly Hayes website for details (www.leics.gov.uk/celebratingwildlife.htm).

Pond Booklet

Froglife has produced a comprehensive booklet on how to build a pond for wildlife. Entitled “Just Add Water”, it concentrates on ponds as a home for amphibians in particular. More details can be found at www.froglife.org/justaddwater.



If you have any news 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

aheaton@ntlworld.com