

HopGossip!

Winter/Spring 2010/11



In this issue ...

Pool frog reintroduction site

Overseas Territories Report

ARG UK Herpetofauna Workers
Meeting 2011

Million Ponds Project Update

amphibian and reptile
conservation



Amphibian and Reptile Conservation is a national wildlife charity committed to conserving amphibians and reptiles and the habitats on which they depend.

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If you would like to contribute to the next edition please contact Angela Reynolds at angela.reynolds@arc-trust.org

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Cover image: Adult male pool frog photographed at Thompson Common in the 1980's before extinction.
Photo: John Buckley
Hop Gossip is edited and designed by Angela Reynolds

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From the Editors desk

Welcome to the first edition of the newly named newsletter. I hope you like it! Well done to Paul High who won the competition and also prompted us to rename the news pages to 'Hop off the Press!' I would like to thank everyone who sent in suggestions, there were some really good ones and we thoroughly enjoyed picking a winner.

We've had a really busy summer here at ARC promoting the Sliding Scales campaign and getting out to some sweltering events to reiterate the importance of conserving our native snakes. It was a great success and we received lots of support.

Summer seems to have flown past and with our herps in hibernation we are now well in to our winter programme. The field teams are busy hard grafting on our reserves and in the Bournemouth office we are all very busy preparing for the season ahead. I am in full swing at the moment preparing for the Scientific meeting in December followed by the ARG UK Herpetofauna Workers meeting in January (details on page 14)

This issues feature is on the Pool Frog. The article on pages 10 - 11 talks about what goes in to managing the valuable re-introduction site and is well worth a read. Also worth a read is the long awaited Reptile Habitat Management Handbook! For details on how to obtain one please see our news section.

On behalf of everyone at ARC we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

With best wishes,

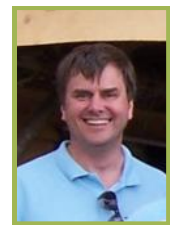
Angela



Angela Reynolds
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C.E.O's Corner

Dr. Tony Gent



At ARC we are committed to working across the range of activities that offer opportunities to improve conditions for our reptiles and amphibians. One important area, and one that occupies a fair amount of my time, is influencing the development and implementation of policy. Over the last few months there has been some significant activity in this area – both influenced by the change in Government and as a consequence of events set in motion long before the election. Through ARC we have sought to influence this, both through direct contact with Government officials and through our involvement with Wildlife and Countryside Link, a network of 33 environmental organisations that collectively represents a membership of some 8 million people.

October 2010 saw the 10th Conference of the parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nagoya, Japan. In itself, the CBD is a landmark Convention that put the conservation of wildlife and the sustainable use of natural resources centre stage. Through this convention we have seen a considerable amount of positive action, but regrettably not sufficient to see the achievement of the halt of the loss of Biodiversity by 2010 a commitment made by the UK's and other European nation's Governments in 2001. It was good to see that the UK, represented by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Caroline Spelman, reconfirmed the UK's commitment to conserving global biodiversity and that a more positive outcome for the meeting was achieved than might have been the case. For example a new strategic plan was created with new targets for 2020. However, much still needs to be done, and the scope for doing so is severely hampered by the state of the economy.

Back home Governmental reorganisation and cost cutting measures have created turmoil with severe cuts to the Environment Department's budget (30% compared with the average of 19% for other Departments). This has a knock on effect for the conservation agencies and means that funding for action for the environment will be particularly squeezed. National assets such as the forestry estate and National Nature Reserves may potentially be sold off, and even the good news stories, such as safeguarding funds for environmentally sensitive farming, seem to be masking real term cuts even in this area.

In addition, there are a series of significant consultations about future approaches to nature conservation in Britain including separate 'Government white paper' consultations in England and Wales as well as major revisions to the planning system and process which is designed to ensure that protected species are being taken properly into account. ARC has provided comments and input to all of these policy areas by sending letters to the press and a joint letter, through Wildlife & Countryside Link, to the Prime Minister. By doing this we hope to secure positive outcomes for our herpetofauna alongside other wildlife.

There remains considerable uncertainty as to how all of this will pan out and what affects other Governmental agendas, such as the role of 'Big Society' and the drive towards 'localism' in decision making, will have on our wildlife. So as 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity, draws towards its end we will be looking with a mixture of hope and anxiety to see whether the current administration will achieve its stated ambition of wishing to be the 'Greenest Government ever'. ARC, in partnership with our colleagues in other NGOs, will be doing what we can to help it do so.

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New GIS and Data Officer

In August we said goodbye to Ben Driver and he's now working for the Nottingham Wildlife Trust. Ben did a fantastic job for ARC and we wish him all the best in his new role. Andy joined the ARC family in September and has settled in extremely well.

My name is Andy Arnell and I am lucky enough to be working as the newly appointed GIS and Data Officer, in ARC's Bournemouth offices. As such I look forward to working with our surveyors and volunteers and pushing forward our various species monitoring projects. I hope to advance the modelling and mapping of species distribution, whilst maintaining our vast records database and contributing to the wider aims of Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.

Like most people working in conservation I have always had a keen interest in the natural world. During my Zoology degree this became coupled with a fascination for Science. Since then I have had unforgettable experiences of studying animals in both Kenya and Thailand, but I have become increasingly aware that efforts need to be focused on conservation for future generations to be able to study these weird and wonderful species.

Recent advances in technology, such as the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS), have helped produce more accurate species distribution maps and therefore focus conservation efforts.

During my Primate Conservation Masters thesis I was fortunate enough to be able to focus on using this type of GIS software to model rare species distributions, including many smaller non-primate species. Since then I have developed a fascination with the conservation of these smaller species, such as amphibians and reptiles, that often receive less attention than larger mammals and birds.

Prior to my current appointment with ARC I was living with my girlfriend who teaches art in an international school in Austria. When the opportunity to work for ARC in my ideal role came up, I had to make the tough decision to return to the UK. I am now carrying out a particularly long-distance relationship, but the fascinating nature of the job is at least easing the blow.

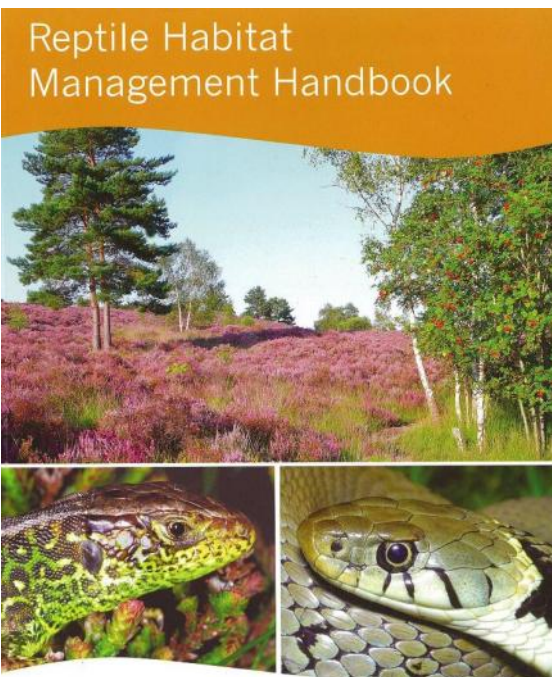


Photo left:
Ben Driver



Photo right:
Andy Arnell

Reptile Habitat Management Handbook - Now available!



Paul Edgar, Jim Foster and John Baker

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ef Esmée
Fairbairn
Foundation

NATURAL
ENGLAND

This Reptile Habitat Management Handbook was part-funded by Natural England and produced in conjunction with Amphibian & Reptile Conservation's Widespread Species project, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

It is the first attempt to bring together habitat management advice for all native UK reptiles. The half dozen species here have experienced population declines, and are now all Biodiversity Action Plan priorities. The handbook is aimed at site managers, and those who advise on management. It gives advice for a range of settings, from dedicated nature reserves to farmland. It reviews habitat management practices and makes recommendations as to how they can be applied, or modified, to benefit reptiles.

The publication benefits from over twenty years of ARC's experience of managing habitat for rare reptiles. It also draws on the collective experience of the UK herpetofauna conservation community including Amphibian & Reptile Groups, site managers and dedicated individuals.

A series of training courses is also being organised for winter to promote the handbooks main messages.

Copies are available from ARC at £3.00 (for postage and packaging.) Bulk orders can be negotiated at enquiries@arc-trust.org. It is also available to download in PDF format at www.arc-trust.org.

National Frog Survey of Ireland

Work on the National Frog Survey of Ireland, which ARC is conducting in partnership with Queen's University Belfast, Giorria Environmental Services and the Irish National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), continues to go well!

John Wilkinson, ARC's Research Officer travelled to the west coast of Ireland in August to help conduct two of the three training events for the NPWS staff who will be carrying out most of the fieldwork. Of course, frog and frogspawn surveys must be done in the spring – so devising a way of training folk in the estimation of frogspawn mat size presented quite a challenge (in August, when there's no spawn!). With the aid of some craftwork and bubblewrap, however, fake spawn mats were constructed. NPWS trainees were awarded prizes for coming closest to the true spawn mat size with their estimates! It can be very difficult to see individual clumps in a spawn mat so the number is extrapolated from the total area of spawn. In this way you can find out how many females have spawned at a pond and thus what the adult population size is (unlike many amphibians, common frogs have a male to female ratio of 1:1).

Habitat surveys are currently being conducted and waterbodies identified for full frog survey beginning early next spring.



Karina Dingerkus of Giorria leads NPWS Rangers in frog survey training at Ballinafad.
Photo: R. Stone



One of the "spawn mats" used in the training!
Photo: K. Dingerkus

New NARRS report due in January

A first peek at the new NARRS report, based on 230 unique reptile survey squares and 294 unique amphibian survey squares visited during 2007 – 2009, reveals that great crested newts occur in just 13% of NARRS amphibian surveys. That this EU-wide protected species has been declining is well known, but what is more disturbing is that the once-common adder turns up in only 7% of NARRS reptile surveys.

"The long-term aim of NARRS is to generate robust data on long-term trends in our wide-spread species," said Dr. John Wilkinson, ARC's Research Officer "But we're already getting a picture which we can use to examine the relative abundance of these species. The adder is now by far our rarest widespread reptile."

Publication of the new report is due to coincide with the Herpetofauna Workers' Meeting in January 2011. Funds are urgently needed to continue future NARRS surveys as sufficient data to establish baseline information will not be received until at least 2012.

	<i>Common frog</i>	<i>Common toad</i>	<i>Great crested-newt</i>	<i>Smooth newt</i>	<i>Palmate newt</i>	<i>Common Lizard</i>	<i>Slow-worm</i>	<i>Grass snake</i>	<i>Adder</i>
Square occupancy rate	60%	33%	13%	26%	30%	32%	22%	19%	7%

NARRS occupancy rates
from surveys 2007 - 09

Hop off the Press!

In the field

Big boost for natterjacks in Cumbria By Bill Shaw - Cumbria Natterjack Officer



Natterjack toads in Cumbria are now benefitting directly from the Environmental Stewardship agri-environment scheme provided by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Natural England manage Environmental Stewardship on behalf of DEFRA.

Under the scheme farmers and other landowners can get payments for improving the habitats on their land for natterjacks. On the ground this means creating new breeding pools, keeping the fields well grazed and stopping the application of any artificial fertiliser.

Cumbria is the stronghold of natterjacks in the UK, with half of all known colonies. Currently in the county this stands at 28, widely strung out along the coast from Barrow-in-Furness in the south, right up to the Solway Firth. This coastal fringe provides natural habitats that natterjacks prefer, namely sand dunes and the upper reaches of saltmarshes. Here there tend to be numerous shallow pools which warm up quickly and so speed up the development of the tadpoles. Ideally these will dry out by late summer, which reduces the number of tadpole predators such as dragonfly larvae and water boatmen. Grazing by sheep, cattle and/or horses keeps the ground open or the vegetation short, enabling natterjacks to run after and catch their invertebrate prey.



The main thing that Stewardship is providing is the opportunity to link up previously isolated natterjack colonies by providing suitable habitat on farmland in-between the current colonies. Natterjacks are, in ecological terms, a pioneer species and so have the ability to disperse quite large distances in order to seek out new breeding pools. It's thought that if suitable pools could be provided every three kilometres then, with the mainly sandy coastline acting as the natterjack-super-highway to travel on, this would create a continuous linkage between colonies, which would do wonders for the genetic health of the species.

Currently there are 10 farms with active Stewardship agreements, and another 14 in various stages of application.



Photos: Bill Shaw ARC. Natterjack: Chris Dresh ARC

Grazing for conservation

By Gary Powell - Senior Reserves Manager



The mention of grazing for conservation purposes is guaranteed to incite a range of opinions from different quarters. Many herpetologists would argue that grazing a heathland site that contains populations of rare reptiles will be detrimental, while those that are pro-grazing would point out an overall improvement in diversity (particularly botanical), as well as scrub suppression – as reasons why grazing is essential! We at ARC find ourselves caught up in this maelstrom of conflicting views, but are attempting to work our way through it, exercising caution and keeping our conservation objectives in mind at all times.



Many of our sites are currently funded by Natural England's Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme, within which there is a big push towards grazing heathlands, especially with animals that fall into the Native Breeds at Risk category. The adverse effects of overgrazing on reptiles could be the loss of habitat structure, the destruction of hibernation sites and reduction in prey numbers amongst others. A low-impact grazing regime must aim to closely monitor the site to assess changes in vegetation structure, ground conditions and species numbers. Stock densities should be low enough at the outset to ensure that no negative impacts occur – it will be much easier to add extra cattle to a site if the conservation outcomes (such as the creation of a diverse non-uniform vegetation structure) are not being achieved than it will be to reverse severe habitat damage. Flexibility must be incorporated into the planning and implementation of the scheme. This requires that external graziers are fully aware of the conservation aims of the programme, and that a good dialogue is maintained between grazier and site managers. Care should be taken when

looking at stock numbers and the ability to move animals away from a site at short notice is essential. This level of flexibility is also needed for animal welfare reasons to allow site practitioners access to carry out bracken treatment and graziers to remove stock for veterinary treatment. On some sites it may be necessary to remove stock during highly sensitive times of year such as breeding seasons, and some particularly sensitive areas such as reptile foci may warrant permanent exclusion from a grazing unit. Each site is different and must be assessed and monitored as such and any prescribed stock levels must be taken purely as guidelines.



At ARC we have implemented grazing on a number of our Dorset sites over the past few years (rural sites such as Creech and Great Ovens, as well as Parley and Dunyeats in a more urban setting), using a variety of breeds and different stocking densities. We will continue to take a very cautious approach, wary at all times that the herpetofauna of our heathlands takes priority.



Photos: Rick Sharp ARC

Water Beetles at pool frog site

By John Baker - Widespread Species Officer



Hydrophilus larva
Great silver water beetle

The site selected for the reintroduction of the northern pool frog is leased and managed by ARC and contains a large number of water bodies. Until recently, some of these water bodies were heavily shaded by trees. Due to this, habitat management was required prior to the release of pool frogs from Sweden. As such a number of the trees were cleared to create a more open site and thus restoring some of the ponds to a more favourable habitat for the frogs. Habitat management measures at the site not only benefit pool frogs, but a variety of other animal inhabitants and visitors, including viviparous lizard, grass snake, cuckoo, kingfisher, hobby, water shrew and otter.

The pool frog reintroduction programme involves survey work to monitor the pool frogs and other amphibians. Monitoring indicates that site management is also beneficial to great crested newts and common frogs. The amphibian surveys have also turned up two rare water beetles, the king diving beetle *Dytiscus dimidiatus* and the great silver water beetle *Hydrophilus piceus*. The king diving beetle is the largest of six great diving beetle species which can grow to 38mm, being a little bigger than the more familiar *Dytiscus marginalis*. The great silver water beetle is the largest of all the UK's water beetles growing up to 48mm.

In the spring of 2010, Geoff Nobes, an invertebrate specialist, surveyed ponds on the pool frog site to make a full investigation of water beetles present. He found another 63 species, including another four national rarities and 16 species classified as nationally scarce. One of these, *Limnebius aluta*, is the smallest water beetle in the UK, measuring only 1 mm. In spite of its nationally rare status, it was found in many of the ponds surveyed at the pool frog site, sometimes in abundance.

The diversity of water beetles at the pool frog site is an example of the importance of ARC's reserves, and habitat management work, for a range of species other than amphibians and reptiles.



Great silver water beetle (*Hydrophilus piceus*) Photos: John Baker ARC

Million Ponds Project

Million Ponds Project Update By Becca Cleaver

Million Ponds Project Officer for Northern England, Pond Conservation.

The Million Ponds Project has just come to the end of its second year, and has achieved all that was hoped for, and more. The overall aim of this four-year project is to create networks of high quality ponds that will protect and increase populations of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, reverse a century's decline in pond numbers and quality and create sustainable patches of clean water. The project is delivered by a range of partner organisations, including ARC and ARG UK, and is led by Pond Conservation.



Grass snake.
Photo: Fred
Holmes



Blackmoor. Photo: Keith Richardson

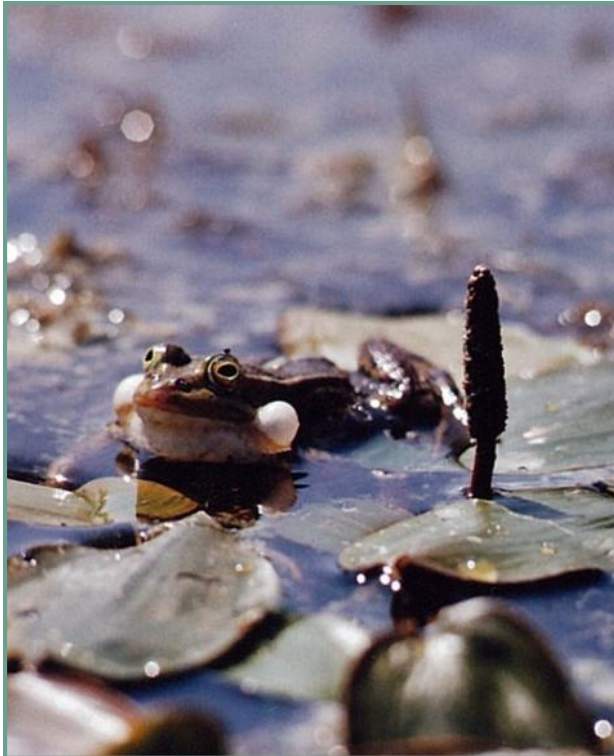
The Million Ponds Project also aims to improve the condition of pond sites for BAP amphibians and reptiles by managing ponds. This is one area of work where we would like to see more happening. David Orchard, ARC Ponds Project Officer, can provide advice and support, and help finding funding, for anyone looking at managing ponds that will help amphibians and reptiles thrive in a landscape. David is interested in discussing projects from single ponds to landscape-scale projects aiming at improving landscape connectivity. Contact David on david.orchard@arc-trust.org whether you have a germ of an idea or a fully fledged plan ready to go.

The second year of the project has seen:

- The appointment of Madeleine Ryan, Million Ponds Project Aggregates Officer, funded by Natural England's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, to advise and guide companies to make the most of the huge pond creation opportunities on mineral extraction sites.
- The development of the BAP Species Map, www.pondconservation.org.uk/millionponds/bapspeciesmap, with funding from the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. This online tool enables users to find out where pond BAP species occur. The tool also provides details on the habitat requirements of these species and tips on creating new ponds for them.
- Raised awareness of the importance of clean water ponds through publications, popular media and work with partner organisations.
- Twenty training courses, attended by 429 people. Feedback shows attendees were very satisfied, and hopefully they are all now putting what they learnt into practice.
- 1429 clean water ponds created by partners and others reporting through the project website.
- Biffaward funding allocated to 366 ponds specifically for BAP species including natterjack toad, common toad, great crested newt and grass snake.

Pool frogs revisited

By John Buckley - ARC Amphibian Conservation Officer



Male pool frog calling

Not so long ago in the 1970s and 80s the pool frog (*Pelophylax lessonae*) was not recognised as a native species, but at Thompson Common, Norfolk, where it had been known for well over 100 years its future appeared secure. Back then one could wander from pond to pond and see or hear pool frogs plop into the water with a sound like a diving water vole. Without much effort, you could encounter about 40 frogs on a single visit.

But our biodiversity was not as safe as it seemed and the following years saw many, often detrimental, changes to our wildlife populations. Water voles, for instance, suffered a decline – this was the most rapid and serious amongst mammals - but worse still, the pool frog became extinct in Britain just as research proved it to be a native species. However, the data also indicated that the British pool frog was closely related to the Scandinavian, and it would therefore be possible to reverse this local extinction. On that basis the reintroduction from Sweden, already sketched out, was developed in detail; by 2005 translocations for a four-year period had begun.

With the translocation phase of the project successfully completed, I recently joined John Baker and Nick Gibbons in Breckland to help monitor the re-introduced population. Early June was always the best time at Thompson Common and this year conditions were ideal, the sun at full strength and temperatures hovering around 25 degrees all day. The first thing we heard on site was a male cuckoo, followed by “auwack”, “auwack”; the sound of pool frogs calling from a pond about 70m away. It was evocative of Thompson in the 70’s.



John Baker ARC Widespread Species Officer during CMR exercise.



Pool frog spawn

The re-introduction programme is being conducted to a very high standard. Each frog brought from Sweden has been given a code number and photographed before release. To maintain a complete photographic gallery of all known specimens every new frog found on site is processed in the same way. So on this occasion our task was to undertake the final CMR (Catch, Mark, Recapture) exercise of the year for which we had simply to locate, stealthily approach and photograph as many of the frogs as possible. Altogether we encountered about 20 adult frogs. Afterwards the day’s photographs were compared with those in the gallery and the number of new frogs and known frogs determined.



Female pool frog photographed at Thompson Common in the mid 1980's

The proportion of new to known frogs will now be used to estimate the current adult population. The project has already met a number of success criteria and we are quietly confident that pool frog numbers will steadily increase. Nothing as sophisticated as CMR was undertaken at Thompson in the last century so it is difficult to be sure about relative population sizes. Simple adult head counts suggest that the re-introduced population is not yet as large as the former one, but juvenile numbers indicate prospects for growth are very good. We saw more juveniles this June than were ever seen on my visits to Thompson. Now that the frog habitat is steadily improving, through a combination of cattle grazing and bracken control, and with the prospect of Higher Level Stewardship funding for additional work, the future for our pool frog looks more secure.



Female pool frog at re-introduction site 2010



ARC and Natural England are joint lead partners for the Species Action Plan (www.arc-trust.org/species/saps.php) which is supported by an expert steering group.

All photos John Buckley ARC

Volunteers improve habitat for natterjack toads

By John & Claire Buckley



September's scrub-clearing task at Woolmer Forest is fast becoming a highlight of the conservation year. Invitations announcing the time and date of this event were evidently eagerly anticipated by friends, family, colleagues, amphibian specialists and others, particularly the South Downs Joint Committee volunteers.

This year some 56 volunteers answered the call to spend the best part of the day clearing birch from a tract of acid grassland to improve it for natterjack toads. Other wildlife also benefits e.g. shepherd's cress (a small plant that's losing ground to birch scrub) and ground nesting birds such as woodlark, and even the little ringed plover and lapwing.

In cool, breezy conditions the first volunteers to arrive soon employed fire making kits on the down wind edge of the work area. The resultant bonfires became focal points of activity; cut stems were speedily dragged to the nearest fire and heaped on in an orderly fashion. For old hands there was a feeling of déjà vu; many of the multi-stemmed birch we felled were old friends from five years ago when they were coppiced but not killed by stump treatment.



Several times the small herd of cattle passed by on one of its grazing peregrinations, but in the absence of cut willow did not linger for long.

At about 12.30 we enjoyed a welcome break for lunch, then it was the group photograph and back to work to finish off the cutting, dragging and burning before ensuring some time for new volunteers to see a natterjack toad or two. Some even saw the first ever stripeless natterjack for Woolmer.

In the afternoon volunteers departed with the suddenness with which they had arrived and before light rain set in, the stump treaters completed their work, herbicide carefully applied.

It had been a very good day. A total of 2.66ha was cleared, almost twice last year's area. Whilst it is tempting to ascribe this increase in performance to improved skills or greater commitment, these may not have been the only factors; volunteers worked harder in the colder weather, and in all fairness the birch scrub was less dense to start with. Plenty of birch is still growing up for future years' work.



Photos by John Buckley ARC



Purbeck Important Ponds Project

By Dr Rachel Janes - Dorset Wildlife Trust



Purbeck district is known to contain many ponds of high wildlife value, and a great opportunity existed for rebuilding biodiversity in the area by creating a network of new ponds within priority areas and/or restoring existing ponds. In 2009, Dorset Wildlife Trust secured funding from Biffaward, Dorset AONB and the Environment Agency for the Purbeck Important Ponds Project, a 2 year programme developed to address targets in the draft national Pond Habitat Action Plan by:

- Compiling an Inventory of all Purbeck's countryside ponds and a shortlist of top 'Flagship' ponds
- Surveying 30 of the best ponds for macroinvertebrates, plants and amphibians
- Creating and/or restoring 40 ponds



To date, details of over 1000 ponds have been added to a pond GIS layer and DWT staff have worked with landowners and community members to restore and create clean water ponds which have the potential to become priority ponds, as defined in the HAP. The survey work has yielded some extremely exciting finds, including new records of BAP species such the rare aquatic fern pillwort *Pilularia globularia*, the liverwort pitted frillwort, *Fossombronina foveolat*, the notable small red damselfly *Ceragrion tenellum*, several rare water beetle species and the tiny hydroptilid caddis fly *Tricoleiochiton fagesii*, which had never been recorded in Dorset before!

As part of the project, Philip Temple has re-examined the Great Crested Newt (GCN) meta-populations around the Langton Matravers and Creech areas. Excitingly, new breeding ponds for GCN have been identified which extends their known range. A programme of habitat enhancements have been carried out including establishing a refuge pond at Leeson House and restoring silted up and overgrown ponds.

This project has proven extremely popular with landowners, volunteers, local people and the many experts who live in the Purbeck district, and forms part of a wider living landscape partnership approach to conservation in this biodiversity hotspot.



Pond and small red damsel fly photos: Chris Dresh ARC

Great crested newt.
Photo: Neal Armour-Chelu



**ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY**



Dorset
Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty



investing in the environment

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www.dorsetwildlife.co.uk

The ARG UK Herpetofauna Workers Meeting 2011

The 2011 Herpetofauna Workers meeting in January will be the 21st anniversary celebration of ARG UK.

On the 29th and 30th of January 2011 the 21st annual Herpetofauna Workers Meeting will be taking place at The Park Inn in Cardiff city centre. The meeting is traditionally very popular and this year I'm sure will be no exception! There is a very varied programme of presentations and workshops as well as a talk on amphibian disease and 'frogswab 2011' with Trent Garner and Freya Smith from The Institute of Zoology during the Saturday night social evening.

Presentations include ...

- **How many great crested newts are there really? Modelling great crested newt status.** John Wilkinson & Dorothy Wright (ARC)
- **Garden Herps Survey.** Mike Toms (BTO)
- **Economies of scale: revised protocols for NARRS reptile surveys.** David Sewell (Durrell Institute of Conservation & Ecology)
- **Local adaption: implications for Scottish frogs in a changing environment.** Anna Muir (University of Glasgow)
- **Natterings from the North - the current state of natterjack conservation in Cumbria.** Bill Shaw (ARC)
- **Water quality.** Jeremy Biggs (Pond Conservation)
- **Johnstone Land Tribunal.** Liz Howe (CCW)
- **Spatial ecology of adders in the Wyre Forest.** Nigel Hand (Herefordshire Amphibian & Reptile Team)
- **Genetics and herps conservation.** Tobias Uller (University of Oxford)
- **Changing approaches to mitigation - past and future.** Tony Gent (ARC)
- **Natterjacks in Woolmer Forest.** Trevor Beebee (University of Sussex)

Workshops include ...

1. Amphibian Disease
2. Water Quality
3. Non-native species
4. Reptile Mitigation
5. County recording for herps
6. Adder swab sampling

Cost

Conference package Friday - Sunday
(includes meals all weekend, accommodation Friday & Saturday night, 2 day conference and Saturday social event.
Only £210 (£180 for ARG members)
Day rates £45 (£30 for ARG members)

The full programme and booking form is available to download from www.arguk.org. ARC recommends booking early to avoid disappointment! The closing date for registration with accommodation is 23rd December 2010 and without accommodation 7th January 2011.

For further information please contact Angela Reynolds on 01202 391 319 or email angela.reynolds@arc-trust.org

So what about our other 135 herp species?

By Paul Edgar - Natural England

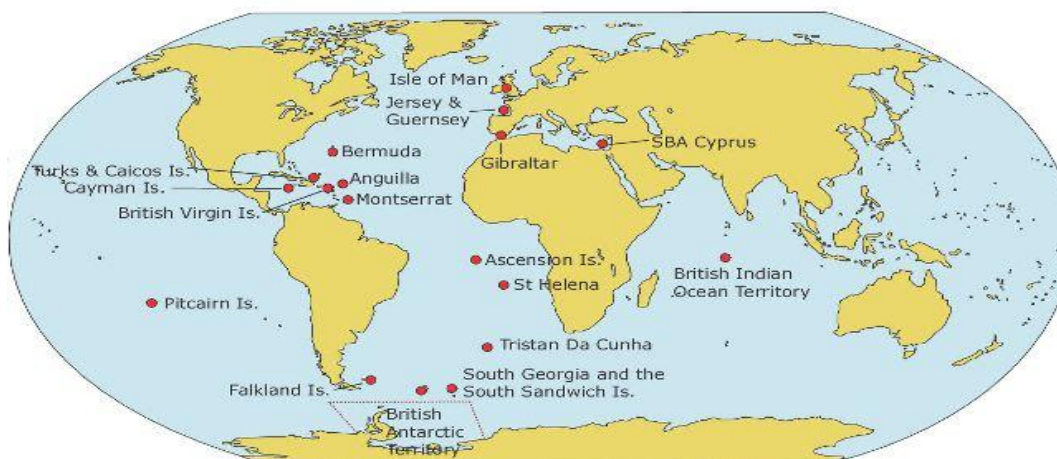
Forgotten or ignored? Either way, a significant proportion of the biodiversity that the UK has responsibility for protecting is little known. Various Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas around the world remain politically part of the UK (or belong to the British Crown – the situation can be confusing!) and support an extremely diverse range of wildlife. In warmer regions, especially in the Caribbean, amphibians and reptiles form a particularly important part of the fauna.

Worldwide, about 135 species of native herpetofauna have been recorded in the UK Overseas Territories (due to the taxonomic instability currently prevailing, an exact total has yet to be determined). Of these, 60 species (over 44% of the total) are of the highest conservation concern internationally, e.g. they are classified as Critically Endangered or Endangered on the IUCN Red List, and/or they are endemic species. In fact, there are more endemic species of herpetofauna in the UK Overseas Territories (34) than there are endemic birds.

The UK has the sole responsibility for conserving all of these endangered and endemic species and they should, supposedly, come under the remit of the UKBAP. Worryingly, however, almost all of our overseas amphibians and reptiles are thought to be declining rapidly and, apart from a few high profile species, little effective conservation action is being taken. A new report by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, supported by the UK Government's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), provides an introduction to the UK Overseas Territories and their herpetofauna, summarises the current threats and problems these species face and makes recommendations for future conservation actions. The report can be found on the ARC website <http://arc-trust.org/europe/overseas.php>.



Location of UK Overseas Territories, Crown Dependencies and Sovereign Base Areas



Map by Sal Millar at Sal's Graphics

Adder (*Vipera berus*)



Black adder. Photo: Chris Dresh ARC



Female adder
Photo: Chris
Dresh ARC

Best time to see

- Breeding season (March to April)
- Sunny mornings

Colour

- Males are grey to even bluish/greenish with black zig-zag pattern
- Females are brown with dark brown zig-zag
- Sometimes both males and females can be black (melanistic). In these cases the zig-zag is often indistinct
- Newborn and very young look similar to females but with red/ginger tinge. Used to be considered a separate species known as the 'little red adder'

Behaviour

- Active late February to early November
- Hibernate from November to late February
- Active during the day
- Adults prey on small mammals and nestlings of ground-nesting birds
- Newborn snakes prey on insects and young lizards

Breeding

- Late March to April
- Males will engage in ritual combat known as 'the dance of the adders'
- Female gives birth to about 10 young (neonates) between late July and early September

Appearance

- Short and stocky
- Distinct zig-zag dorsal pattern
- Often have V, X or Y shaped marking on head
- White lips (labial scales)
- Red to orange eyes with vertically elliptical pupil

Male adder.
Photo: Paul Stevens



Adult male 50 – 55cm
Adult female 50 – 70cm
New born 16cm

Habitat

- Heathland and moorland
- Sea cliffs
- Chalk downland
- Open woodland and woodland rides
- Road and rail embankments



Photo: Chris Gleed-Owen



Photo: Chris Dresh ARC

Status

Listed as a priority species on the UK's Bio-diversity Action Plan list.

Protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act; it is prohibited to kill or injure them intentionally, sell them or to offer them for sale (dead or alive).



By Ros Blishen - Fundraising Officer

We have been very busy putting together a Heritage Lottery Fund application for our project in London, CLARE, (Connecting London's Amphibian and Reptile Environments). I'm delighted to say that the bid was successful. We'll be working with London Wildlife Trust and GiGL (Greenspace Information for Greater London). The project will raise the profile and increase understanding of amphibians and reptiles and their distribution within Greater London through a campaign that will involve wide public participation and learning in wildlife recording. The project will be starting early next year.

Some of you may recall that when I first joined ARC I had not really thought about amphibians and reptiles and didn't realise what an important role they played in our ecosystem. I don't have a large garden, but it is surrounded by trees and every autumn my husband and I have religiously cleared away the dead leaves. Last autumn, it being my first since working for ARC, we decided to only clear the dead leaves from the paths and leave them on the flowerbeds. We were delighted to find in the spring this year we had several frogs and toads, that had obviously hibernated in the garden over winter, in fact we disturbed one that had been under the leaves in the flowerbed. We had never had them before and it made me realise, that although our garden is small we can still do our bit for conservation and make a difference.

Thank you to all the people that have renewed their ARC Friendship. Your financial support is so important to us and really appreciated. There is a donation form included with this newsletter. I know Christmas is a busy time for everyone and families and people take priority, but if you could send us a gift it will help ARC make a difference for our often neglected amphibians and reptiles.

The ARC Snake Genebank Update

We have had a fantastic response to the genebank and to date we have received more than 100 sloughs from all over the country!

These sloughs will be used to build up a 'Snake Genebank' - a resource that can be used for long term studies into the effects of population isolation. DNA can be extracted from the sloughs, revealing much about the population in which the owner lives.

You can still send your sloughs in using the following guidelines

- collect as much of the skin as you can, but it does not need to be entire to be useful.
- gently dry (pat with tissue paper) the skin, this will help it to last longer.
- record the accurate grid reference and place name of where you found the slough. If you find it in or near a garden, please give us the postcode as well.
- if you find more than one slough at the same site, please send them all to us if you can. Several samples from one site will be very useful.

Before placing each slough in a separate, dry paper envelope and sealing it, write on it:

- which animal you think the slough is from.
- the location you found the slough.
- the date you found it.
- your name and contact details (especially email).
- place this envelope (or envelopes) in another envelope marked '**ARC Sliding Scales Genebank**' and post it to the Bournemouth office.

Where there's a Will there's hope for the future! Please remember ARC in your Will to ensure that our wildlife heritage is conserved for us and future generations

Christmas Cards

I realise it's a bit late to be buying Christmas cards for this year, but you could buy them in preparation for next year. They are unique to ARC, designed by Leon Hills. A pack of eight cards with four different images will only cost you £3.00 and a pack of five cards designed by a member of staff, Dr John Wilkinson, £2 - bargain or what! Please phone 01202 391319 to order your cards

ARC is also producing packs of notelets in the New Year. In due course they will all be available from our online shop.



Events

This summer ARC attended a large number of events both locally and nationally. Our focus was to promote our 'Sliding Scales' campaign and give members of the public a chance to meet our native reptiles. The events were very popular and everyone at ARC felt each event was a great success.

Events are really important as they give us an opportunity to reach a variety of people and answer a variety of questions. We hand out literature and advice and it also provides a rare opportunity for people to see our native herps 'in the flesh.' This enables us to demonstrate identification techniques and helps to quash the myth that snakes are slimy and scary creatures!

Keep an eye on our website www.arc-trust.org for next years events schedule.



Avon Heath. Photo: Angela Reynolds ARC



Thames Festival. Photo: John Baker ARC



Thames Festival. Photo: John Baker ARC



Avon Heath. Photo: Angela Reynolds ARC



New Forest Show. Photo: Angela Reynolds ARC

And the winner is ...

Congratulations to the winner of our 'new name' competition.

Paul High suggested the name 'Hop Gossip' and also 'Hop off the press.' We have used both of these suggestions and I hope you like them as much as we do!

Paul will receive a signed copy of Howard Inn's book Britain's Reptiles and Amphibians, free membership for a year and a Marks & Spencer voucher.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who sent in suggestions. They were all really good and we thoroughly enjoyed choosing the winner.



USEFUL PHRASES FOR THOSE HERPING HOLIDAYS ABROAD

ITALIAN Dove si trova il più vicino stagno? Where is the nearest pond?

GERMAN Ist das eine Kröte oder eine Schildkröte? Is that a toad or a terrapin?

SPANISH ¿Es esta especie de serpiente venenosa? Is this species of snake poisonous?

FILIPINO Mangyaring huwag shoot, ko lamang nais na tumingin sa iyong mga kolonya ng butiki! Please do not shoot, I only wanted to look at your lizard colony!

DANISH Kan du direkte mig til Treefrog miljøprojekt du? Can you direct me to the treefrog conservation project please?

WELSH Methu chi roi maes parcio yno! Mae'n safle bridio madfall! You can't put a carpark there! It's a newt breeding site!

SWAHILI Sijawahi kuona hii kobe kabla! Unaweza kuniambia jina lake kwa Kiingereza? I've never seen this tortoise before! Can you tell me its name in English?

CZECH Ach ano, oni často přezimují pozdě, když v létě bylo velmi teplé. Ah yes, they often hibernate late when the summer has been very warm.

amphibian and reptile conservation



Amphibian and Reptile Conservation is a national wildlife charity striving for a world where amphibians and reptiles are safeguarded for future generations. With over 20 years experience in the wildlife sector we are committed to the conservation of frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards and the habitats on which they depend.

To find out more or to support Amphibian and Reptile Conservation contact:

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655A Christchurch Road
Bournemouth
BH1 4AP

Tel: 02120 391319
Fax: 01202 392785
Email: enquiries@arc-trust.org

www.arc-trust.org

Become a Friend!

Join Amphibian and Reptile Conservation today and help us give a voice to the UK's amphibians and reptiles - saving species, improving habitats and enhancing lives in the process. It costs as little as £15 a year.

Join online:
www.arc-trust.org/support

Or call **01202 391319**
(9:00am - 5:00pm, Monday - Friday)