



Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team

Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Brandon Lane, Coventry CV3 3GW. Tel (01203) 302912 Fax (01203) 639556
Affiliated to the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (Registered Charity Number 209200)
and the British Herpetological Society (Registered Charity Number 205666)

Patron: Ken Livingstone MP

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Amphibian Surveying At Tocil Wood



Sunday 26 March 2pm to assess frog population status & Friday 21 April 8pm for newt surveying

This is an opportunity for WART members to visit a local nature reserve (near Warwick University, on the southern edge of Coventry) and receive training on survey methods. Meet at Rootes residence car park, which is first right at the first island down Gibbet Hill Road (off the A429) coming from Kenilworth. OS map grid ref SP 304754.

WART Open Day - and car wash!

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Brandon Lane, Coventry 16
April 11-2pm

Our WART Open Day coincides with a Trust event - trust employees will wash your car for a pound! Volunteers are welcome to help man the stall.

Live animals will be on display - we hope to have all the Warwickshire species present.

Walks on Coundon Wedge

Andi Wolf says he would be happy to show people his 4 ponds and the techniques used to survey them throughout the amphibian breeding season. His e-mail address is andi.wolf@virgin.net

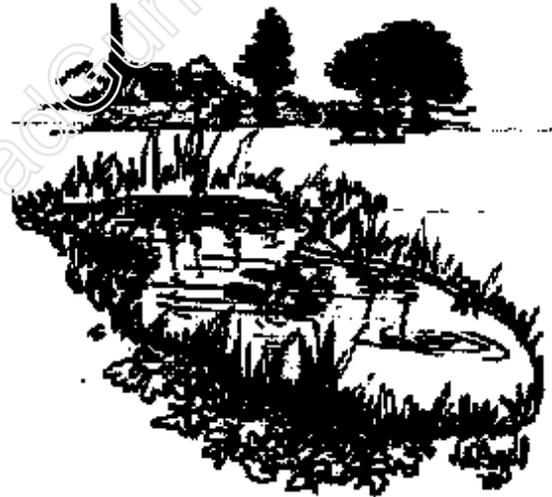
The ponds have been surveyed for the last 4 years, showing that the ponds and their inhabitants are thriving despite a rather grim background UK wide trend.

Surveying - toads and reptiles

Whilst we appreciate all records, it would be helpful if we could gain a better idea of the distribution of toads and reptiles in Warwickshire. These herps are not as visible as frogs and newts can be, so it's difficult to know whether they are less common or just haven't been noticed.

Regular monitoring of toad breeding sites is important and can show dramatic population changes, as with the Dunchurch survey, but at present we don't have enough volunteers for this - is anyone interested in specialising in a particular site?

Jan reports that academics have told her that ten years is too short a time to show changes in toad populations and that the Dunchurch Toads study should continue. More environmental readings will be taken this year, for example, levels of oxygen and DNA analysis of tadpoles - this will tell us how genetically diverse the population is. Anyone wishing to help with the toad survey is welcome. It is usually 3 nights between 13-22 March, but the exact date is weather dependant, so contact Jan Clemons for details.



There will also be an opportunity to survey for amphibians along the M42 with WRAG (the Worcestershire group). This will include colonisation of the new ponds at the Hopwood service station installed by Bob Brays consultancy. Details from Jan Clemons.

If you would like to know what has been recorded in your area, contact Jan and Nigel Clemons who can search the database for records.

Herpetofauna Workers Guide 2000

A new HGBI 10th anniversary edition of the Herpetofauna Workers Guide 2000 is now available. Keep up to date with UK herpetology with this useful directory of information & resources for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles. Free to WART members but send 2 x 1st class stamps to cover postage. Write to WART c/o Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, marking the envelope HWG.

Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Ireland

Published by the Field Studies Council, with support from the Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, this well-illustrated fold-out guide (eight "pages", slightly larger than A5 when folded), is a useful aid to identification for anybody likely to come across herps.

Notes on identification details and habitats frequented are included alongside compact distribution maps. In the illustrations, slow-worms are sensibly shown in both the snakes' and the lizards' sections.

The guide does not restrict itself to identification - there are notes on surveying, sending in records, conservation and relevant organisations (including Amphibian and Reptile Groups, of which we are one).

It is part of the FSC's AIDGAP series (Aids to Identification in Difficult Groups of Plants and Animals), which is supported by the British Ecological Society and the Linnean Society of London.

The guide can be obtained from WART at a cost of £2.25. Please make cheques payable to WART and send to WART, c/o Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Brandon Lane, Coventry CV3 3GW, and mark the envelope FSC Identification Guide.

Toad Crossing Signs

Please could the lady who requested toad crossing signs, contact Jan Clemons, because Nigel Clemons deleted the answerphone message....

.....However, Jan's husband is not without his uses, as he performs some vital services behind the scenes.

Nigel is in charge of the WART records database as well as the creator of the WART website

WART Work-Parties at Kenilworth Common

The Kenilworth Common work-party meets at the railway bridge on Common Lane, on the first Sunday of each month, 10 am - 1 pm. Contact: Howard Eccles

Warwickshire Amphibian and Reptile Team Review

Recording activity - during 1999 our priority was reptile recording, due to the paucity of reptile records for the County. Visits were made to sites where reptiles were present in the 1970's to assess their current status. Over 150 records (only 50 of which were for reptiles) were entered into the WART database in 1999. WART continues to maintain the effective partnership with the local BRC at Warwick Museum and every record received by each partner is exchanged and validated to the best of our ability. Our long term study of a toad population at Dunchurch College continued into its tenth year. It is encouraging to note that several WART members have instigated their own amphibian recording programmes as

accredited agents under the Wart chairman's English Nature licence. One new site for crested newts was made in 1999. A blanket amphibian survey was undertaken at a site destined to become a 2000 home 'village' on the outskirts of Solihull. We are happy to report the presence of frogs and that the developers are to include the retention and enhancement of their breeding pond as part of the development.

Key Sites - no sites (to our knowledge) were lost in 1999. Our partnership with Railtrack at the County's best reptile assemblage site at Kenilworth Common has continued into a second year. Slow worms have been recorded but the theft of refugia and gaining access to the railway embankments with Railtrack staff remain limiting factors. A 30 year old record of grass snakes was confirmed at Brandon Woods on the outskirts of Coventry and these snakes have also been recorded within the city boundary which will need a follow-up visit next year. This may represent an important but isolated remnant population. A common lizard site in SE Warwickshire (Goldicote Cutting) was visited several times, within the ideal 'reptile window' but we failed to see any lizards. This is very disappointing as the site supported lizards in 1993 and although we observed prime basking areas and plenty of lizard food, there were no sign of lizards. We aim to repeat surveying at this site next year.

Volunteer interest & ARG status - WART membership remains around 50, the vast majority of which remain non-active but supportive. During 1999 we published 3 newsletters, a report of the West Midlands HGBI Regional meeting and organised 3 field meetings. WART members also undertook management work at Kenilworth Common. WART hosted the HGBI Regional Conference in September. The meeting was well attended with talks from Sylvia Sheldon, Will Watson, Alan Shepherd, Bob Bray, Jim Foster, Jan Clemons and Chris Gleed-Owen. A lively discussion on key issues within the region was useful and it was good to see representatives from Herefordshire, Staffordshire and the City of Birmingham. Regarding ARG status, WART are recognised as the local authority on herpetological conservation by English Nature, Local Authorities, the Environment Agency and other conservation organisations. WART feel that by involving us from the start of any proposed development, there have been no losses of herpetile sites in the county over the past two years.



The siting of the road signs is now in the hands of the parish council and Louise Smith, a local WART member. The WART chairman gave three talks to local Natural History Societies which resulted in new records. WART were also closely consulted on the draft great crested newt SAP for Coventry. WART now have their own web site at

www.angelfire.com/nc2/wart/index.html
This site contains information about amphibians and reptiles found in the county, relevant publications, details about the

WART database, current newsletter, survey and membership forms to download and contacts and links to other herpetological conservation sites.

Key issues - raising WART membership over fifty remains problematical. Analysis shows a 'hard-core' of 30 members with people joining for a couple of years and being replaced by new members. How can members' interest be maintained? Alternatively is this the natural carrying capacity of people interested in herpetology in the county? Whatever the reason one

of WART's main aims next year is to seek publicity in order to raise the profile of Warwickshire's reptiles and amphibians, at the same time aiming to recruit new members.

The WART committee continued to meet regularly over the past year and I am indebted to their help and hard work in making WART WORK! It is with regret that Irena Kruszona and Mark Hollowell have had to stand down from the committee. They have both been with WART since its conception and their support has been invaluable. Irena's ability in knowing the WART constitution and keeping us working within its framework, together with her excellent secretarial skills will be greatly missed and Mark's hard work in looking after the membership is very much appreciated. On behalf of WART I would like to offer our thanks and hope that as WART members they will still get involved. On a more positive note, Howard Eccles has taken on the role of membership secretary and treasurer, which will hopefully streamline the membership application system. Andi Wolfe is our new WART secretary and with his excellent IT skills and natural enthusiasm will be a good replacement for Irena.

Finally thanks to all WART members for sending in records and donations. We are also grateful for the continued support of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

Jan Clemons
January 2000