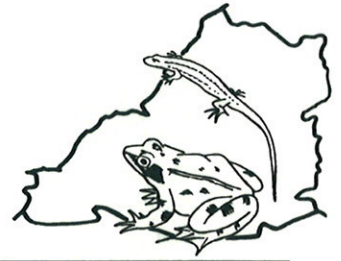




# ARAG NEWS

## Avon Reptile & Amphibian Group



January 2010

The Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group continues to grow and become involved in several conservation initiatives in the Avon Region. Before the 2010 season fully kicks off here is a round-up of the news, events and surveys undertaken throughout 2009.

### **Charlcombe Toad Patrol, Bath**

The 2009 Toad Patrol was successful in catching and re-releasing 1991 toads, 568 frogs, as well as 289 newts. This gives a grand total of 2848 animals, some of which may have otherwise been squashed by cars had it not been for the actions of enthusiastic volunteers. The 2010 patrol is due to commence on February 15<sup>th</sup> in Charlcombe Lane in Bath and run for six weeks. This is a great opportunity to see a variety of amphibian species and help conserve these animals at the same time. Anyone who is interested in helping should contact Helen Hobbs on the email distribution list to find out more and be added to the covering insurance.

### **National Amphibian and Reptile Survey**

ARAG took on four squares as a group, 2 in Bristol and 2 in Bath. Following a training day conducted at Elm Farm to learn how to identify different species



Photo: Becky Bryant

and outline methodology, surveys were run between April and June. Unfortunately only two squares were found to contain newts and one other for snakes. However, other squares were surveyed by ARAG members who were more successful in finding animals. It is hoped to repeat the training and surveys in 2010 and with luck we will be successful in finding some great crested newts.

### **European Wall Lizards**

After months of inaction, efforts were made to determine the status of the population of wall lizards at a site in Bristol. Despite the size of the site the animals were finally tracked down to a small area within the University grounds by Andy Ryder.

### **New frog blog**

A blog has been set up by a zoologist/filmmaker to share news on frogs, in particular the problem of chytrid fungus and the global amphibian extinction crisis. To view and add to it, log on to <http://pinktreefrog.typepad.com/amphibianavenger/>

### **Hibernacula construction**

Despite having to cancel the event several times due to bad weather, which always seemed to occur at the weekend, reptile hibernacula was constructed along the banks of Chew Valley Lake. The site was chosen where several grass snakes were found in 2008 so it was hoped that it would be used over winter. Although perhaps not as large or complex as those used in reptile mitigation projects, visits planned for 2010 should be able to determine the level of success of the project.

## Surveys in Avon

Several areas have been surveyed in the region by ARAG volunteers, including old cemeteries in Bristol and Bath, Chew Valley Lake, Cheddar Gorge as well as part of the Mendips. One cemetery was found to contain loads of slow worms while these and common lizard were also found at a site in the Mendips. It was also a good year for snakes with Iain Adderton and Andy Ryder catching 2 adders and 2 grass snakes at various sites. Unfortunately, grass snake numbers were not as impressive as those recorded at the same site in 2008 but maybe they will be better in 2010.



Photo: Iain Adderton

## Wild at Chew

As part of Bristol Waters continued commitment to improving Biodiversity they had organised a Wild at Chew Day at Woodford Lodge. ARAG were in attendance and demonstrated to the public the importance of conserving amphibians and reptiles as well as answering questions and providing advice. The stand was manned for an impressive 8 hours by Anna Ferguson Montague, Andy Ryder, Becky Bryant and Rachael Cooper. Well done chaps!



Photo: Patric Bulmer

## News and Events

### Bristol Zoo

The reptile house at the zoo has now been fully refurbished with a new hi-tech heating system installed. The vivarium houses an amazing collection of reptiles from all over the world. Now added to the zoo's collection are six critically endangered Egyptian tortoises and six Annam leaf turtles. Check out the Bristol Zoo website if you are interested in seeing some cool scaly creatures! Better still go and visit and see them for real! Given the recent weather a trip to the reptile house to stand next to a hot lamp may be a great idea!  
<http://www.bristolzoo.org.uk/>

### Herpetofauna Workers Meeting

This event is to be held in Hinckley, Leicestershire on Jan 30<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> and has talks covering a wide variety of issues which focus on a range of species. For those interested in finding out more about the practical conservation and academic research underway in the UK then this is the place to go. If interested in attending please complete and return your booking forms as soon as possible as this is a highly popular event and space is limited. Details can be found here: <http://www.herpetofauna.co.uk/news/HWM%202010%20Flyer.pdf>

### OPAL Water Survey

The University College London is looking for volunteers to carry out surveys to gather data on the state of our environment. The free Water Survey pack focuses on freshwater invertebrates in ponds and lakes and it is hoped that people will take part by pond dipping and submitting data. Each pack contains an invertebrate guide and workbook, guides to amphibians, adult dragonflies, damselflies and duckweeds, a habitat leaflet compiled by Buglife, an 'Opalometer' disc for measuring water clarity, a magnifier, pH test strips and an OPAL water centre pencil. For more

information visit the Website <http://www.opalexplornature.org/> or contact Iain Adderton on the distribution list to get your free pack.

## ARAG 2010

Look out for an email informing you of the start of the group's events for 2010. It is hoped that we can get some trips to reserves in 2010 or expand the number of surveys in the region. New members are always welcome to attend the meetings!!



Photo: Iain Adderton

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