

Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network.

Reptile Survey

Newsletter Number 3
February 2000

2000 is the year in which we want to make a big push on reptile surveys in Leicestershire and Rutland. Please find enclosed with this newsletter a copy of *Snakes Alive*, the reptile survey leaflet which has been produced by Holly Hayes Environmental Resources Centre. This is going to get wide distribution and will hopefully bring in quite a few records, but we can help by targeting some survey work this year.

Grass Snakes

The majority of records will undoubtedly be of grass snakes. The best areas to search for these will be along the canals and riverside meadows (places like Croft Pasture and Lea Meadows), around Rutland Water and the other reservoirs, wetland nature reserves such as Great Bowden Borrowpit and Lucas Marsh, and anywhere where there is a good population of amphibians.

Rarities

Adders and Common Lizards are largely going to be confined to heathland / dry grassland sites, hence Charnwood and Rutland are the best

bets, together with the heathy vegetation that is re-establishing itself on some derelict sites in North West Leicestershire. There have apparently been recent sightings of lizards on Bardon Hill and at Moira, which will be worth checking. Slow-worms are rather an unknown quantity – they could turn up anywhere in gardens, allotments and derelict sites – urban areas may be the best place to concentrate on for this species.

Surveys

Quite coincidentally, Froglife has just produced an advice sheet on reptile survey. It includes the following tips:



Where to Look: sunny spots for basking animals (banks, boardwalks, dry stone walls, hedgerow bases); within open vegetation (gorse, heather, bramble); look under potential refuges (logs, rocks, fallen fence posts, discarded materials such as metal sheets and wood).

When to Look: best are April, May and September; between 8.30 and 11.00 am, 4.00 to 6.30 pm; air temperature 9-18 C; a hot spell after days of cold weather, or showers after a prolonged dry period, can be particularly productive.

How to Look: walk slowly, tread lightly, scan the area 3-4 m ahead, especially potential basking spots; listen for rustles in the vegetation; if you catch a fleeting glimpse of an animal, note the spot and return 10 minutes later.

Good luck with your reptile-spotting – let's get some forms coming in!

Herps Conference

The annual Herpetofauna Workers' Meeting took place on 4 and 5 February at the British Library. As ever, it included a fascinating set of presentations. Key messages seemed to be:

- Great crested newts – the need to think about links between individual populations
- Reptile survey – choosing the best times (see above)
- The urgent need for protection for ponds
- Recognition that marine turtles are

a part of our native fauna.

If anyone would like summaries of the papers presented, please let me know. The meeting takes place around this time each year; this timing does not fit in very well with the issue of this newsletter, but if anyone wants details of next year's meeting, again, let me know, and I will forward them when they appear.

Charnwood Amphibians

The Charnwood Group of the Wildlife Trust is running an Amphibian Evening on Wednesday 5 April, at 7.30 pm. For details and to book a place, phone 01509-264714.

Knighton Park Frogs

Last year, a local resident reported that frogs were breeding in the ponds at the Rockery, Knighton Park, in the city. She was upset because all the spawn was being taken away and, worse, youths were kicking frogs around like footballs. It is difficult to know what to do, but Environ, and through them the City Parks Dept., will be asked to keep a special eye on the area during the critical period.

A final plea – keep sending in great crested newt records – we need to know where all the populations are.

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