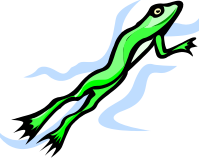


Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network



*Newsletter No. 16
May 2010*

Big Pond Thaw Survey 2010

Pond Conservation has been investigating the impacts of the hardest winter for 30 years on amphibian populations, after many reports of dead amphibians, mainly frogs, being found following the long period of freezing conditions. Pond Conservation asked pond owners how they had managed their ponds and what effect it had.

Most reports related to small numbers of dead frogs, less than 10, though the worst case involved 300 corpses. Making a hole in the ice did not make any difference to the likelihood of mortalities, and neither did clearing the blanket of snow. Running a pump did reduce the likelihood of amphibian deaths. Overall results suggested deaths were associated with lack of oxygen in the water.

To reduce amphibian deaths, shallow saucer-shaped ponds are likely to retain higher oxygen levels than deep ponds, and are not at risk of freezing solid (most ponds didn't have more than a few centimetres depth of ice). Leaves and sediment on the pond bottom deoxygenates water, whilst having plenty of submerged plants maintains oxygenation, particularly if snow is cleared away. A hole in the ice of itself makes little difference, but a surface hole and a pump circulating the water will bring oxygen to deeper waters.

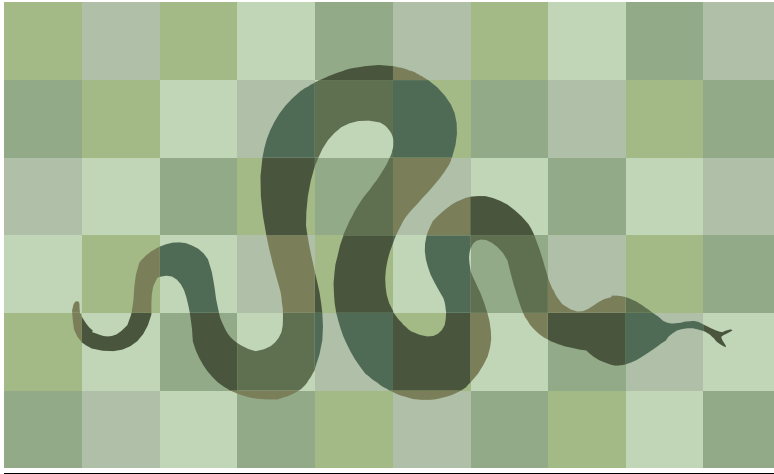
Herps at Hinckley

The 2010 Herpetofauna Workers Meeting took place at the end of January at the Hinckley Island Hotel on the A5 near Hinckley. This national meeting brought together active amphibian and reptile workers from across the country to share experiences.

Day one (Saturday 30 January) mainly consisted of presentations, on topics including the conservation status of herps; the importance of dew ponds for amphibians in the Peak District; reptile survey in Herefordshire; aging and sexing slow-worms; NARRS; trapping GCNs; green infrastructure; pond management; and hints on starting a new ARG. A talk on amphibian diseases suggested Ranavirus, which causes mortality in frogs, is mainly a south-eastern problem, with few reports from Leicestershire.

The second day was taken up with workshop sessions on data flow; pond management; reptile mitigation; best practice for volunteers; and national/local relationships for herps organisations.

The Herpetofauna Workers Meeting provides a great opportunity for sharing information on amphibians and reptiles. Although it is unlikely to be held so close to home for a few years, it is always well worth attending.



Halted

The merger of Froglife and the Herpetological Conservation Trust to form Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, reported in the last LARN newsletter, has been put on hold due to incompatibilities between the two organisations. HCT will go ahead with its change of name to ARC, operating out of its usual address (655a Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 4AP).

National Forest BAP

The National Forest Biodiversity Action Plan, covering parts of north-west Leicestershire as well as areas of Derbyshire and Staffordshire, is currently being revised. The BAP identifies the adder as a key species. The revision, however, is likely to incorporate species actions within the relevant habitat action plans – for the adder, this will mean heathland and acid grassland.

ARG UK Newsletter

The ARG UK website www.arguk.org has the latest newsletter (ARG Today 7, Spring 2010), as well as the details of activities of ARGs all around the country.



Rutland Reptiles

Charles Gallimore of Rutland Natural History society has collated early reptile records from the smallest county. This provides useful information on the changing status of reptiles in Rutland: contact Charles for more details.

Melanism

Melanism is the condition whereby animals take on a black colouration, masking their usual colour pattern. Records of melanistic snakes are required for a study of the phenomenon. Any records from around the country should be made known to Darryn Nash: darrynnash@hotmail.com

OPAL Water Survey

The popular science project OPAL (standing for OPen Air Laboratories) is running a water survey. This is encouraging people to investigate ponds, and there is an amphibian element to the survey. Details from www.OPALexplorenature.org



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

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