

# **DERBYSHIRE AMPHIBIAN & REPTILE NEWS**

*Issue No 14. Winter - Spring 2011*

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.

## **EXCELLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY AWARD**

The Group won an award in the “protecting Derbyshire’s Environment” category at the Derbyshire County Council’s annual Excellence in the Community Awards 2010. We were nominated by the Lowland Biodiversity Project Officer, Debbie Alston, for the voluntary effort we have put in over years with toads on roads, surveys, giving talks and attending events to promote & conserve the native amphibians & reptiles in Derbyshire.

The Awards ceremony was held at Buxton and the Group was represented by Sheila Stubbs, Ruth & Martin Mullis from the Furness Vale toad crossing patrol group, who collected the certificate and engraved glass award.



Pictured above from the left Martin & Ruth Mullis, Cllr Robin Baldry (Chairman of Derbyshire County Council) and Sheila Stubbs.

### **GROUP WEBSITE**

**Don't forget to check the Group's website at  
[www.derbyshirearg.co.uk](http://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](http://www.arguk.org)

### **Derbyshire Group contacts:**

**Chair** - Helen Metcalfe

**Secretary** - Chris Monk

**Treasurer** - Jayne Thompson

**Committee Members** -

Bob Baker, Victoria Sloan, Trevor Taylor

**Website:** [www.derbyshirearg.co.uk](http://www.derbyshirearg.co.uk)

**E-mail:** [Secretary@derbyshirearg.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@derbyshirearg.co.uk)

### **GROUP ACTIVITIES IN 2011**

The next indoor meeting is on  
**Saturday 9 April 2011 starting at 14.00**  
At the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's Whistlestop Centre Education Room, Matlock Bath railway station. (Entrance from the station platform)  
David Goddard will be talking on dragonflies and this will be followed by the AGM and Group meeting finishing by 16.30.

#### **Field meetings / Survey trips**

Volunteers to help with the Make the Adder Count Project surveys or with reptile surveys of a site near Holymoorside please contact the Secretary.

Slow-worm survey - Following last years advice from Alan Shepherd it is planned to arrange a slow-worm survey in May. Further details to follow

Pond restoration - it is hoped to organise two tasks in the Peak District in the summer & autumn

## 2010 Toad road crossing results

Site Name	Toads rescued	Toads dead	No. nights covered	Dates covered	Other amphibians
CHAPEL EN LE FRITH - Bowden	1077	233	12 nights + 4 mornings	19.3.10 to 14.4.10	
BRETBY - Repton Shrubs	681	138	21	19.3.10 to 13.4.10	7 frogs, 76 newts
BUXWORTH BASIN	181	67	37	16.3.10 to 29.4.10	3 frogs
COMBS RESERVOIR	519	110	22	18.3.10 to 24.4.10	3 frogs, 1 newt (dead)
FOREMARK	532	76	17	19.3.10 to 7.4.10	6 frogs, 2 newts
FURNESS VALE	2161	94	21	18.3.10 to 15.4.10	100 frogs (3 dead), 10 newts
GRANGEMILL	257	226	5	23.3.10 to 30.3.10	1 frog, 3 smooth newts
PRESS RESERVOIRS	4	9	0	24/03/10	
RIDGEWAY	185	150	12	18.3.10 to 25.3.10	11 frogs (1 dead), 5 newts
RODSLEY	32	6	3	19.3.10 to 21.3.10	
OVERSEAL - Shortheath	1276	64	25	18.3.10 to 11.4.10	7 frogs, 9 newts
WHALEY BRIDGE - CPA pond	388	25	11	17.3.10 to 6.4.10	41 frogs (4 dead), 1 smooth newt
WINGERWORTH - Lido	108	18	1	24/03/10	1 frog, 7 smooth newts
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>7401</b>	<b>1216</b>			
<i>2009 totals</i>	<i>6579</i>	<i>648</i>			

### NOTES

The figures from Press Reservoirs and Wingerworth were supplied by Trevor Taylor when he was in the area. At Wingerworth it relates to 1.5 hours rescuing the amphibians but for Press Reservoirs it was not a patrol, just a site visit.

At Rodsley, Ruth was away for the main toad migration period but reported that the breeding pond was full of amphibians.

At Whaley Bridge, Jill recorded the first newt at the site since starting patrolling the crossing

At Grangemill, the two best evenings could not be covered until about 10pm at night, which resulted in the high proportion of animals killed.

After some years of declining numbers at Furness Vale, Bretby and Foremark there were increased numbers found in 2010, whilst the relatively new crossing that has developed at Overseal has seen a dramatic increase from 363 in 2008 to 676 in 2009 before doubling in 2010.

Thanks to all the volunteers who took part in the crossing patrols.

## GROUP EXHIBITION DISPLAY

Following the successful application to the OPAL grants scheme in autumn 2009, the Group now has the basis of an exhibition for use at events across the county. This it is hoped will assist in educating the public about our native amphibians and reptiles, providing advice, obtaining species records and informing people about the Group and its activities.

The first three panels on Derbyshire's amphibians, Derbyshire's Reptiles and about the Group were printed, together with glossy A4 versions of the two species boards to give out as hand-outs at events. In addition a vertical banner, set of display boards, leaflet dispenser folding table and a gazebo were bought with the funding. Three further display panels are planned for printing in 2011.

In 2010 the display was taken to the Derby Bioblitz in Markeaton Park in early June, to the Elvaston Castle Country Park's 40th Anniversary event in late June and to the Derbyshire Countryside Service's Woodlands Festival at Black Rocks on the High Peak Trail in October. The display was seen in total by approximately two thousand people and many new records, especially for reptiles were obtained. It is planned to take the display to a similar number of events in summer & autumn 2011.

The Group's stand at the Derby Bioblitz in Markeaton Park 6 June 2010



## ADDER SURVEYS AND THE EASTERN MOORS

After the severe winter weather in January and February, with snow on the ground until almost the end of February, the Group's annual adder hibernation emergence surveys started on 1 March. This was the latest date for emergence since we started the surveys in 2005 and the recording season was the shortest as the snakes moved off into their habitat by the first week in April.

Despite this there was a great deal of volunteer effort put in and in following up reports and chance sightings we discovered new sites and improved our knowledge about others.

The Peak National Park Authority had announced that because of the financial restraints it was seeking for other suitable bodies to take on the management of its Eastern Moors Estate comprising Clod Hall Moor, Leash Fen, Ramsley Moor, Totley Moor and Big Moor. They eventually chose the new Eastern Moors Partnership of the RSPB and National Trust, who have signed an agreement to manage the site for 15 years.

The Group has made its comments to the Partnership about the importance of the Estate for its amphibian and reptile populations, especially for adder, common lizard & common toad.

Also we stressed the value of the bracken habitats on the moors for reptiles and the need to ensure that they are retained and that any changes to the site management are made slowly and after consultation.

We have now been invited to be a member of the focus group to meet with the Partnership and discuss & advise on possible changes in management and how it may affect the wildlife.

## AMPHIBIAN DISEASE

There has been recent evidence that the spread of diseases affecting amphibians is becoming more evident across the country. More reports have been received of frogs suffering from Ranavirus infection, including in the Midlands. Also known as red-leg from its side effect of causing ulcers and haemorrhaging below the skin, frogs suffering from this are also usually very thin, being "all skin & bone".

If you come across or hear any instances of this could you please report it. There is a facility on the Froglife website to fill in a form that they will pass onto the Institute of Zoology (IoZ) ([www.froglife.org/disease/report.htm](http://www.froglife.org/disease/report.htm))

In addition this year the IoZ and Natural England will be carrying out a follow-up survey to determine the incidence of the chytrid fungal infection of amphibians across England. A previous study in across the UK in 2008 found that there was a scattering of the infection across the country (between 16 and 20% of sites sampled). In 2008 no sites were sampled but for this year's follow up DARG member Darryn Nash is hoping to carry out sampling of amphibians at a couple of sites in Derby City.

## WINTER KILL

After last year's deaths of amphibians, mainly frogs, under the ice of frozen ponds there seems to have been another episode of deaths due to the prolonged icy and snowy weather from late November to just after Christmas. A survey run by Pond Conservation in early 2010 found that many people reported large numbers of dead frogs (up to 300 in one garden pond in mid Wales) whereas at others there were no frog deaths. Smaller numbers of the other species over-winter in ponds, so only a few newts were reported to have died.

## MILLION PONDS PROJECT - POND CREATION IN DERBY

A successful application was made in 2010 by Beverley Rhodes of Wild Derby on behalf of the city council for funding from the Million Ponds Project run by Pond Conservation. This enabled the creation of 3 new ponds at the Woodlands School in Allestree and 6 new ponds at Sinfyn Moor Park and Local Nature Reserve. Following the guidelines to achieve the best value for wildlife, these ponds are all of different sizes and shapes and they will be left for natural colonisation by plants and animals. Sinfyn Moor in particular now has a diverse range of ponds with a total of 12 on the site ranging from small to large in size and from permanent to seasonal.

These ponds which were excavated in January & February 2011 are in addition to the 5 new ponds proposed in the current SITA Trust funded Wild About Ponds Project in the city, which started in March 2010.

## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Amphibian and Reptile Group

Across the county border to the east a new Amphibian and Reptile Group has been set up in Nottinghamshire. One of their first field meetings in 2011 will be to come to Derbyshire to be shown an adder survey.

In Notts it seems that the adder could now be extinct despite many suitable areas of habitat especially in Sherwood Forest. There have been no confirmed sightings for several years now and after some field experience in Derbyshire their members will be equipped to look more closely at suitable sites to see if the adder can still be found there.

## **GROUP CONTACT - E-mail: [Secretary@derbyshirearg.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@derbyshirearg.co.uk)**

Chris Monk, Hon. Secretary, Hilburn, Middleton, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 4NF. Tel: 01629 823136

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](mailto:info@derbyshirewt.co.uk)