

ARGSL Update : March 2011

What's the latest news?

You may have been thinking that the last few months have been pretty quiet for ARGSL, but there's been plenty of work going on behind the scenes. This update highlights some of the things that have been going on...

Two new ARGs for Lancashire!

Two new ARGs were established in February and March of this year: Fylde ARG (FARG) and ARG of North Lancashire (ARGNL). The inaugural meetings of both groups were well attended and organising committees were formed.

The Fylde Group will be most active in and around the Blackpool area, where volunteers will be surveying a network of ponds as part of the North Blackpool Pond Trail Project. The North Lancashire Group is still planning its activities, but events are likely to be centered around the Lancaster and Garstang areas.

If you'd like to get involved or help out with either group please contact:

FARG Chair, Pauline Taylor:
Pauline.Taylor@groundwork.org.uk

ARGNL Chair, Jenna Trewartha:
greenlyjenna@gmail.com

Garden pond surveys - the priority for 2011.

The 2011 amphibian breeding season is well underway, so now is the time to be visiting ponds, recording what you see and (- all importantly -) passing on this information!

Identifying and recording amphibians is often straightforward, but the perennial problem for surveyors is obtaining landowners permission to visit ponds in the first place. This can be both difficult and time consuming, but nevertheless it is an essential part of the survey process. One easy way round this problem is to collect data from garden ponds.

There are probably thousands of garden ponds

across the North West and many of these will support amphibians, particularly common frogs. However, there is very little data on these ponds which is where ARGSL volunteers have an important role to play. If ARG volunteers could collect data from only 5% of garden ponds in the area, we'd have a nationally important dataset!



Photo by David Orchard

Just as a reminder, the basic information needed is:

1. The location of the garden pond
2. The species found there
3. The name of the person who saw them
4. The date of the observation

- it's that easy!

The chances are that you know someone with a garden pond. Can you visit this pond over the coming season, record what you see and pass on the information to ARGSL?

ARGSL has a simple recording form (available on the ARGSL website) which has been designed to collect garden pond information from the general public. If you'd like copies of this to distribute to garden pond owners, or if you have records to pass on, please contact David Orchard: argsl@btinternet.com

Appearing at a public event with the ARGSL stand is a great way to collect records. If you're able to help with this over the coming months, please ask for further details.

Your ARGSL Committee for 2011

Chair: David Orchard
Database Manager: Lee Brady
Publicity: Angela Julian
Treasurer: Denis Dowsell
Biodiversity and planning: Stuart Ryan

ARGSL volunteers win recognition at last!

After seven residential task weekends at Talacre, North Wales, the hard work of ARGSL volunteers has now been recognised with an award from the site's landowner, BHP Billiton. The award recognises work to clear scrub from sand dunes which will benefit both sand lizards and natterjack toads.

The first of the popular "North Wales Weekenders" took place in November 2005. All the weekends have been well attended, with as many as 30 volunteers helping with the arduous work.

All weekends have been well supported by members of Bolton Conservation Volunteers, in particular Lynn Entwistle who's organised the catering to a consistently high standard.

Watch this space for another North Wales Weekender this autumn!



Brian Robinson and Colin Mather hard at work on the Talacre dunes during the most recent task in November 2010. 18 volunteers spent the weekend clambering up and down a large dune to remove large willow and sycamore.



Amphibian and Reptile Group
of South Lancashire

Lancashire Amphibian and Reptile Atlas Project moves up a gear

The Lancashire Amphibian and Reptile Atlas Project (LARA) is an exciting initiative and a major step forward for Amphibian and Reptile Recording in the North West of England.

LARA has evolved from the ARGSL records database, which was established in 2007 as part of the North West Slow-Worm Hunt project funded by the Big Lottery *Awards for All*.

ARGSL's aim in 2007 was to collect together as many slow-worm records as possible from the Vice County of South Lancashire, (an area now covered by Greater Manchester, Merseyside and part of Lancashire) but it was soon receiving data from the Vice County of West Lancashire as well (an area covering both West and North Lancashire; see Note 1).

With the establishment of two new ARGs in Lancashire, it seemed sensible to make the ARGSL recording project more inclusive and more relevant to recorders across the whole of Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. The LARA database will include all the records collected by ARGSL, as well as data contributed by other ARGs across the region.

LARA is keen to receive amphibian and reptile records from anywhere in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. For more information contact David Orchard: atlasrecorder@btinternet.com



Note 1: The vice county system was established in 1852 and it is still the basis of many wildlife recording schemes today. The advantage of this system is that recording area boundaries remain fixed, whereas administrative county boundaries often change over time (for example the extensive re-drawing of county boundaries in 1974).

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