

# 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. 39 SPRING 2005

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## **Report on Annual General Meeting**

Brandon Marsh Nature Centre

**Tuesday 25th January 2005**

### 1. The WART Committee:

Chair	Jan Clemons
Vice-Chair	Jon Easton
Secretary	Vacant
Membership Secretary/IT 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

## 2. Chairman's Report

### WARWICKSHIRE AMPHIBIAN & REPTILE TEAM REVIEW 2004

**Recording activity** - Wart has continued to concentrate on the Adder survey, now in its second year as part of the Adder SAP for Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull BAP. At the end of the first year all 18 of the sites we had adder records for were visited. One trend which emerged showed that many of these 'adder' sites were also grass snake sites. As the grass snake is common in the county could grass snakes have been identified as adders? The major limitation in the first year was lack of refugia but this year the three sites considered the most suitable were 'tinned' and visited on a regular basis. Adders were present at one site in 2004, but no adders were found at the other two sites which is cause for concern. Due to a generous donation from a Wart member we are now in the position to tin more sites next year, but suspect only grass snakes are present. One of our main targets is to identify individual adders at the extant site, but we will only be able to do this from photographs taken by Network Rail employees. One consolation is that the population is well protected from disturbance from people and their pets. We will also continue to investigate 'new' sightings from members of the public.

**Key Sites** – a provisional survey for a proposed reclamation and redevelopment of Napton Brickworks, near Southam has revealed the largest great crested newt colony (metapopulation) in the county. WART have written to the planning authorities in order to stress the significance of this metapopulation and that the newts must be safeguarded as part of a revised development plan.

**Volunteer interest & ARG status** – WART membership at the time of writing has dropped to forty, from an all time high of sixty two years ago. Several of our key members have left the area and overall the vast majority of members remain non-active but supportive. During 2004 we published 3 newsletters and organised 3 field meetings. WART members also undertook management work at Kenilworth Common. WART continues to be recognised as the local authority on herpetological conservation by English Nature, Local Authorities, the Environment Agency and other conservation organisations

**Training, Education & Publicity** – there were no training sessions in 2004 and a planned amphibian training day at Brandon Marsh was cancelled due to lack of interest. Wart continues to deal with queries from members of the public mainly through the web site [www.wartsoc.co.uk](http://www.wartsoc.co.uk) managed by Nigel Clemons. Talks were given to several Local Trust groups and Natural History Societies and WART led part of a FWAG pond management course.

**Key issues** – the main issue of threats from development have already been discussed but the other main issue is recruiting new WART members, especially onto the committee.

I would like to thank Warwickshire Wildlife Trust for all their support, especially in providing us with a meeting place; also Warwick Museum & the Biological Records Centre with whom we continue to exchange herpetological records. Thanks must also go to the WART committee with a special mention to Nigel Clemons, Howard Eccles and Helen Mayne. It is unfortunate that Helen has handed over the WART newsletter, but after 12 years of doing it I can understand how she feels! However WART are fortunate to have Helen's support on our committee.

Finally a large thank you to you, WART members, for your continued support with Warwickshire's amphibians & reptiles. I do hope you will be able to take part in the events planned this year. If not, records from your garden and your local environment will go a long way into understanding the distribution and status of these relatively unrecorded vertebrates.



Jan Clemons  
February 2005

### 3. Treasurers Report

#### Receipts and Payments Account for period 1/10/2004 to 30/12/2004

Receipts	2004	2003	Payments	2004	2003
Bal. as @ 31/12/03					
Bank 780.21					
Cash 16.60	£796.81	£1173.17	Printing	£8.64	£38.30
Subscriptions	£150.50	£153.50	Postage & Stationery	£65.11	£90.15
Donations	£64.10	£16.80	Printer Cartridge	-	£55.45
Tins Appeal	£535.00	-	Herpetofauna Workers Meeting	-	£120.00
Sales	£27.00	£10.35	G.P.S. Units	-	£253.11
			Purchases	£22.00	-
			Bal. as @ 31/12/04		
			Bank	£1447.06	
			Cash	£30.60	
				£1,477.66	£796.81
	<b>£1,573.41</b>	<b>£1,353.82</b>		<b>£1,573.41</b>	<b>£1,353.82</b>

Howard Eccles  
January 2005

### 4. Membership Report

The membership has now dropped 40, after a number of years at around 50.

If you have not yet paid your 2005 WART subscription (it's still only £3.50 pa). We very much hope that all existing members will renew - the success and health of the group depends on an adequate membership base. WART subscription rates have been held unchanged for some years and we think

they represent pretty good value for money. If you're interested in conserving Warwickshire's native herpetofauna - please continue your membership to WART. If you can introduce any new potential members to the group, all the better!

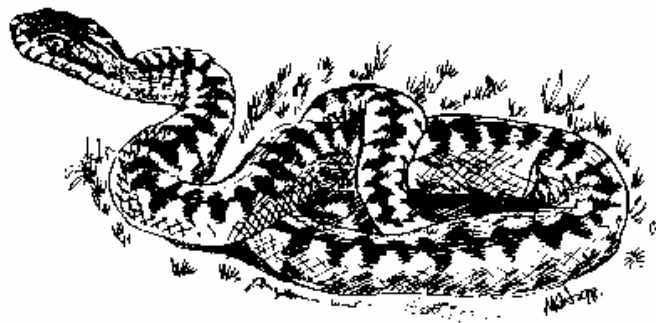
Thank you to all members for your continuing support of the group.

Nigel Clemons  
January 2005

#### **4. Subscriptions for WART 2005 now due!!**

Yes, it's that time of the year again and subscriptions are now due for 2005.

Please send your £3.50 to: Nigel Clemons, Membership Secretary  
34 Montalt Road,  
Coventry CV3 5LU



### **Report of the 2005 Amphibian & Reptile Workers meeting**

After two years absence, this focal point in the herpetological worker's calendar was held at Keele University from Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> February. WART was represented by Jan Clemons, Ian Tanner & Natalie Walker.

There were various talks on current survey and research work with interactive workshops over the two days. Lee Brady of KRAG reported on adder declines in Kent. Basically the adder is under-recorded, known populations are small and isolated, there is a poor understanding of habitat needs and surveying is very labour intensive. Sounds familiar? A project has just been launched called 'Make the Adder Count' and is being coordinated by the Herpetological Conservation Trust with the support of English Nature in response to the report by John Baker in 2004: *Status of the adder and slow-worm in England* (English Nature Research Report No. 546). The report highlighted how adder status was declining, especially in the Midlands. Hopefully this pilot project will become an annual census and go a long way to providing information about the national status of the adder.

Sue Young outlined 'How common is the common toad' following a pilot study and interpretation of questionnaire data. The study concentrated on 169 toad sites in the Midlands & SE England. Forty sites had detailed data including the WART data on the Dunchurch Toad population. One observation was that a decrease in marginal vegetation together with an increase of aquatic vegetation corresponded with

a number of declining toad populations. Also habitat changes could contribute but Sue's report only showed the need for further research into how common the toad is today.

Robbie Mc'Donald talked about smooth newt status in Northern Ireland. It is the only newt species found in Ireland and has the same level of protection under Irish legislation as the great crested newt. A re-survey of previously recorded sites showed a steep rate of pond loss in the last decade and there are numerous conflicts with planning initiatives. Overall, smooth newts are widespread (36% ponds) but the habitat in and around many ponds is in rapid decline.

Chris Glead-Owen spoke about recent developments concerning NARRS (National Amphibian & Reptile Recording Scheme) and Jim Foster of English Nature reviewed current methods of aquatic & terrestrial trapping techniques for great crested newts. Will Watson & Richard King of Herefordshire ARG were inspirational in how they secured funding for the Hertfordshire Ponds & Newts project.

Workshops on Species Action Plans, designing a national herpetofauna monitoring scheme, Defra licensing, wildlife crime and involving the wider community in herpetofauna conservation work were also an important part of the two day meeting.

This year we had a 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration dinner on the Saturday evening, followed by a talk on the conservation work carried out on MOD estates which for those of you that have read the excellent Sanctuary magazine will realise is extensive. Jim Foster's Quiz 'Have I got newts for you' seems to get crazier every time but as a member of the winning team I really earned my two bottles of 'designer' beer.

Froglife are to be congratulated on running a well organised and interesting meeting. Also credit must be given to the funding agencies. On a final note it is important that this meeting continues to run annually, as the networking is equally important as the talks & workshops and you certainly come away feeling very positive and full of ideas.

Jan Clemons

## **Forthcoming Events**

**Reptile Identification and Survey Day**  
**Sunday 08 May 2005**  
**Held at Lickey Hills Country Park**

The purpose of the day will be to provide an introduction to British Reptiles. It will look at surveying and management of areas for reptile populations.

Outline:

9.45 a.m. Arrival for 10.00 a.m. start

10.00 Introduction to British Reptiles, identification and ecology, Paul Wilkinson.

11.00 Coffee break

11.15 Reptiles in Warwickshire and the adder project, Jan Clemons

11.45 Survey techniques, Simon Needle and Managing habitats, Stefan Bodnar

12.35 –1.00 p.m. Handling techniques, Les Basford

1-2p.m. Lunch break, please bring a packed lunch.

2- 4 p.m. The afternoon session will consist of practical survey and searches for reptiles in the Bilberry Hill and Cofton Hill locations.

Booking:

The course is free but numbers are limited. Please confirm attendance by e-mail [Simon\\_Needle@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:Simon_Needle@birmingham.gov.uk) or call the Lickey Hills, 0121 447 7106.

### **Dunchurch Toads**

March. We have been asked to resurvey this population again after a 4/5 year gap. Contact Jan Clemons.

### **Cannock Chase**

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May. Field trip to Cannock Chase with a chance to hone your amphibian identification skills. Please register with Jan Clemons.

### **West Midlands Regional HGBI Meeting**

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> September. Details to follow in next newsletter.

## **WART Contacts**

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Contributions for the newsletter should be sent to Lee Miles  
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