



Contents

Warwickshire Pond Creation 1
Around the ARGs 2
Turtle Hoax 3
Herpetofauna Workers' Meeting 2011 4
Warwickshire's Top Reptile Site Damaged 5
Reptile Habitat Management Handbook..... 7
Albino Slow-worm 8
Drift Fence Assists Toad Crossing..... 8
Last Orders for Million Ponds Funding..... 9
A Day in the Cyprus Hills with Snake George..... 10
Fish Control Methods for Great Crested Newt Conservation . 11
Review: Silent Summer 12

Warwickshire Pond Creation

Ian Jelley, Nature Reserves Manager, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Vice Chair Warwickshire Amphibian and Reptile Team



Pete Thorne

Pond creation at Stonebridge Meadows

Warwickshire Amphibian and Reptile Team (WART) in partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) have received funding from the Million Ponds Project – a national scheme coordinated by the Pond Conservation Trust that supports pond creation projects across England and Wales (see p.9). The total number of ponds in Britain has been declining over the last century and it is estimated that up to a third have been lost in the last 50 years with many rural ponds becoming either polluted or isolated.

Two sites were selected, Tocil Wood Meadow and Stonebridge Meadows both Local Nature Reserves in Coventry. The ponds were targeted to benefit great crested newt and common toad, as Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priorities, hence eligible for Million Ponds Project funding. Smooth newt and common frog (non-BAP species) are also expected to benefit from new breeding habitat.

The project, which was undertaken during September 2010, entailed a contractor excavating two ponds at Tocil Wood Meadow and three at Stonebridge Meadows. The new ponds will create additional habitats for some

of the 80 pond species that have been identified as national priorities under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and will be of particular benefit to amphibians and reptiles as breeding and foraging sites. The ponds will complement the existing mixed habitats at each site and improve their overall biodiversity.

WART and WWT will continue to work in partnership to monitor the colonisation of the ponds by different species over time.



New ponds like this one at Stonebridge Meadows create habitat for some of the 80 pond species identified as national priorities under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Pete Thorne

Around the ARGs

Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group

It has been another great year for Avon Amphibian and Reptile Group (ARAG) with a range of events undertaken within the group, from trips to Dorset, visiting Avon Wildlife Trusts' newest Reserve at Portishead, and, of course, the continuation of surveys to better understand the distribution of Herpetofauna in the County. Some key events of note are as follows:

IFAW Award for ARAG Member

Helen Hobbs, of the Charlcombe Toad Rescue Group in Bath, has received a conservation award from the International Fund from Animal Welfare (IFAW) for her work in co-ordinating the volunteers who help thousands of toads, frogs and newts reach their breeding lake safely each spring. Helen received her award, presented by TV vet Emma Milne, at the Animal Action Awards ceremony hosted by Baroness Gale on 19 October at the House of Lords. There were nine awards all together, including those who dedicate their time to animal rescue centres and also a search and rescue dog called 'Echo' who spent time in Haiti searching for people caught in the recent earthquake.



Helen Hobbs (4th right) receiving her IFAW award, with other members of the Charlcombe Toad Patrol.

Helen has been volunteering at Charlcombe for 12 years and took on the co-ordination and recording in 2003 when Bath and Northeast Somerset Council introduced an annual road closure to through traffic for six weeks during

the spring migration. Since 2003 the Group has recorded a total of 15,338 live amphibians with 862 casualties, the most successful year being 2010 with 3,380 toads, 498 frogs and 607 newts crossing safely with just 111 casualties. For more information on toad patrols go to www.froglife.org

Avon ARG Away Day in Dorset

Paul Clack

Saturday 12 June saw ten ARAG members meet up near Bournemouth to explore some Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust reserves with the help of Rowland Griffin, their Dorset Reserves Community Officer.

The weather was good and in the morning we quickly found some slow-worms under refuges and several adders basking on heathland. Whilst searching for smooth snakes, other wildlife highlights included nightjar, Dartford warbler, green hairstreak and emerald damselflies. We then found three adult smooth snakes, and several ARAG members were able to handle these fantastic animals, under close licensed supervision by Rowland!



Iain Adderton

After a welcome pub lunch (thirsty work reptile hunting) we visited another site in search of lizards. Hard searching produced a superb male sand lizard basking near a small stream. This animal helpfully posed for several minutes, allowing all members to obtain good views. Afterwards we found several common lizards in nearby habitat, and Iain, our chairman, was able to capture one by hand so everyone could clearly see the differences between the two species.

Throughout the day, Rowland answered all our questions patiently and thoroughly, guiding us around the reserves brilliantly. We'll certainly be back in 2011, and maybe we'll add grass snake to the list to complete the UK native reptile set!

Many thanks Rowland!



ARAG Represents ARC at Reserve Opening Day

Iain Adderton

ARAG was invited to attend the handover ceremony of Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve, the newest reserve to be managed by Avon Wildlife Trust. The reserve is a brilliant addition to AWTs reserve portfolio and offers a fantastic opportunity for residents of Portishead to enjoy nature on their doorstep. Surveys have already been undertaken prior to the handover and great crested newt and slow-worm are known to be present. Hopefully ARAG will be involved in additional surveys to find out what else may be present in the area.

Reminiscence Group

Some of the older heads among the ARG UK Panel have been trying to work out how many years the Herp Workers' Meeting has been running for. This conference has seen several changes in name and format. As far as we can tell, the first conference was the *Herpetofauna Recorder's Seminar*, organised by Fauna and Flora Preservation Society and the Biological Records Centre, held at London Zoo in 1985. Since then, the meeting has been organised and supported by various parties, notably Leicester Polytechnic, the British Herpetological Society, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and its predecessors, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Froglife ARG UK and others too numerous to list.

We could not find records of conferences being held in some of the years since 1985, namely 1986, 1988 and 2004. We are fairly confident that no conferences were held in these years, but if you know otherwise, please contact John Baker johninhallesworth@aol.com. If our fading memories are correct, then the Herp Workers' Meeting (in its various guises) will be celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2012.

Website and Twitter

The ARG UK website has been re-designed by Jen Drage (Aye-aye Design) and looks greatly improved. An on-line recording facility is in development and will be linked in to the website fairly soon.

You can also follow ARG UK on twitter twitter.com/ARGgroupsUK

FOLLOW US ON 

Turtle Hoax

You may have seen photographs circulated by email, supposedly showing illegal collection of sea turtle eggs in Costa Rica. Todd Lewis (British Herpetological Society) currently working in Costa Rica, however, reports that they actually show a legal harvest of surplus eggs from the olive ridley colony at Playa Ostional on the Pacific coast.

The harvest is a partnership between the University of Costa Rica, a community organisation called ADIO, and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MINAET). Mass nesting, or arribadas, can involve many thousands of turtles, swamping predators with sheer numbers. But the downside is that the turtles regularly dig up and destroy each others' eggs. The egg harvest at Ostional is legal, sustainable and regulated, taking eggs that are doomed to be destroyed by subsequent arribadas.



Herpetofauna Workers' Meeting 2011

A 21st Anniversary Celebration of The UK Amphibian and Reptile Group Network

Park Inn Cardiff City Centre, Mary Ann Street, Cardiff, CF10 2JH

Saturday 29 - Sunday 30 January 2011

Provisional Programme

- Genetics and herps conservation. Tobias Uller (University of Oxford)
- *How many great crested newts are there really? Modelling great crested newt status.* John Wilkinson & Dorothy Wright (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation)
- *Garden Herps Survey.* Mike Toms (British Trust for Ornithology)
- *Economies of scale: revised protocols for NARRS reptile surveys.* David Sewell (Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology)
- *Spatial ecology of adders in the Wyre Forest.* Nigel Hand (Herefordshire Amphibian and Reptile Team)
- *Local adaptation: Scottish frogs in a changing climate.* Anna Muir (University of Glasgow)
- *The importance of water quality in ponds, and how to tell if it's good or bad.* Jeremy Biggs (Pond Conservation).
- *Changing approaches to mitigation – past and future.* Tony Gent (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation)
- *Johnstown Land Tribunal.* Liz Howe (Countryside Council for Wales)
- *Natterings from the North – the current state of natterjack conservation in Cumbria.* Bill Shaw (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation)
- *Natterjacks in Woolmer Forest.* Trevor Beebee (University of Sussex).

Social Evening, including speakers Trent Garner and Freya Smith (Institute of Zoology). Freya will provide an update on chytrid and introducing *Frogswab 2011* which will re-visit the sites sampled by ARG members and others in 2008.

Workshops to include:

- Amphibian disease
- Water quality
- Non-native species
- Reptile mitigation
- County recording for herps
- Adder swab sampling. Workshop to be run in conjunction with Natural England/Institute of Zoology's project to investigate genetics of isolated/non-isolated adder populations. This project is still in development, but it will be seeking help from ARGs, locating and sampling adder populations (expressions of interest to John Baker johninhalesworth@aol.com)

Conference package (includes meal on Friday evening, accommodation Friday and Saturday night, two-day conference and Saturday evening meal/social event) only £210 (£180 for ARG members). Must be booked before Christmas.

Day rates £45 (£30 ARG members).

Full programme and booking form available from the ARG UK website www.arguk.org

Warwickshire's Top Reptile Site Damaged

Ian Tanner's account of damage to a reptile habitat is an all too familiar example of the lack of consideration given to reptiles, even on recorded sites

Following the destruction of reptile habitat provided by a section of dismantled railway that passes through Kenilworth Common, Warwickshire Amphibian and Reptile Team (WART) has been monitoring the site during 2010.

The site was damaged during the reptile hibernation period during work associated with a cycle path project to link the Kenilworth Greenway with the residential areas south of Finham Brook in Kenilworth. The project is coordinated by a partnership between Warwickshire County Council and Sustrans.



Reptile site, Kenilworth Common, after work related to a cycle path project, February 2010

This part of Kenilworth Common is the most important known reptile site in Warwickshire. All four of the widespread reptile species have been recorded here, although adders have not been seen since the end of the 1980s (partly due to access restrictions to the rail network).

In June 2010 WART visited the site to make an assessment of damage to the site. On the strength of the initial findings, WART contacted

Warwickshire Police to inform them that the works would have resulted in the death of reptiles and that, since the County Council was aware of the herpetofaunal interest contained within the site, the killing of the reptiles should be regarded as intentional. Such actions are illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which protects all widespread reptile species from intentional killing and injury.



Survey refuges in place on the remaining reptile bank

The works took place prior to any planning application being submitted, which could otherwise have been commented on by WART as part of the normal planning procedures. Moreover, no consultation was made with the adjacent landowners (Warwick District Council) or Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, who manage the land as a nature reserve under agreement with the Council.

WART provided reptile survey refuges to the Warwickshire County Council Ecology Unit and also monitored the area where destruction had occurred during the summer. In

August WART relocated the refuges to the remaining undisturbed banks of the railway cutting and, after these had bedded down, carried out two site visits, a week apart, to check on the status of the remaining reptile habitat.

The surveys revealed that the area of direct destruction had lost all elements of vegetation noted for the site and now includes species associated with disturbance and enrichment such as field forget-me-not, nettle and great mullein. Areas where material had been dumped had bracken growing up through the substrate but the understorey was devoid of vegetation.

One small area that occurs within level ground had not been damaged and here bracken grew with an understorey of ivy. Part of the bank where trees were felled contains a good deal of rabbit activity and is now generally bare sand with some scattered vegetation although bird's-foot (a rare Warwickshire plant species already recorded from the Common) was found along the base of the bank. Another part of the bank was unaffected and this is dominated by a dense expanse of bracken.

During two site visits in September, a total of four common lizard, 18 slow-worm and a grass snake were recorded. It was not possible to determine whether the site visits recorded the same individual animals but by assessing the location, gender and the age group it is likely that these counts represent three individual common lizards, eleven slow-worms and a grass snake (including a juvenile common lizard and four juvenile slow-worms). The area of undamaged habitat that includes ivy contained at least four slow-worms. No reptiles were found in association with the habitat areas that had been destroyed.



WART is currently producing a report to provide written evidence to the police of the destruction that has taken place. The report will also indicate the nature of habitat restoration and creation that we would be expecting to mitigate for the damage that has occurred and the safeguards to the site should the proposed cycleway go ahead.

Amongst the recommendations will be the construction of a small pond and the creation of terrestrial habitat, using timber and brash from felled trees, and the incorporation of red sandstone blocks along the south-east facing bank of the cutting. WART would also like to see some additional tree felling and the erection of fencing to reduce disturbance to the reptile habitat.

WART will also liaise with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to develop a project to re-establish heathland communities within Kenilworth Common adjacent to the railway line and, if successful, establish a 25-year plan to extend this management across the entire site.

World Congress of Herpetology

Jan Clemons (ARG UK) and Richard Griffiths (Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology) are planning a symposium on the role of volunteers to be held during the seventh [World Congress of Herpetology](#). Jan has been involved with ARG UK since its re-branding in 2005 and prior to that under its former guise of the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland.

Between now and the Congress, scheduled for 2012, in Vancouver, Canada, ARG volunteers will not only continue with local projects, but they will also be contributing to the *Million Ponds Project*, *Frogswab 2011* and, potentially, an adder genetics project. More of the latter two at the Herp Workers' Meeting.

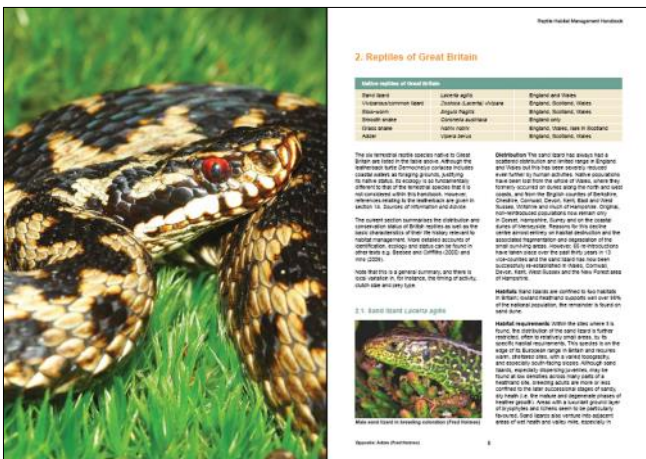
Reptile Habitat Management Handbook

The *Reptile Habitat Management Handbook* has been produced to fill an information gap. As reptile ecologists will be aware, there is sometimes only poor understanding of reptile habitat requirements among those responsible for managing sites.

Reptile advocates have sometimes ended up in confrontational situations with site managers. It can be infuriating to return to a favourite reptile site only to find that the habitat has been damaged or destroyed—sometimes, it must be presumed, along with the formerly resident reptiles. Reptile watchers understand the subtleties of topography and vegetation structure that make specific areas of key importance to reptiles. Site managers are not necessarily reptile experts—they cannot reasonably be expected to have encyclopaedic knowledge of all taxonomic groups.

In addition to a lack of understanding, unsympathetic habitat management is sometimes justified by the view that it is impossible to draw up management plans on a species-by-species basis, as there are too many to consider and some may have conflicting requirements anyway; hence habitat is the focus of management, rather than species. Which does not always work well for reptiles. During the production of the handbook one of the review panel recounted that, in his experience, reptiles persisted at sites in spite of management, rather than because of it.

In spite of the frustration experienced by reptile advocates, the handbook has attempted to adopt a positive tone. Berating site managers is less likely to engage their cooperation. Instead, the handbook provides information on reptiles and their habitat requirements and discusses how commonly used management techniques can be applied or adopted to best benefit them.



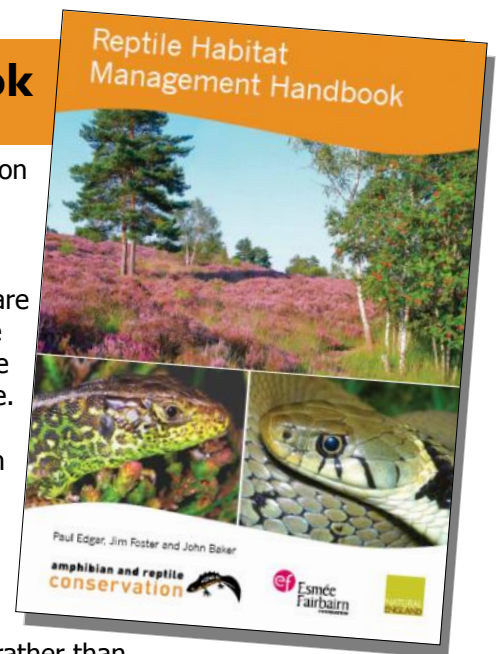
The handbook includes a section on the resolution of the conflicting demands. In practice, several aspects of reptile habitat requirements are helpful when it comes to incorporating multiple taxonomic interests. Reptiles need warm, relatively open habitats, with

varied vegetation structure and good connectivity. Such habitats are also favourable to a wide range of other wildlife. Additionally, there seems an increasing recognition of the value of mosaics of differing habitat types, rather than extensive homogeneity. Further, climate change has drawn attention to the importance of habitat connectivity. Whilst it may be tactful to restrain from saying that we were right all along—reptile ecologists may hope for an easier reception than in the past.

It is very much hoped that the handbook will guide site managers and assist ARG members advising on site management through documented 'back-up'. In turn, ARGs can help the handbook. Plenty of copies have been printed, so ARG members who advise on site management, or work with habitat management advisers are encouraged to take sufficient copies for their own reference and to distribute to other likely 'users'. The production costs of the handbook have been covered by Natural England and ARC's Widespread Species Project, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. There is a charge of £3.00 to cover postage and handling, but this should not be a barrier to getting the handbook to those who will use it. It's not doing any good sitting on the shelf. If you can use multiple copies and a handover opportunity can be arranged, then the handbook is free to ARGs and other conservation practitioners.

It has to be admitted that reptile habitat management is not, in most aspects, a precise science. Information and photographs contained in the handbook have pooled the collective experience of ARC, ARG members and other reptile advocates. ARG members may also have also contributed through a Herp Workers' Meeting Workshop in 2007. Nevertheless, it is fully expected that the current handbook can be improved upon. If you can suggest improvements or additions, please contact ARC enquiries@arc-trust.org.

Copies of the handbook will be available at regional meetings over the winter, the ARC/BHS Scientific Meeting in Bournemouth and the Herp Workers' Meeting in Cardiff. Contact Ange Reynolds (01202 391319) at ARC to request copies or to arrange their handover/delivery.



Albino Slow-worm

Jennie Hatts, Avon Amphibian and Reptile Group



A juvenile albino slow-worm was captured in June 2010 during a reptile translocation in Bridgwater, Somerset.

Slow-worm populations exhibit wide variation in colour but albino morphs are a rare occurrence. The albino is shown here adjacent to a normally coloured juvenile.

Jennie Hatts

Drift Fence Assists Toad Crossing

Chris Gregory, West Stow Country Park

Following a successful trial in 2009, a drift fence was re-erected along Icklingham Road, West Stow, Suffolk, in time for the 2010 spring migration of toads.

The plastic fence, held upright with wooden stakes, prevented the toads reaching the road, allowing toad patrollers to collect them from the verge, both during the evening and the daylight hours of the following morning.

Toads stopped from crossing the road burrowed into vegetation and under objects at the base of the fence, making it easier and safer for volunteers to collect them and transport them safely to West Stow Country Park, on the opposite side of the road, where they breed. The fence was lowered after the main migration to allow the toads to return.



Chris Gregory

The site has been a major crossing point for toads for many years. Migration did not start until the third week of March in 2010 and lasted for about three weeks, during which time over 8000 toads were collected from the barrier and the road, more than double the previous year's total. Most importantly the mortality rate dropped to just over 5%, compared to about 40% before the barrier was installed.

Last Orders for Million Ponds Funding

Becca Cleaver, Pond Conservation

The *Million Ponds Project* has come to the end of its second year, having achieved all that was hoped for, and more. This four-year project is delivered by a range of partner organisations, including ARC and ARG UK, and is led by Pond Conservation.

Aims of the *Million Ponds Project*

- 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.
- Create sustainable patches of clean water.

Key outcomes of the second year include:

- 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. It 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 learned into practice.
- Biffaward funding allocated to 366 ponds specifically for BAP species including great crested newt, natterjack toad, common toad and grass snake.
- 1429 clean water ponds created by partners and others reporting through the project website.



Million Ponds funding has enabled ARC to create ponds for natterjacks in Hampshire and Surrey, with more planned for Oxfordshire.

Latest round of funding is the last chance

The latest round of Biffaward funding for pond creation projects is now open for applications. The preliminary enquiry form can be downloaded from the ARG UK website www.arguk.org. This form should be returned to ARC Ponds Project Officer David Orchard by 23 December at the latest. If you have any ideas about potential projects or if you think you'll need help with the planning or implementation of these, then please contact David as soon as possible.

This is the last round of Biffaward funding for pond creation projects, so if you'd like to create habitat for 'pond BAP herps' (great crested newt, common toad, natterjack toad and grass snake), this could be the time to make it happen!

The *Million Ponds Project* also aims to improve the condition of pond sites for BAP amphibians and reptiles by habitat management. This is one area of work where the *Million Ponds Project* would like to see more happening. David Orchard 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 project aiming at improving habitat connectivity.

Contact: David Orchard, david.orchard@arc-trust.org 01204 529312.

A Day in the Cyprus Hills with Snake George

Andy Ryder, Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group

Snake George (Hans-Jörg Wiedl) is well known in Cyprus and across Europe as an expert on the reptiles and amphibians of Cyprus. George was born in Innsbruck, Austria. He worked as a ranger in his homeland and internationally as a UN Peacekeeper before settling in Cyprus in 1986, quickly falling in love with the island and its herpetofauna. He has since worked tirelessly to protect the reptiles of the island and their habitats. Snake George spends his days rescuing terrified snakes from terrified people, attempting to explain the various benefits of a healthy, rat-eating herpetofauna to the latter.



Blunt-nosed viper

As I was visiting Cyprus for a wedding, I decided to make contact with George and spend the day with him. I met up with him in Paphos and we set off for the picturesque village of Kathikas, where George was delivering a follow-up talk to interested expats, tourists and a few Cypriots at the village hall.

George spoke passionately about the problems facing the snakes of Cyprus, and in particular for this meeting, the large whip snake (*Dolichophis jugularis*). Cypriots are generally aware that any large black snake is not dangerous and can help control the rat population; but unfortunately for the large whip snake, it is greenish brown for the first two years of its life. This coloration provides better camouflage from birds and mammals but sadly it also means that the local human population can mistake these immature snakes for one of the other seven species found in Cyprus and kill them.

One of the side effects of this unnecessary decimation of the non-venomous snakes of Cyprus is the increase in sightings of the highly venomous blunt-nosed viper (*Macrovipera lebetina lebetina*) upon which large whip snakes feed. Vipers forced out of their natural habitat by competing land uses seek refuge in areas less suitable for venomous snakes; low-lying plants surrounding swimming pools, in orchards and vineyards. In areas attracting rats, the snakes soon follow. By killing snakes the natural balance is upset, and rat populations increase; leading to large imports of rat poison. Rather than the targeted consumption of rats by vipers and whip snakes the local human population is increasingly relying on less targeted poisons, which can harm or kill plants, animals or even young children. George always removes blunt-nosed vipers from residential areas for relocation, but when the owners agree and locations are suitable he prefers to leave harmless species where they are.



Snake George talks to the interested public at Kathikas village hall

After George's well-delivered presentation we decided to head into the hills to find some native reptiles. After a couple of hours in the field we had found nine different species and a few interesting invertebrates.

George then took me to a favourite coastal restaurant. Replenished by a hearty serving of beef stifado we decided to try another area in the hope of finding the spiny-footed lizard (*Acanthodactylus schreiberi*) hiding under stones on the dune fringes. Whilst there was lots of evidence of the lizards' activities including burrows, tracks and shed fragments of skin, we

had left things a little too late in the day and, regrettably, we found no lizards. George suggested that next time they would not elude us and then, still deep in conversation, he dropped me back at Paphos airport for my return flight home.



Ocellated skink

Spending the day with George was fascinating and illuminating. Amongst the many challenges facing George and the snakes of Cyprus, one issue takes precedence. The plight of the endemic Cypriot grass snake (*Natrix natrix cypriaca*) has been a constant concern since George rediscovered it on Cyprus in 1992 (prior to which it had long been considered to be extinct). There are indications that it is not being afforded the protection required. George and his Cyprus Reptile Society are currently in the process of taking the Cypriot government to the EU courts for their failure to protect this critically endangered subspecies.

To support George and his group in their struggle, and to protect the grass snake and other Cypriot reptiles, please visit the following websites, follow the simple instructions and lodge your petition.

<http://rochfordessex.net/cyprusreptiles/eu-asked-to-take-action-now-to-save-the-cyprus-grass-snake/>

www.cypruspetitions.com/petition_details.php?petition_id=25

Futher Reading

Baier, F., Sparrow, D.J. and Wiedl, H.-J. (2009). *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Cyprus*. Edition Chimaira.

Fish Control Methods for Great Crested Newt Conservation

Among native amphibians, the great crested newt is particularly susceptible to fish predation (during its larval stage). Fish introduction has been identified in the UK Great Crested Newt Species Action Plan (SAP) as a significant factor adversely affecting populations.

This advisory note, available from the 'Resources' section of the ARC website, started life as a report produced by Will Watson for the Countryside Council for Wales (Watson, 2002). Management activities that may involve killing fish or moving them between water bodies are regulated under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 (in England and Wales) and other legislation. So, Will took care to consult with fisheries specialists to ensure that his report was compliant with legislation. Since then, Rebecca Cleaver, and subsequently Dorothy Wright, have worked on distilling the key information into the current advisory note. During a series of further rounds of consultation with the SAP Steering Group and the Environment Agency, it has become increasingly apparent that legislation renders the most effective means of fish control (rotenone and draining ponds) difficult to undertake, in practice. Key to some of the legislative barriers are that the consents to manage fish are issued to enhance fish stocks, rather than remove them (as well as for scientific purposes).

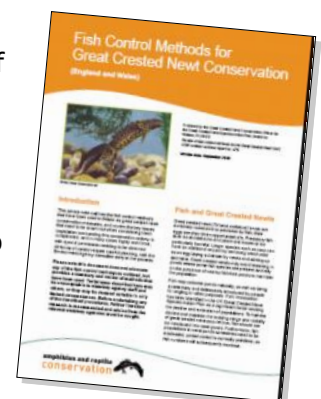
Each case where fish control is needed is different. Permission may be more likely for a recently introduced population of goldfish (clearly a case of deliberate introduction) rather than to remove fish from a pond that is regularly inundated from a river. Consent may also depend on how sympathetic the local Environment Agency office is towards amphibian conservation. Fisheries contractors may have experience of applying for the necessary consents, so it is worth asking potential contractors whether they can undertake this as part of a prospective fish control operation.

Given the practical difficulties of fish control and the legislative constraints, measures to discourage inappropriate introductions of fish in the first place are vital and are listed within the note.

Anyone undertaking fish control measures is invited to report experiences of methodologies and consents.

Reference

Watson, W. (2002). Review of fish control methods for the Great Crested Newt SAP, CCW contract science report no. 476.



Silent Summer Edited by Norman Mclean

Silent Summer is multi-authored review of the current state of wildlife and conservation in Britain and Ireland, with a view to understanding the drivers of change, predicting changes and directing future effort. It focuses on changes in wildlife status in Britain, Ireland and the UK Overseas territories over the last fifty years or so but also summarises conservation planning and management. It is aimed at anyone with an interest in wildlife, but also biological science undergraduates.

Silent Summer looks at factors affecting wildlife through case histories, reviewing the status of different taxonomic groups and the health of the marine environment.

The section on amphibians is written by Tim Halliday, formerly of the Declining Amphibian Population Task Force, who has reviewed native amphibians in the context of global declines. He notes that there are relatively few studies from the UK, and draws heavily on European examples, (although most are, unfortunately, not referenced). He also notes that national monitoring of amphibians in Britain has been negligible until recently, dismissing previous work as 'questionnaires that depend on memory'. This is a shame, because these questionnaire surveys, such as those carried out by Cooke and Scorgie and Hilton-Brown and Oldham for the Nature Conservancy Council, pooled a great deal of informed opinion. Perhaps one of the reasons that there are relatively few studies of some of the 'global factors' is because habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation are so readily apparent, that there has been little need to seek more subtle causal factors.

The text contains inaccuracies, some of which should have been picked up by review (e.g. reference to a surviving relic population of pool frogs or that great crested newt larvae are distasteful to predators) others may reflect the rapidly changing state of information (e.g. no reports of chytrid infecting native amphibians).

The section on reptiles is provided by Chris Gleed-Own, formerly Amphibian and Reptile Conservation's lead on monitoring, and well known among ARGs for leading the National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme, organising survey training courses and the Herp Workers' Meeting. Chris reviews the protection afforded through legislation and SSSI site designation, and summarises the status or reptile species. Assessing the latter is hampered

by the lack of historical baseline data or systematic recording schemes, a situation not just peculiar to reptiles. Chris attempts to quantify national population sizes for the rare reptiles, using average population densities and known range. This approach seems to work quite well for sand lizards, indicating that previous

assessments may have been underestimates. Chris also highlights the ongoing burning management of the New Forest, key habitat for the smooth snake, and discusses issues relating to translocations.

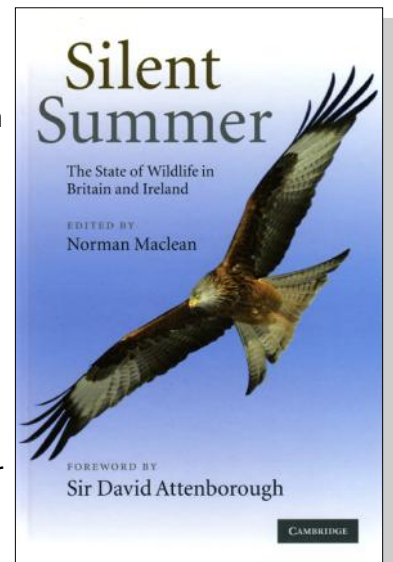
Among the widespread reptile species, Chris singles out the adder as the species of most conservation concern. Status assessments of all four widespread reptiles are hampered by lack of quantitative data, but habitat loss makes the direction of change in status fairly unequivocal, and, more recently, NARRS has been established in an attempt to improve data quality.

A section of the book on conservation in action is fairly positive, citing a strong legislative framework, and a powerful voluntary sector. It also refers to well-funded statutory bodies, which, of course, may well no longer be the case, after the current government spending review.

The book does not shy away from what is sometimes left as the elephant in the room among wildlife conservationists—it recognises the fundamental threat posed by uncontrolled human population growth, and McClean writes *In the face of such expected population increases it is hard to be optimistic about the future of Britain's wildlife.*

Overall, this is a useful textbook and summary of the state of wildlife and nature conservation. Costing less than £30, it is excellent value for money.

N. McClean (2010). *Silent Summer*. Cambridge University Press.



ARG Today is the e-newsletter of the Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (ARG UK). It is edited by John Baker and funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation as part of Amphibian and Reptile Conservation's Widespread Species Project.



Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK
VOLUNTEERS WORKING FOR THE CONSERVATION OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES



Esmée
Fairbairn
FOUNDATION

amphibian and reptile
conservation

