

DERBYSHIRE AMPHIBIAN & REPTILE NEWS

Issue No 13. March 2010

This newsletter is produced for members of the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group and other interested persons on an occasional basis and includes news items, advice and information and results from toad crossing patrols. If you have any items that you wish to be included in future editions please e-mail them or post them to Secretary at the address on the back page.

GROUP ACTIVITIES IN 2010

AGM and Group Meeting followed by talk and survey advice on Slow-worms.

Saturday 10 April at the DWT Whistlestop Centre, Matlock Bath railway station.

11.00 - 12.30 AGM & Group Meeting

13.30 -16.00 Slow-worm presentation by Alan Shepherd followed by a visit to an adjacent site with slow-worm records.

Field meetings / Survey trips

Saturday 20 March - Pond and amphibian survey at Elvaston Castle Country Park near Derby. Meet at 10.00 at the staff car park behind the castle at the top of Stable Drive, Elvaston.

An evening newt survey at the site will be held in late April or early May for those interested.

Saturday 27 March - Adder recording field meeting in the Peak District. Meet at 10.00. Contact the Secretary to book a place and find details of the meeting place.

Stands at public events

Come & help man our stand and visit these events.

Sunday 6 June - Derby Bioblitz in Markeaton Park, Derby 10.00 to 17.00

Sunday 20 June - Elvaston Castle 40th Festivities 12 noon to 17.00

Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 October - Derbyshire Countryside Service Woodland Festival at Black Rocks on the High Peak Trail near Wirksworth.

GROUP WEBSITE

Don't forget to check the Group's website at www.derbyshirearg.co.uk

Notices of meetings, events and other activities will be posted there and copies of the newsletter and recording forms can be downloaded

DERBYSHIRE AMPHIBIAN & REPTILE GROUP A MEMBER GROUP OF



Amphibian and Reptile
Groups of the UK

www.arguk.org

Derbyshire Group contacts:

Chair - Helen Metcalfe

Secretary - Chris Monk

Treasurer - Jayne Thompson

Committee Members -

Bob Baker, Victoria Pope, Trevor Taylor

Website: www.derbyshirearg.co.uk

E-mail: Secretary@derbyshirearg.co.uk

OPAL WATER SURVEY IN 2010

OPAL (Standing for Open Air Laboratories) is a Project being run by the Natural History Museum and several other partners. As mentioned in the last newsletter, they ask members of the public to carry out surveys to find out more about the natural world such as the soil & earthworm survey and a lichen survey into air quality they organised in 2009, both of which asked people to carry out the work in their back gardens or immediate neighbourhood.

This spring they will be launching their water survey to get people to look at their local ponds and return data. We will be running the survey at some of the public events we are attending this year and have requested some of their free Water Survey Packs.

If you have a garden pond, why not give the survey a go this summer. Details of how to get a free Survey Pack will be on the OPAL website: www.opalexplornature.org.

THE PEAK PARK'S VISION PROJECT - A PROTOTYPE FOR LANDSCAPE-SCALE CONSERVATION

Text summary of presentation to the 2010 Herpetofauna Recorders Meeting by Rebekah Newman (Peak District National Park Authority) and Chris Monk (Derbyshire ARG)

The Vision for Wildlife project was a pioneering approach to delivering the Peak District Biodiversity Action Plan, setting out to deliver targeted multi-habitat conservation, restoration and creation in a small area of the White Peak Natural Area. The majority of landscape scale projects are on land in the ownership of organisations with a conservation remit or require land acquisition. The Vision Project area by contrast is almost completely in private ownership and it was extremely successful in delivering on Habitat Action Plan targets, as exemplified by the work carried out on ponds.

The White Peak is an upland plateau of Carboniferous limestone dissected by steep sided dales. With little natural water owing to the permeability of the bedrock, dewponds were created by farmers to collect rainwater for watering their stock. Originally lined with clay and later with concrete, several thousand were created at densities of up to 20 per square kilometre. Whilst they are often impoverished in plants and some invertebrates, they have become colonised by amphibians which have spread across the plateau. These are now recognised as significant features in the historic landscape and as important wildlife hotspots, with the White Peak being of national significance for its great crested newt population. With the advent of widespread mains water supply since the 1950's, the majority of dewponds no longer perform a stock watering function. Consequently when the Project started there had been a dramatic loss estimated at over 60%, with many of the remaining ponds being in a very poor condition.

Conservation action by the Project has varied from de-silting, vegetation removal and fencing to complete re-lining with clay and stone setts or fibreglass over the concrete ponds. The latter is an industrial method that together with the contractor we have adapted for the countryside location. We have involved all elements of the community including individual volunteers, community groups, schools, landholders and contractors. The programme of conservation action has been coupled with a programme of awareness raising, education and interpretation. Over 7 years the Project has undertaken management work at 18 ponds, restoration of 48 dewponds in poor condition and 62 formerly dry ponds have been re-created.

The project has been supported by the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group who have carried out annual surveys to inform the project so that action could be clearly targeted at extending and linking great crested newt populations. The multi-habitat approach has also encouraged action on ponds where these were sited within surrounding rich newt terrestrial habitat. The survey work has resulted in substantially increased knowledge of the distribution of newts in the Peak Park, coupled with greater landowner and general public engagement. Over 600 ponds have been surveyed for the Project, which with other records since 2001, have resulted in a total of 170 ponds in the White Peak Natural Area with great crested newts records, 72 of which are in ponds where management, restoration or re-creation works have been carried out by the Vision Project.

The work has also shown that the targeted landscape scale approach of extending and linking existing populations can deliver for protected species, with a great crested newt colonisation rate in new ponds of greater than 50% within 18 months.

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The views expressed in this newsletter are solely those of the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group. However, thanks are due to the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust for assistance in the distribution of the newsletter. For details of the Wildlife Trust, please contact them at East Mill, Bridgefoot, Belper, Derbyshire, DE56 1HX Tel: 01773 881188. E-mail info@derbyshirewt.co.uk