

# Leicestershire Amphibian and Reptile Network

## Snakes Alive!

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November 2000

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, "Snakes Alive! A Survey of Reptiles for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland" has been running all this year. The survey form produced by Holly Hayes Environmental Resources Centre has been widely distributed. There was some media interest, with a helpful full-page feature in the Leicester Mercury in April. The survey was also promoted at a Recorders Meeting at Holly Hayes.

Despite all this attention, survey forms have been trickling rather than flooding in. There may be several reasons for this. The weather may not have been particularly good this year in the critical periods. It may be that people wait until the end of the year to send in their records. Perhaps the most likely, and unfortunate, reason is that Leicestershire and Rutland are just not very well off for reptiles.

If you do have any reptile records for this year, do please send them in now – on the survey forms or by a note directly to Holly Hayes, or via me if you wish.

## Biodiversity at Bardon

One of the events organised during Biodiversity Week in September, to highlight the Biodiversity Action Plan for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, was a walk up Bardon Hill, Leicestershire's highest point. Attended mainly by members of the Wildlife Trust's North West Group, those who

made the climb were delighted to see evidence of one of our few common lizard populations. At the summit of the hill, basking on rocks in the heathy grassland areas, six lizards were counted, including one obvious juvenile. It is very pleasing to confirm that there still appears to be a viable population of lizards on Bardon Hill.

## New Naturalist

If you want comprehensive information on all the British amphibians and reptiles, look out for the latest volume in HarperCollins New Naturalist series. "Amphibians and Reptiles", by two well-known names in the field, Trevor Beebee and Richard Griffiths, is packed full of information on all the species, including the marine turtles and alien species, based on up-to-the-minute knowledge.

## Bullfrog Alert

English Nature and Froglife have launched a campaign to combat the threat of American bullfrogs in the UK. Bullfrogs which



were bought as pets have escaped or been released into the wild, and successful breeding was confirmed in this country in 1999. Bullfrogs are a problem because they grow so large (up to 20 cm) and eat wetland animals up to the size of young ducklings. They compete with common frogs for food and habitat and can introduce disease.

Bullfrogs breed in summer, females laying up to 20,000 eggs a year, and the tadpole grow up to 15 cm. The call of the bullfrog is distinctive, males making a low-pitched foghorn or cattle-like “moo”. If you think you have found a bullfrog in the wild, please contact Froglife on 01986-873733.

## Knighton Park Frogs

The last Newsletter detailed the problems with mistreatment of frogs in Knighton Park, Leicester. This year, the Friends of Knighton Park have instituted a special “Frog Watch” which hopefully will have reduced the problems.

## Pondemonium

Holly Hayes’ Pondemonium project, intended to raise the profile of ponds in Leicestershire, has produced a lot of interesting literature, including pond survey forms. Look out for “The Folklore of Pond Plants” for amusing takes on a number of familiar species. The “Pondemonium” pack is available from Holly Hayes Environmental Resources Centre, 216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicestershire LE4 4DG.

## Marine Turtles

Here in the Midlands, marine conservation is one thing we can leave to other people. However, we all visit the seaside from time to time, and it is becoming increasingly

evident that it is worth looking out for marine turtles even around British coasts.

Five species of marine turtle have turned up around Britain, and whilst the majority are simply vagrants, it now seems that one species, the leatherback (or leathery turtle or luth) is a regular, and deliberate, migrant to British waters. Leatherbacks are turning up in significant numbers, especially between August and October, to feed on jellyfish.

The largest marine turtle ever recorded, a leatherback, was washed up dead on the beach at Harlech. It is now preserved as a specimen at the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff – and it’s a very impressive display, worth making a trip to see.

If you are holidaying by the coast and you spot a turtle, do report it to the local museum or Wildlife Trust.



Pond Watch – Charnwood Wildlife presents a look at the secret life of frogs, toads and newts - Saturday 3 March 2001, 10 am – 12 pm at Shephed – for details, phone 01509-264714

Don’t forget – do send in any outstanding 2000 records for amphibians and reptiles in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland now.

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