

# ARGL Review of 2024

## A look back over 2024

Over the past year ARGL has held seven habitat management tasks and continued reptile surveys on the Manchester Mosses. In January, Chair of ARGL David Orchard was presented with an award by HM Prison Service in recognition of ARGL's pond management work at Wymott Prison. The highlight of the year was probably the Moss Side Farm Activity Day, attended by nine ARGL members and five ecologists from ARCADIS.

## 2024 was our 20th Anniversary!

2024 was ARGL's 20th anniversary! Over the last 20 years ARGL volunteers have:

- undertaken a huge amount of practical habitat management work for protected species, including on SAC's and SSSI's.
- completed amphibian and reptile surveys around Lancashire and Greater Manchester.
- created new amphibian ponds across Lancashire and Greater Manchester.
- helped raise awareness of amphibians and reptiles at public events.
- advised members of the public on queries relating to planning and development and its effect on our native species.

ARGL's future work is dependent on the number of active volunteers, so please support us by turning out when you can.

## Moss Side Activity Day

May 15th was an opportunity for ARGL members to see for themselves the work being done by Natural England to restore their 154 hectare site at Moss Side Farm to its original condition. The day was hosted by Steve Ormerod, site ranger with NE, who gave a guided tour of the site and an explanation of the restoration work which has just started. Neil Madden gave



Above: ARGL volunteers and ARCADIS staff at the Moss Side Farm Activity Day, hosted by Steve Ormerod from Natural England. Below: Rindle Moss



a talk on the value of the Manchester Mosses for reptiles, including a summary of records collected by ARGL volunteers and Alan Bedford gave a talk on the small mammal study conducted by him and Hilary at the nearby Caddishead and Little Woolden Mosses. In the afternoon Alan and Hilary gave a demonstration of sweep netting for invertebrates which helped inspire volunteers with an appreciation of the habitat for other species. The afternoon also included a visit to the Lancashire Wildlife Trust site of Rindle Moss, giving an indication of what Moss Side Farm will look like in the coming years.

To make the most of the day it was opened up to ecologists from ARCADIS, who attended as part of an employee volunteering event.

### Your ARGL Committee for 2025

Chair: David Orchard  
Database Manager: Lee Brady  
Treasurer: Lorna Bennett



## Pond management at HMP Wymott

Work continued for a fourth year at HMP Wymott. Two habitat management tasks were held to improve ponds for amphibians, with trees being removed from pond edges and the brash stacked to create dead hedges. Amphibian surveys were conducted on six out of the eighteen ponds by two surveyors from Atkins with great crested newts being recorded in one pond.



*Wymott, February 29th: before and after. Evidence of gcn has been recorded at this pond in the past, so shading was reduced by removing trees from the western side. The work was challenging due to the steep gradient!*



## Darcy Lever Marshes, Bolton

Scrub removal continued at Darcy Lever Marshes, a County Wildlife Site near Bolton, with a task in January to reduce shading on the network of ponds. This work is almost complete thanks to work done by ARGL in conjunction with Bolton Conservation Volunteers. Great crested newt eggs were found in small numbers in spring 2024 and those numbers will hopefully rise in coming years. In the past, all five species of native amphibian have been recorded here.

## Longton Brickcroft, Preston

After several years of good intentions, ARGL finally made it to Longton Brickcroft to assist the site ranger and her volunteers with pond management work. Significant progress was made on the most overgrown and shaded pond, but more work remains for the future.



*Volunteers at Longton Brickcroft on January 14th*

## Pleasington, Blackburn

Work continued to reduce shading on the ponds created by ARGL in 2008 with brash being used to create almost 100m of dead hedging. Without ARGL's long term commitment to these ponds willow scrub would dominate, resulting in the loss of amphibian breeding ponds. Further work is planned for next year.

## Oakwood Park, Salford



*Work in progress at Oakwood Park on November 23rd*

A wet corner of Oakwood Park, Salford, has been earmarked as a site for pond creation by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU). Before the ponds can be created scrub needs to be removed and ARGL was asked to undertake this work. Clearance was done by a small number of volunteers, despite some heavy rain!