



Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team

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

Patron: Ken Livingstone

WART NEWSLETTER: ISSUE NO. 26 SPRING 2001

Forthcoming events

Foot and Mouth and Herps

Owing to the current foot-and-mouth disease problems, we cannot be certain whether the following events will take place. If you would like to attend, check with Jan first that there are no problems.

“Old Milverton pondscape” 2 pm, Sunday 21 April

We intend 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).

Joint WART/WRAG survey at Long Marston & Pebworth Saturday 29 April

Another opportunity to hone your amphibian surveying skills. Again a complex of ponds that straddle the Warks/Worcs border that have never (to our knowledge) been surveyed before.

Meet 10.30 am in the public carpark in Bidford-on-Avon (OS SP099516). The survey will be in two parts with a visit to a local pub for lunch. Alternatively bring sandwiches etc.

Leam Valley Nature Reserve, Leamington Spa 7 pm Saturday evening 12 May

The reserve contains a series of ponds that support smooth & great crested newts. Meet at 7pm in the Swimming Pool car park, Newbold Common (OS SP330658).

WART will be given a guided tour of the reserve by the reserve warden & then as it gets dark we will monitor the ponds for newts using torches and lay newt traps if needed. Come & learn about more quantitative amphibian surveying techniques that can be used to assess the status of amphibian populations. A good torch is essential.

Events at Kenilworth Common

Kenilworth Common is open and is not affected by foot and mouth restrictions, so please come along and join in the activities to help our local herps. You might well see some wildlife while you work. You are welcome to stay for whatever time you can afford, even a short visit is very helpful. For all below meet at the railway bridge on Common Lane:

Introduction to Reptiles, Sat 30 June 2 pm

Discover how to look for reptiles, the places they like, the management needed by their habitat.

Work-parties: bracken-pulling to open up the ground for reptiles to enable basking and feeding:

Sundays: 13 May, 3 June, 1 July, 5 Aug, 2 Sept.

If more information is required, contact Serena and Howard Eccles.

Licences for Surveying

If you are likely to want to survey for Great-crested Newts, contact Jan to add your name to the WART licence. Training in survey techniques will need to be undertaken if necessary.

Stratford Butterfly Farm

Sunday 18 March 2.00pm

Richard Lamb gave me a guided tour, after I'd apologised for the lack of other WART members.

It was a cold day with rain in the air, not ideal for seeing butterflies outside. I even wondered whether protected butterflies in a glasshouse might be unwilling to show themselves.

How wrong I was... once through the curtain into the flight area I was immediately circled by a huge flapping butterfly. There were butterflies everywhere, of a great variety of colours and patterns. A brightly-splashed red-and-yellow Heliconid laid eggs on passion flower tendrils high above my head while one of the large intricately patterned species settled on my jumper. I wanted eyes in the back of my head, it was difficult to decide where to look next.

A bridge led us between a waterfall and a pool with cruising koi carp, while a hummingbird watched from the branches of a small tree. After passing under a stone archway and studying a small stripy butterfly perched nearby, I was surprised when Richard pointed out two large iguanas lying on top of the wall.

Exiting from the flight area, we entered a room with potted plants. On closer inspection, caterpillars of various shapes and sizes were happily munching the leaves. Some were camouflaged to look like a shrivelled leaf or the stem of the plant, so that even large caterpillars were easily missed.

Further rooms contained snakes, toads, cockroaches, leaf-cutter ants, scorpions, several kinds of tarantulas and a black widow spider. Fortunately these were all safely behind glass and not roaming the flight cage!

The possible Edible Frog that Richard had seen in his outdoor pond failed to show itself, though frogspawn and some Smooth Newts were present. I didn't feel cheated, though – I have to admit that if I had to choose between chasing frogs in the rain and being surrounded by tropical butterflies in a warm glasshouse, it's not difficult to decide.....

It is a great shame that more WARTers didn't turn up for what turned out to be a very pleasant afternoon, in spite of the weather.

Helen Newell

WART on the web

WART's web-site, created by Nigel Clemons, can be found at: www.wartsoc.co.uk

Membership Reminder

Please continue to support WART; membership is still a bargain at £3.50 per household. A form was attached to the last newsletter

Getting paid to do herpetological survey work

Jan is often asked by wildlife consultants if anyone in Wart would be prepared to undertake occasional survey work in Warwickshire. As most of us already work full-time Jan can seldom help them. If you are interested please contact her.

ARGs, NGOs and other TLAs

(or Amphibian and Reptile Groups, Non-Governmental Organisations
and other Three-Letter Abbreviations)

Ever get confused by all those acronyms and organisations? Here is an attempt to sort some of them out. First some NGO's:

HGBI: Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland are the national network of county based ARGs.

ARGs: Amphibian and Reptile Groups, of which WART is one. They are local groups aiming to help herps. Other groups include WRAG (Worcestershire Reptile and Amphibian Group), KRAG, SARG (Kent and Sussex respectively). We could have been WARG, but it's just not the same!

Froglife is a non-profit making organisation concerned with the conservation of reptiles and amphibians. It publishes leaflets, booklets and posters, runs training courses and conferences, advises the voluntary and statutory sector and operates projects to further herpetofauna conservation. It acts as a secretariat to HGBI.

BHS: British Herpetological Society is involved in conservation as well as research, education and captive breeding. It provides small grants for GCN projects and publishes a journal of research into herps and the Bulletin.

HCT: The Herpetological Conservation Trust works mainly on the conservation of the rarest species of reptile and amphibian, particularly sand lizard, smooth snake and natterjack toad in south and northwest England and southwest Scotland.

WWT as I'm sure you all know is the **Warwickshire Wildlife Trust**.

The various Government bodies that can be involved with herp conservation include: The Environment Agency, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Joint Nature Conservancy Council, English Nature, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, Northern Ireland: Environment and Heritage Service, Eire: National Parks and Wildlife Service.

There are also the Rio Summit creations to contend with, though these are documents not organisations: BAPs, LBAPs, SAPs, HAPs or Biodiversity / Local Biodiversity / Species / Habitat Action Plans.

Contributions for the newsletter should be sent to Helen Newell.
Copy deadline for next issue: 30th June 2001.
