



# Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team

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Affiliated to the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (Registered Charity Number 209200)  
and Herpetofauna Groups of Britain & Ireland.

[www.wartsoc.co.uk](http://www.wartsoc.co.uk)

## WART NEWSLETTER: ISSUE NO. 29 SPRING 2002

*Forthcoming events*

### Identifying and Monitoring Amphibians

**Saturday 6 April**

**2 pm - 4 pm**

**Brandon Marsh Nature Centre**

Originally this was going to be called an Amphibian Training Day, but we thought you might get the idea we were training newts to jump through hoops.....

This event is one of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's Training Sessions, aiming to encourage people to record plants and animals they see at nature reserves. Good information on the species present is essential if nature reserves are to be managed for their benefit, and the Trust hopes visitors to nature reserves will record what they see and send in their records.

Brandon Marsh is a very good place to see all sorts of wildlife, so it's well worth a visit.

### “Old Milverton pondscape”

**Saturday 20 April**

**2 pm**

We are going to conduct an amphibian survey at Milverton near Leamington Spa. The aim is to survey a complex of ponds that may represent a newt metapopulation. Learn about basic amphibian surveying skills & remember to bring your wellies.

Meet in the church car park (OS map ref SP297674).

### Dunchurch Toads (March)

If anyone would like to assist in this regular survey, please contact Jan Clemons. (I've been on this survey myself and been amazed at how many toads can be heading for the pond on some evenings – it's quite an experience!).

# Weekend in Dorset

## 11-12 May

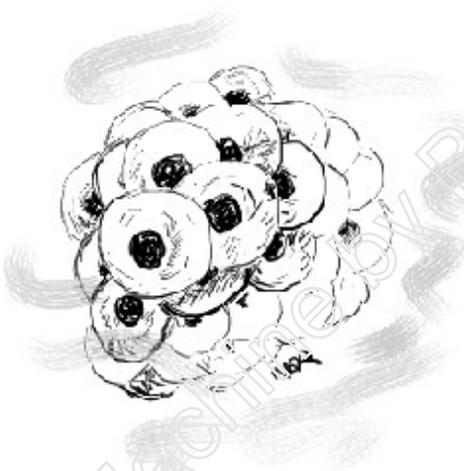
Here is the chance to visit a more reptile-rich county with experts as guides. We will visit selected sites with Herpetological Conservation Trust personnel who will explain the theory and practice on species' habitat management and, if the weather is favourable, we may see reptiles including sand lizards and smooth snakes.

For further details on accommodation etc. contact Jan. e-mail [janclemons@wartsoc.co.uk](mailto:janclemons@wartsoc.co.uk) The deadline for booking is the end of March.

## Help wanted

Andi Wolf requests help for surveying at a site near Coventry. Anyone interested should contact e-mail [Andi.wolf@virgin.net](mailto:Andi.wolf@virgin.net)

## First Frogspawn?



We would like you to record the date you first see frogspawn in your local pond(s). Please include a grid reference if possible, as well as the name of the site or address. This kind of information may indicate changes in climate or in the frog population. It would be helpful if you could include any other relevant information, such as the amount of spawn and other amphibians and reptiles present.

## Membership Fees

As mentioned in the Chairman's Report, the WART membership year has in the past run from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 30<sup>th</sup> September, but at the AGM it was agreed to change this to 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December. Effectively, this gives members 3 free months.

You should have received a membership reminder from Nigel Clemons if any money is due. We are keeping the membership fee at £3.50 per household, so we're still easily affordable!

## Electric Shock Treatment for Snakebite?

It appears that a belief has been circulated in America that electric shock is effective against snakebite. A man who was in the habit of kissing his pet rattlesnake had heard of this “treatment”, and when the inevitable happened, he asked his friend to apply a heavy duty electric shock to the affected area. To put it mildly, it didn’t help.



The idea seems to originate from a letter sent in 1986 by a missionary doctor to the respected medical journal *The Lancet*. He wrote that while working in Ecuador he had witnessed electric shock being used to treat some 34 alleged snakebite victims. This consisted of five one-second high-voltage, low amperage shocks from the spark plug cable of an outboard motor.

A variety of reasons for the alleged success were suggested, including electro-chemical destruction of the venom or contraction of blood vessels in response to the shock.

However, there are several reasons why electric shock might appear to be effective:

- some “defensive” snakebites result in little or no venom being injected (“dry bites”),
- many people believe that all snakes are venomous, so any bite is a poisonous one,
- and, of course, a good story teller always gets bitten by an exceptionally large, aggressive and lethal specimen.

Research has since failed to show a beneficial effect. Official medical advice is that “unless or until the beneficial effects of this treatment can be duplicated in the laboratory, the use of a stun gun” [which was suggested by articles in *Outdoor Life* magazine] “should be considered dangerous as well as a time wasting exercise, which delays applying more conventional means of first aid and arranging transport to the nearest hospital.”

Also, don’t kiss your pet rattlesnake.

From an article in “No Fur, No Feathers”,  
the newsletter of the Worcestershire Reptile and Amphibian Group

# Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team: Chairman's Report for 2001

The first year of the new millennium has been rather eventful in terms of the countryside being closed due to foot & mouth disease and the consequences of the terrorist attack of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Survey and management work had to be severely curtailed, but as you can see from our programme of events for 2002 the WART committee are attempting to rectify the situation. Our trip to Dorset will visit selected sites with Herpetological Conservation Trust personnel who will explain the theory and practice on species' habitat management and if the weather window permits the chance to see reptiles including sand lizards and smooth snakes.

Despite a lack of survey work and hardly any records coming in, the HGBI West Midlands Regional Conference in October was most successful, if only to reassure us that 2001 had been a poor survey year for all local reptile & amphibian groups.

Helen Newell continues to produce the quarterly WART newsletter and I am grateful for her commitment and efforts in making the newsletter interesting and informative. Nicola Angell, our only WART member in Cornwall still continues to brighten up the newsletter with her wonderful illustrations and was instrumental in updating and revising the new WART prospectus. To promote herpetology to a wider audience I wrote two articles for the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's magazine on declining amphibians and garden ponds.

WART are indebted to Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, especially Andrew Thompson for their support in printing off the newsletters, mailing them out to all our members and providing a venue for committee meetings. This arrangement has enabled us to keep the annual subscription down to £3.50 per person, which represents excellent value for membership of WART.

Our link with the Biological Recording Centre at Warwick Museum continues to prosper and we are fortunate to have on the committee Jane O'Dell who enables the Centre and WART to reciprocate herpetile records.

WART's main success during 2001 was the WART web-site maintained by Nigel Clemons. Since May 2001 the site has been 'hit' no less than 458 times. Chris Monk who runs the Derbyshire ARG is one of many UK herpetologists who logs on to read the latest newsletter and other visitors include people from the US Ministry of Defence, Latvia, Estonia, Australia and New Zealand.

During 2001 we received £425 in donations for the purchase of GIS software. You may remember that we did appeal in an earlier newsletter for help in acquiring funding and WART are particularly grateful to members Ian Tanner and Louise Slack for their generosity in this matter. WART are now halfway towards their target of obtaining the software.

At the recent AGM it was agreed that Nigel Clemons should take over the role of Membership Secretary. Unfortunately it has come to light that membership subscriptions have not been chased up for the last few years. The lack of subscriptions has led to a deficit of over £400. Nigel's first task will be to carry out a membership audit and by the time this newsletter goes out you should have received a subscription renewal form detailing what subscription is owing.

Our effectiveness in helping to conserve Warwickshire's reptiles and amphibians is dependant on our membership base and it was agreed at the AGM to change the subscription year from 1<sup>st</sup> October – 30<sup>th</sup> September to 1<sup>st</sup> January – 31<sup>st</sup> December in order to streamline the process. This means that subscription for 2002 will cover 15 months and from 2003 will be back to 12 months. Your co-operation in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

In conclusion I would like to thank the WART committee for their support and feel very optimistic that the coming year will be better than 2001. The inaugural meeting of WART was in April 1993 so WART's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be next year and deserves to be celebrated. If any members have any ideas of how to celebrate this event we would love to hear from you.

Jan Clemons

## Treasurers' Report

Receipts and Payments for period 1/10/00 to 30/9/01

RECEIPTS	2001	2000	PAYMENTS	2001	2000
Bal. as @ 30/9/00:			BTCV membership + insurance	55.00	55.00
- Bank 751.20			Photocopying + postage	12.15	0.00
- Cash 13.10	764.30	900.01	Purchase of materials	0.00	19.96
Subscriptions	66.50	50.50	HGBI Regional Meeting	0.00	50.00
Donations received	425.00	60.00	Herpetofauna Workers Meeting	59.00	46.00
Donations for survey work	55.00	0.00	Purchase of publications:		
Sales:			- Pond Book	62.50	0.00
- FSC guides	0.00	6.75	- FSC guides	0.00	32.00
- Others	15.75	0.00	Donation given	0.00	50.00
			Bal. as @ 30/9/01:		
			- Bank 1121.30		
			- Cash 16.60	1137.90	764.30
	<b>1326.55</b>	<b>1017.26</b>		<b>1326.55</b>	<b>1017.26</b>

Howard Eccles, Treasurer

# Fame for Frogs

Jan was interviewed on January 28<sup>th</sup> for Radio 4's programme Open Country, talking about Warwickshire herps. The programme was broadcast on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, and repeated the following Thursday, as well as being available on the internet for a while (unfortunately now replaced by less interesting things!). Two Common Lizards in the school vivarium obligingly made an appearance in spite of strong winds and intermittent showers. Andrew Thompson was also in the programme, talking about identifying trees in winter.



## Your New Committee

Chair  
Vice-Chair  
Secretary  
Membership Secretary  
Treasurer  
Newsletter Editor  
Ordinary members

Jan Clemons  
Andrew Thompson  
Andi Wolf  
Nigel Clemons  
Howard Eccles  
Helen Newell  
Jane O'Dell, Serena Eccles

Illustrations by Nicola Angeli.

Contributions for the newsletter should be sent to Helen Newell.

Copy deadline for next issue: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2002.

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