



Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team

Brandon Marsh Nature Centre, Brandon Lane, Coventry CV3 3GW. Tel (02476) 302912 Fax (02476) 639556
Affiliated to the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (Registered Charity Number 209200)
and Herpetofauna Groups of Britain & Ireland.

www.wartsoc.co.uk

WART NEWSLETTER: ISSUE No. 38 WINTER 2004

Forthcoming events

Annual General Meeting Tuesday 25th January 2005

All WART members are invited to the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Tuesday 25th January 2005 at 7.30pm in the Brandon Marsh Nature Centre. Some of the current committee members are intending to change roles, WART Member Jon Easton is now the new WWT representative and Louise Slack has started a new life in a remote and beautiful part of Scotland. We wish her well. Why not come along and see what WART gets up to? Your support would be appreciated.

The proposed Committee:

Chair

Jan Clemons

Vice-Chair

Jon Easton

Secretary

Vacant

Membership Secretary/Database Manager

Nigel Clemons

Treasurer

Howard Eccles

Newsletter Editor

Lee Miles

Insurance & Training Officer

Vacant

Ordinary members

Helen Mayne, Jane O'Dell,
Serena Eccles, David Cole,
Andi Wolf

Jan Clemons



Editorial

Welcome to the new look WART newsletter. I have taken over the job as editor from Helen Mayne and I am sure you will all join me in thanking her for all her hard work over the last few years, I hope I can do as well as she did!

As many of you Warters are probably aware, we are currently in the middle of a global amphibian crisis, with almost a third of all species under threat from extinction worldwide. More than 7% of amphibian species are now classified as 'critically endangered'.

No one is exactly sure why this is happening and it appears to be a combination of different factors. A fungal disease has been found to be responsible for killing many tropical species, and it is possible that additional environmental stresses are making them more susceptible to this. The study was carried out by Conservation International based in Washington DC, and warns that if nothing is done to help these creatures we could be facing hundreds of extinctions worldwide in future years.

What does all this have to do with Warwickshire I hear you ask? I feel that this is a clear case for the well-used, but very true environmental catch phrase 'Think Global, Act Local'. It means that we should not take our common native species of amphibian for granted and just focus conservation effort on the rare ones, such as the great crested newt or the natterjack toad. We cannot afford to lose any of these wonderful creatures from our planet.

Lee Miles.

West Midlands Regional Meeting

Representatives from WART, WRAG Derbyshire and Staffordshire met at Smite Farm, the WWT's HQ on Sunday 7th November. Ruth Carey, the new Froglife Development Officer presented Froglife's strategy for the next 3 years which includes working closely with ARG's and HGBI. It also gave us a great opportunity to network and discuss various herpetological issues. Perhaps a visit to Chester Zoo to see the Sand Lizard enclosure and the enigmatic tuatara? In this newsletter are details about the 15th Anniversary Amphibian and Reptile Workers National Meeting, which promises to be an interesting event.

Local News

Reptile Translocation

Over a period of 51 days earlier in the year (2004). At a site in the north of the county. A total of 186 common lizards (*Lacerta viviparia*) and 2 grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*) were translocated to a new receptor site. In order to complement the translocation work carried on site, an artificial hibernacula was constructed within the confines of the receptor site.

Information supplied by George Wimpey Midland Ltd.

Wart Contacts

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Contributions for the newsletter should be sent to Lee Miles
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Stop Press

'GOOD NEWTS' FOR WILDLIFE – Press release from English Nature

A former brick pit in Peterborough was given permanent legal protection yesterday as the most important site for great crested newts in Britain and possibly Europe, and as one of the top two sites in the UK for rare plants called stoneworts.

English Nature's ruling Council finalised the declaration of the wildlife site, next to the Hampton development, to be a nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). O & H HAMPTON LTD and Peterborough City Council, who own parts of the land, made objections to the declaration. English Nature's Council accepted some but overruled two other objections from O & H Hampton Ltd and Peterborough City Council to exclude some areas of land from the site.

English Nature's Director of Designated Sites, Dr Andy Clements, said: "The old brick pits at Hampton provide the most amazing haven for great crested newts and in some areas have plants that are only otherwise found on Scottish islands. A huge operation to move over 20,000 newts before the start of building at Hampton has proved a success and they are now thriving in this SSSI. English Nature will continue to work with the developers O & H Hampton Ltd and Peterborough City Council to ensure that the development of housing and transport for the city happens while maintaining, and where possible enhancing, these important wildlife refuges. Hampton is proving to be a powerful example of truly sustainable development."

Hampton is thought to be the single biggest site for great crested newts in Britain, making it key to the survival of the tiny amphibians. A series of pools created in the clay at the former brick pit, together with ponds in woodland and scrub provide the perfect conditions for the small creatures to survive. Surveys on the site estimate there are more than 25,000 newts possibly making it the most important site in Europe for this declining species.

The old brick workings also provide perfect conditions for delicate aquatic stoneworts. Their name comes from the lime that encrusts them and unlike other plants; most stoneworts build an external skeleton made of chalk (calcium carbonate). As well as their ecological significance, stoneworts are also recognised for their evolutionary importance. Fossil records tell us these remarkable plants have long been considered candidates for the evolutionary origin of today's land plants.

FROGLife



protecting reptiles and amphibians in the wild



**Herpetofauna
Groups of
Britain and
Ireland**

15th Anniversary
Amphibian and Reptile Workers
National Meeting

Keele University Conference Centre
5th and 6th February 2005

To reserve your place please contact
Melanie Hamlett on 01733 58844 or
Email melaniehamlett@froglife.org

Further details available on
www.froglife.org