

ARGSL Update: January 2010

Review of 2009

2009 was a good year for ARGSL, here is a reminder of some highlights...

Amphibian Surveys

2009 was our best year so far for pond surveys, with ARGSL volunteers collecting data from 19 ponds during an amazing 90 survey visits. This achievement was partly due to preparations made before the survey season, a sterling effort by Lorna to coordinate all the surveyors and due to all those people who turned out to take part in the pond surveys. Recording will be ARGSL's main priority for 2010 so keep an eye on the website for regular updates.

The challenge for 2010 is to survey as many new sites as possible – the more we can find out about the distribution of amphibians and reptiles, the more we can do to promote their conservation.

The ARGSL records database

An important step forward has been the establishment of the ARGSL records database. This has been done with the help of Lee Brady, one of the UK's top herpetologists and the county recorder for amphibians and reptiles in Kent. Lee has written the recording software for the Kent database which means it does exactly what it needs to do - it can process lots of information relevant to amphibians and reptiles that other recording packages find it difficult or impossible to do. Lee has developed the Kent database over the last ten years on behalf of the Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (Krag) so we have the benefit of both his experience and his state of the art recording software.

Pond Creation

Creating new ponds is a very practical way of improving habitats for amphibians. In 2009 ARGSL funded the creation of one pond at Cuerden Park in Preston and obtained funding for two ponds at Boz Park in Bury and six ponds at Darcy Lever Gravel Pits in Bolton. ARGSL has money set aside to fund the creation of more new ponds, the only thing stopping us doing this is finding suitable sites. If you know

Your ARGSL committee for 2010

Chair: David Orchard

Vice chair: Lorna Bousfield

Records database manager: Lee Brady

Treasurer: Denis Dowsell

Funding advisor: Margaret Keighley

Have you got skills to offer? If you have skills that could help ARGSL to develop its projects over the coming year, please let us know – offers of help are always welcome.

of a place where new ponds can be created, please let us know. (Projects most likely to receive funding are those on farmland or on land owned by local authorities. Ponds that need to be lined, garden ponds or school ponds are unlikely to receive funding.)



Pond creation taking place at Darcy Lever Gravel Pits in January 2009

ARGSL Membership

The ARGSL membership year runs from January 1st to December 31st, so if you'd like to take part in our activities over the coming year please send us your £6 subscription as soon as possible. Please post your cheque to ARGSL C/o 106 Thicketford Road, Tonge Moor, Bolton. BL2 2L. Being an ARGSL member will give you reduced rates at conferences, as well as keeping you up to date with our activities. We'll keep e-mailing the 2009 members until the end of January, after which you'll need to have renewed your membership to receive regular updates.

Training events in 2010

A number of amphibian survey training events will be held this spring, two have been confirmed for Rixton Claypits on March 13th and March 17th. Training will cover everything you need to know before carrying out an amphibian survey so whether you need more confidence with amphibian ID, or whether you simply need a general reminder, you'll be very welcome. The afternoon session will focus on the processing of data and this will be useful for everyone. If you can only attend this session rather than the whole day that'll be fine – keep an eye on the ARGSL website for further details

What can you be doing over the next couple of months?

In 2009, ARGSL launched its garden survey project. We'll be promoting this more widely in 2010 and encouraging more people to send us information on their garden ponds. Garden surveys are one of the best ways of finding out about wildlife in urban areas so the results can be really useful.

Why not start preparing for the 2010 garden surveys now, by asking around among friends and colleagues to find out who has a garden pond? Can they survey it on our behalf and send us the details, or will they need one of us to call round and do it for them?

Garden ponds are easy to survey but the key is to prepare a shortlist of sites that can be visited in advance of the survey season.

Could each ARGSL member find two garden ponds to survey this spring?

Northern Conference 2010

The 2009 Northern Region ARG conference was held in Leeds on October 24th and once again it was a popular event, providing a good opportunity for amphibian and reptile enthusiasts to get together and learn from each other. The 2010 conference will again take place in the autumn and plans are afoot to hold it in Cumbria. Details will be publicised over the summer.

The ARGSL Facebook Page

ARGSL now has its own Facebook page called "ARGSL – The Amphibian and Reptile Group of South Lancashire". Please contribute to this page and use it to enthuse people about amphibians and reptiles and to encourage them to submit records to us.

Wales weekend

ARGSL organised two weekends during which volunteers removed scrub from sand dunes at Talacre in North Wales. This management work will benefit sand lizards and natterjack toads. More weekends are being planned for 2010 –



Some of the 30 volunteers who took part in the Wales weekend in November 2009

Date for the diary: January 30th-31st Herp Workers Meeting 2010

One of the highlights of the herping year is the Herpetofauna Recorders Meeting – the national ARG conference organised by ARG UK. This year the conference will be held in Hinckley, Leicestershire, and if you're able to attend you'll definitely find it worthwhile. This year's packed programme includes a talk and workshop on pond management by Jeremy Biggs, director of Pond Conservation – for a full programme and registration form, see the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust website at www.arc-trust.org. Book now to avoid disappointment!



Amphibian and Reptile Group
of South Lancashire

www.argsl.org.uk
argsl@btinternet.com