

ARGSL Review of 2013

ARGSL highlights of 2013

- The *What's in Your Pond?* project was launched to collect garden pond records from Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside.
- Further progress has been made on LARA, the Lancashire Amphibian and Reptile Atlas project (www.lara-project.org.uk). Two thousand new records were added to the database in 2013.
- ARGSL has helped to create five new ponds and manage five more at a farm near Garstang.

ARGSL continues to monitor its ponds

ARGSL has created 53 amphibian ponds in Lancashire since 2005. Most have been closely monitored to assess their success and observations from surveys help to inform management work.

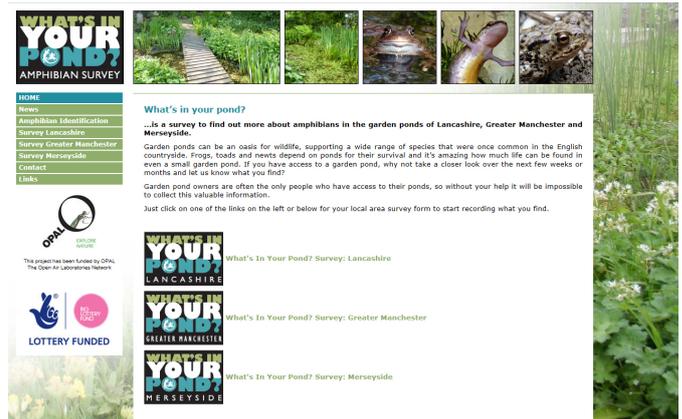
Some of the ponds have been created within public parks and can be visited any time such as those at Witton Park, Blackburn. Five ponds were created there in 2008 and since then they have been surveyed for amphibians almost every year. ARGSL prepared a management plan for the ponds and surrounding habitat on behalf of Blackburn with Darwen Council and the group has been closely involved in management of the area. One of the biggest challenges has been the removal of himalayan balsam which, over the past six years, has been almost completely banished from the area. Last year volunteers removed *Typha* from some of the smaller ponds to prevent them filling with vegetation.

Your ARGSL Committee for 2013

Chair: David Orchard
Vice Chair: Kath Smyki
Secretary: Hilary Bedford
Database Manager: Lee Brady
Treasurer: Denis Dowsell
Website Manager: Chris Arthur

What's in Your Pond?

For a number of years ARGSL has been encouraging people to send in their garden pond records. This year the group launched a new project called *What's in Your Pond?* to help collect this information. The aim is to find out how many garden ponds support amphibians and if so which species occur most often.



Above: the *What's in your pond?* website launched in February 2013

Many people are interested in surveying ponds for amphibians but this is often complicated by the need to obtain landowners permission. Asking people to survey a garden pond is more straightforward so this is an easy way to collect valuable information. Common frogs frequently occur in garden ponds but perhaps because they're so familiar they tend to go unrecorded. Despite increasing reports of amphibian disease (affecting frogs in particular) this is the only project in the North West of England trying to find out whether the species is thriving or declining in suburban environments.

The website and an information leaflet have been funded by OPAL - the Open Air Laboratories Network. The leaflet includes some excellent illustrations by Chris Shields and copies are available to download from the website.

Please do your best to publicise the *What's in your pond?* project - the more records we can collect the better! If you know anyone with a garden pond please take a look over the coming months and let us know what you find by submitting your records online at www.whatsinyourpond.org.uk

ARGSL works with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation to create ponds near Garstang

Five ponds have been created and five managed on farmland near Garstang in Lancashire. The work cost just over £5000 and was funded by the SITA Trust following a grant application submitted by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. The SITA Grant required a matching contribution of £500 which was provided by ARGSL.



One of the ponds being created in July 2013

In 2011 the site had been surveyed for amphibians by ARGSL volunteers and all five species of widespread amphibian were recorded. This information was an essential part of the funding application which depended on evidence to show that the new ponds would definitely benefit amphibians, and great crested newts in particular.

Ponds of various sizes were created, the largest being approximately 25x10m. All have held water successfully and will be monitored in future years to find out how valuable they become for amphibians. Trees were removed from the edges of five ponds to reduce shading and two of them were also de-silted.

This project highlights the value of the farmed landscape for great crested newts and other amphibians. It clearly demonstrates what can be achieved when a farmer, ARGSL and Amphibian and Reptile Conservation work together.



**Amphibian and Reptile Group
of South Lancashire**

Wales Weekend in October 2013

The first ARGSL task weekend in North Wales took place in November 2005 and since then a total of twelve weekends have been completed. The most recent one took place at Talacre and involved habitat management for sand lizards. This work was undertaken as part of the management plan for the coast coordinated by Flintshire Countryside Service.



The volunteers

All the volunteers worked really hard and cleared an area of approximately 2 acres of willow scrub. The area is to be grazed by ponies to clear most of the remaining vegetation and open up some bare patches of sand. Accommodation for the Friday and Saturday night was arranged by Flintshire Countryside Service at Presthaven Sands Caravan Park. Once again the catering was done by Lynn Entwistle, one of the volunteers, who has done a magnificent job of providing food on all the weekends since 2005.



Work in progress

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