

ARGSL Update: January 2012

ARGSL highlights of 2011

- Significant progress has been made on LARA, the Lancashire Amphibian and Reptile Atlas project. Hundreds of new records have been added to the atlas database and a new website has been launched at www.lara-project.org.uk.
- A seminar on predictive mapping for great crested newts (attended by over 20 consultant ecologists) was held in October.
- Two task weekends have taken place in North Wales to improve the habitat for sand lizards and natterjack toads.
- Eight new ponds have been created in Charnock Richard with funding from ARGSL.
- The ARGSL stand has appeared at three public events in Lancashire.
- A local site has been swabbed for chytrid, as part of the national research project.

The Lancashire Amphibian and Reptile Atlas project (LARA)

With the help of Dr Lee Brady, ARGSL is pioneering some really important work to support the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

The LARA project is giving us a much better understanding of where species can be found, enabling a much more efficient targeting of scarce resources. The most important part of LARA is the predictive mapping work which is being done by Dr Lee Brady. This accuracy of this depends on the number and quality of species records, so the more records that ARGSL collects, the more we can focus conservation effort where it is needed most.

Anyone can submit records to LARA, so please try to find time for some surveys in 2012!

Pond creation in Charnock Richard



One of the new ponds created in October 2011

Eight new ponds have been created and one restored at Charnock's Farm (near Charnock Richard) in Lancashire. Four large habitat piles were also created during the work.

This project was organised by the Million Ponds Project, a partnership of organisations coordinated by Pond Conservation. However the cost of the pond creation work, a total of £822, was met by volunteers. £572 was provided by ARGSL and £250 was donated by the ARG UK 100% Fund.

Planning the project started in spring 2011 and included an amphibian survey of an existing farm pond. Frogs, toads and smooth newts were confirmed as present during this survey. A second pond had almost completely dried up so could not be surveyed and this pond was earmarked for management work.

The amphibian species recorded at this site are widespread and relatively common, but they are absent from a surprisingly large number of countryside ponds. The new ponds will provide an excellent habitat for frogs, toads and newts but plants and invertebrates will also benefit.

ARGSL is keen to support pond creation on farms with advice and funding. If you know any landowners who may be interested in taking advantage of this, please get in touch.

Your ARGSL Committee for 2012

Chair: David Orchard
Vice Chair: Kath Smyki
Database Manager: Dr. Lee Brady
Treasurer: Denis Dowsell

More "Wales Weekenders" completed

In November and December 2011, ARGSL organised another two weekends of practical conservation work near Prestatyn in North Wales. As in previous years, the work involved the removal of scrub to improve the habitat for sand lizards and natterjack toads. Some of the scrub removal was done to enable the creation of new natterjack toad ponds, which are due to be created in January 2012.

This year's work was done in partnership with the landowners, Flintshire Countryside Service and BHP Billiton, who planned the work and arranged free accommodation for the weekend. Both weekends were well supported by members of Bolton Conservation Volunteers, ensuring that both weekends were a great success.

The first ever ARGSL task weekend in North Wales took place in November 2005 and since then we've completed a total of eleven weekends of habitat management work.



Some of the volunteers on the November weekend.



Amphibian and Reptile Group
of South Lancashire

Can you collect any garden pond records this spring?

Finding out whether frogs (or other amphibians) are breeding in a garden pond is easy. If you can spare some time this spring, please collect some basic information so that it can be included in the Lancashire Amphibian and Reptile Atlas.

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!

If you know someone with a garden pond, please try to pay a visit over the coming spring, record what you see and pass on the details.

If you'd like more information, please ask for further details.

Can you help expand the work of ARGSL in 2012?

ARGSL is run by a very small group of volunteers and there's never enough time to do everything!

There's lots of ways in which people can help ARGSL and some of these may not immediately spring to mind, such as:

- helping to update the ARGSL website and Facebook page.
- writing press releases and magazine articles.
- helping to plan surveys.
- responding to enquiries from members of the public.

If you have any other skills or ideas that could be harnessed to help develop the work of ARGSL in 2012, please get in touch with David Orchard for an informal chat.

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