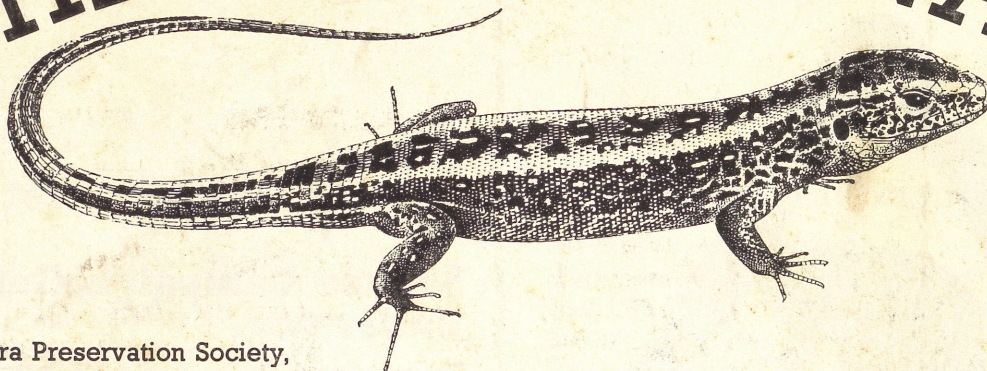


HERPETOFAUNA

Cheers
Alan

No. 1
JULY
1985



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NEWS

Edited by
T. Langton, Staff Herpetologist

Published Quarterly

Herpetofauna News

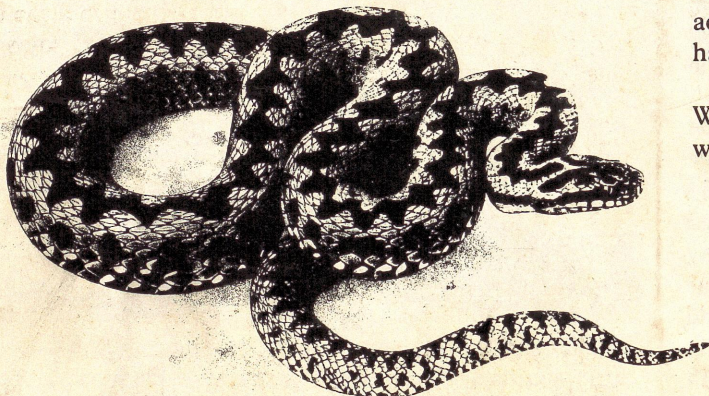
Herpetofauna News is the result of a growing need to keep amateur and professional herpetologists who are interested in conservation, up to date with news of projects, activities and events concerning reptiles and amphibians and their habitats. It is hoped it will also be of value to those who are working in other areas of nature conservation and who wish to keep in touch.

Like the well established *Bat News*, we will be presenting both European news, as well as matters of truly international concern.

However, at least half of the content will be of greatest interest to those in Britain who are involved in 'herps' projects, such as the recording of distribution and population changes, or those involved in habitat management.

With this first issue comes an invitation to anyone wishing to contribute an article, appeal for information, or publicize an event or meeting.

Herpetofauna News is available free to interested members of the FFPS, or for a minimum donation of £5 for four quarterly issues to the FFPS.



Snakes campaign gets underway see p.2.

Herpetofauna Conservation Programme

A new U.K. working group to co-ordinate conservation action.

A new UK Working Group for the conservation of herpetofauna has been established this year, by professional herpetologists with an involvement in conservation. The main objectives of the group are to explore and promote ways to protect reptiles and amphibians and their habitats, and to stimulate public interest.

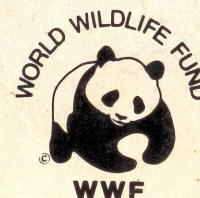
Discussed at the first meetings were matters such as co-ordinating work in the UK, in the fields of habitat management, recording of endangered and commoner species and their habitats. Several European and International matters were also discussed.

With the FFPS providing Secretariat facilities for the new group, and with active participation from members of the Societa Europea Herpetologica, the group looks forward to promoting and assisting conservation work abroad as well as in the UK.

At the FFPS office, both International aspects, and the FFPS Herpetofauna Programme UK, are being co-ordinated by the Society's staff herpetologist Tom Langton.

Tom Langton's job will be to link in with both the Working Group, and the numerous existing organizations with differing interests in herpetofauna, in particular those active in the field who are looking at particular species and habitat problems.

FFPS looks forward to participating within the new Working Group, and in particular exchanging information with our European colleagues.



Herpetofauna News is printed and published with the financial assistance of World Wildlife Fund U.K.



Toads On Roads Campaign

D.o.T. approves road warning signs

This spring saw the first wide-scale use of a newly approved road warning sign for toad migration routes. Many County Trust groups, members of BHS conservation committee, local conservation and welfare organisations put in a tremendous effort, and many reports have been sent in from sites across the country.

This year grant aid was available from the Nature Conservancy Council, the World Wildlife Fund, and an anonymous Charitable Trust, to produce the new road sign, and erect the temporary posts on which they stand for the road migration season: 1st March to 31st May. Despite strenuous efforts by volunteers, however, a number of signs were the subject of collectors or vandals, and methods to counteract this are being formulated for 1986.

Next spring a revised schedule of sites is being drawn up, and circulars are being sent to borough councils and highway authorities so that these bodies may budget and meet the costs, as they would with any other warning sign. This not only spreads the 'toad bill', but encourages a local response to a local issue.

Due to the 'newness' of the toads on roads campaign, county engineers and borough authorities often require technical information on the necessary procedures, and sometimes even convincing that the exercise is of sufficient value to warrant public funds. Careful liaison and co-operation over the 1985 season by local groups indicates that given a little time and patience, most authorities will respond in a favourable manner.

Next year, the campaign is to be co-ordinated from the FFPS office, with a target of identifying as many of the large migration routes as possible throughout Britain. In 1984 over 20,000 toads were rescued at the sites people reported on, and this year the total looks closer to 50,000, with many hundreds of people taking part. Much interesting data has been sent in, and the future application of toad fences and even toad underpasses in Britain looks increasingly feasible.

All in all this has been a promising campaign, with greatest thanks to those who turned out, often in pouring rain, to 'help a toad across the road'; keep up the good work in 1986.

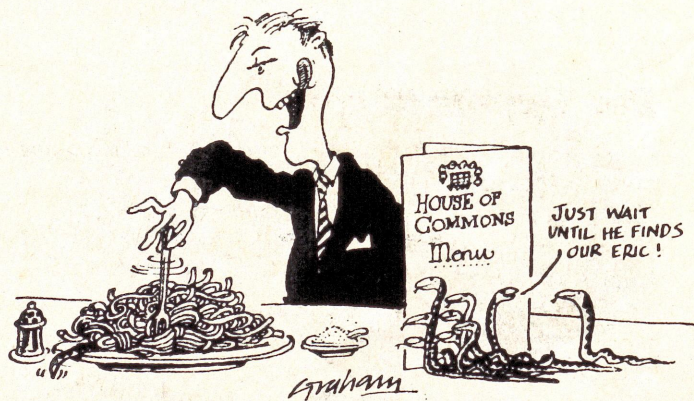
Snakes Campaign Gets Underway

The outburst by Sir David Price MP in the House of Commons last year, could hardly have come at a better time for the launch of the FFPS snakes campaign. His request that all British adders be eradicated, clearly highlighted the unnecessary fear that is still today instilled in the general public.

Already, we have received over two hundred letters from interested people throughout England and Wales, reporting on adder bites, and on the sites where grass snakes are known to lay their eggs. We now have many gardeners and land owners, with compost and manure heaps, recording the success or failure of different types of egg-laying substrate. We are of course continuing the appeal for people to report on any other sites they know or have heard about, and are looking forward to the late summer hatch.

With adder bites, we are collecting as many first-hand anecdotes as we can find, concerning people or animals that have been bitten by adders, in order to assess the full venomous potency of this species, and report fully on the findings. Like the grass snake campaign, we would welcome correspondence from anyone with knowledge of sites, or past experience with snake bites.

At present, the FFPS sales department is offering 'Be kind to snakes' stickers to local groups at a discount rate for 25 stickers or more of 25p each, for resale at 50p each. In addition, we are offering a very fine poster/print by Edward Wade at only £1.50 each, or as a signed limited edition (of 100) at £7.50 including postage and packing. The print is in full colour, and measures 23cm by 34cm.



By kind permission
Manchester
Evening
News.

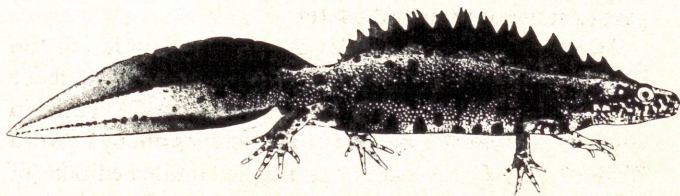
Crested Newt Research Inquiry

Leicester Polytechnic (under contract to the Nature Conservancy Council) is conducting a national survey, by correspondence, of the distribution and status of the crested newt *Triturus cristatus*.

Details of the sites, and of population estimates are requested, using a standard survey form. We now have information on about one thousand sites in the UK. Survey results show occurrence especially in ponds without fish, but with high nutrient and pH levels. The greatest threat would seem to be the decline in breeding sites, caused by absence of pond management, coupled with intensive agricultural development. Unlike some other amphibian species, *Triturus cristatus* does not seem to be capitalizing on the increased incidence of garden ponds.

Several areas of the country are still very imperfectly surveyed, and we would welcome additional field information. Please write to:

Mark Nicholson,
School of Life Sciences,
Leicester Polytechnic,
Leicester



The Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*

Pet Shop Inquiry

In 1986, the FFPS herpetofauna programme will be looking at the sale of native reptiles and amphibians in pet shops. The vast majority of pet shops selling the commoner herpetofauna do so illegally, without the proper sale licence from the Department of the Environment.

The aim of the 1986 survey is to determine the percentage of pet shops that sell grass snakes, slow worms, frogs, toads and the smooth and palmate newts, the numbers they sell, and the locations of capture. A special form is being drawn up for people wishing to take part in the survey to complete. Local pet shops are listed in local 'Yellow Pages', and a brief visit, or telephone call to each, will quickly build up a picture of the local exploitation of these wild animals.

Smooth Snake Survey

New sites, old problems

This is the second year of a research programme that will look into the distribution and status of the endangered smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* in Britain. The project is grant aided by the Nature Conservancy Council, and aims to monitor as many of the remaining heathland sites in southern Britain as possible, in order to identify the existing populations of this species. In 1984 more than 50 individual snakes were located by the team of 15 fieldworkers carrying out the project. These fieldworkers are co-ordinated under the general habitat and species monitoring programme of the BHS Conservation Committee. Current estimates of the total remaining adult smooth snakes in the UK vary, but there may be as few as 2000 individuals, making this by far Britain's rarest indigenous reptile.

Many of the sites being surveyed are considerably threatened by a number of pressures, from fires to public recreation, and total habitat destruction by building developments. While some sites are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and others have a proposed SSSI status, the Nature Conservancy Council is stretched and heavily committed at present with the renotification of existing sites. This still leaves unscheduled sites very open to deliberate and accidental damage, and the more subtle changes caused by public pressure. All these factors add up to a steady stream of site losses and species decline, particularly in the county of Dorset. While some progress is being made in securing more lowland heath, and managing it in a suitable way, there is, it seems, a sad inevitability that much of even today's ragged fragments of the southern heathlands will be lost for good. This is why the field recording of smooth snakes, and indeed all heathland species is so important now, not just for the history books, but for the task of deciding what can be saved, and what is left to be destroyed. That is, of course, unless there is a miraculous change of legislation or policy.



Another heathland site is burnt.

The turtle that needs protection in Britain

From time to time leatherback turtles *Dermochelys coriacea* are seen in the waters around the British Isles; sometimes they are caught in fishing gear and less often they are stranded on beaches. The long-held assumption that these turtles, the largest known existing reptiles, are merely strays, is being challenged by Gabriel King, who has spent several months collecting information on turtle occurrences. His preliminary findings suggest that leatherbacks occur frequently in the Atlantic waters of the British Isles. There have been 75 reported occurrences since those listed up until late 1971 by Brongersma (1972); 33 of these off Ireland. Careful checking has revealed that there may be repetition in a few of the records, but it appears certain that 71 individual turtles were involved, the majority either captured accidentally in nets and observed at sea. More information is coming to light and the final numbers may be higher than this.

The belief that all turtles in British waters are on a one-way journey northwards, having been carried there by the North Atlantic Drift to end up eventually dying in arctic or subarctic waters is much open to question. It is difficult to believe that a healthy energetic turtle of 250-500 kg, reputed to be one of the world's most powerful swimmers, could be helplessly subject to drift. Leo Brongersma (1979) stated that the leatherback is a regular visitor to the waters of northern Europe during the summer months, returning to warmer southern waters at the onset of winter. It is quite probable that leatherbacks migrate northwards following the jellyfish brought by warm currents in summer; sightings have often been at times of large concentrations of jellyfish, the adult leatherback's main prey.

Perhaps one of the difficulties in accepting that these turtles are a part of the British fauna, albeit migratory, has been the belief that the sea is too cold, even in summer, to sustain a 'cold-blooded reptile'. However, recent research has shown that leatherbacks are quite able to live in temperate waters. They have well-developed thermoregulatory adaptations; vascular counter-current heat exchangers in their flippers; a thick fibrous oil-saturated layer beneath a thick insulating cartilaginous shell; and an ability to maintain a body temperature several degrees warmer than that of the environment, probably the large size favouring heat retention from muscular activity. In possessing these characteristics, leatherbacks are unlike other species of marine turtles.

Both Ireland and the UK have a commitment to protect these migratory turtles under the Berne Convention. In addition, they are protected in Irish territorial waters under the Irish Wildlife Act 1976.

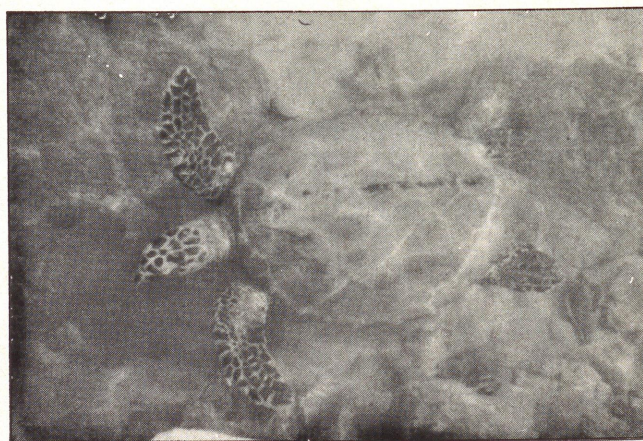
There is therefore very good reason to see this species added to the list of protected animals on schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

At present turtles that are caught in fishing gear are sometimes towed ashore to satisfy human curiosity. The practice subjects the turtle to unnecessary and often fatal trauma. In the summer of 1983 a leatherback was taken alive in a drift net off Quilty, County Clare, and was only released after Gabriel King's intervention; it had been suggested that it be killed as an act of kindness. Such well-meaning but misguided acts will continue to occur unless people are made aware that the leatherback is part of our regular migratory fauna. The two Governments should urgently implement measures to ensure that the turtles are indeed actively protected. They should make it known that they are taking their responsibilities seriously as their contribution to the conservation of the world's declining populations of turtles:

References

- Brongersma, L. 1972. *European Atlantic Turtles*. Zool., Verhand., Leiden nr. 121.
Brongersma, L. 1979. Marine turtles of the Eastern Atlantic Ocean. In *Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles* (Ed. K.A. Bjorndal, 1981).

This report has been adapted from an article which first appeared in Oryx Volume XVIII October 1984.



The Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas*, is a less frequent visitor than the loggerhead. It faces considerable problems in the Mediterranean, where nesting beaches are threatened.

Biogenetic Reserves

Council of Europe and Key Herpetofauna Projects

Biogenetic Reserve (BR) status, for wildlife sites in Europe, indicates a categorization of some of the most important areas for endangered fauna and flora.

Thanks to R. Honegger, the Council of Europe (CoE) recognized the particular vulnerability of herpetofauna in Europe by the inclusion of all species on the Berne Convention appendices.

The Conservation Committee of the Societas Europaea Herpetologica (SEHCC) produced a proposal to initiate a three-year programme, to fit the CoE biogenetic reserves requirement. Following the existing habitat proposal for Biogenetic Reserves, sites were singled out for the most important species reserves, and the SEHCC submitted a programme to CoE. The first part of this programme involved a conservation priority rating for all CoE herpetofauna. We were able to do this because of the detailed results from a previous Europe-wide conservation mapping exercise, combined with a review of literature and existing field records.

The resulting rating of species produced categories 1-10, from which for the BR programme we selected most of the 1 and some of the 2 rated species. The funding for the exercise was mainly from CoE and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with contributions from World Wildlife Fund UK and WWF Netherlands.

Once the rating and species selection was accepted, BR recommendations were based on three important factors. Firstly, that selection of priority would be based on species for which there was sufficient information already known to allow for meaningful reporting, and secondly, and more usually where SEHCC members were involved in field assessments to identify site potential within particular areas. Thirdly, a new approach was formulated, which defined key areas in Europe that contain assemblages of herpetofauna species, notably for those rated 2,3 and 4.

The species covered by the recommendations were as follows:

Alytes muletensis
Proteus anguinus
Bombina bombina
Pelobates (fuscus) insubricus
Rana latastei
Podarcis lilfordi
Podarcis pityusensis
Podarcis on island complexes
Gallotia (simmonyii) simmonyii
Vipera ursinii (rakosiensis)
Vipera lebetina
All marine turtles

The areas covered under species assemblages were NE Greece, Sardinia, the Balearic sub-islands, and the Cyclades.

One of the most important findings of the programme was the high degree of overlap of the selected sites and areas for other important fauna and flora for example the riverine forests of the Po Valley, and the endemic plants in the Balearics. The overlap included species such as the Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*, the Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and the Monk Seal *Monachus monachus*.

The implementation of these recommendations is awaited with concern, because of the overall scale of threats to sites and areas discovered during the work, notably on Sardinia.

However, we cannot fail to praise the CoE and its initiatives for nature conservation, in allowing the identification of particular areas of priority. We must hope that their political goodwill, will rub off as soon as possible on the European Economic Community (EEC).

Whereas the above three-year programme can be regarded as a step in the right direction, it is recognized that the vast majority of species and habitats await urgent conservation allocation if they are to survive.

SEHCC hopes to extend the programme to Portugal in spring 1985, but that and any future work will be entirely dependent on funding availability.

Keith Corbett (Chairman S.E.H. Conservation Committee)

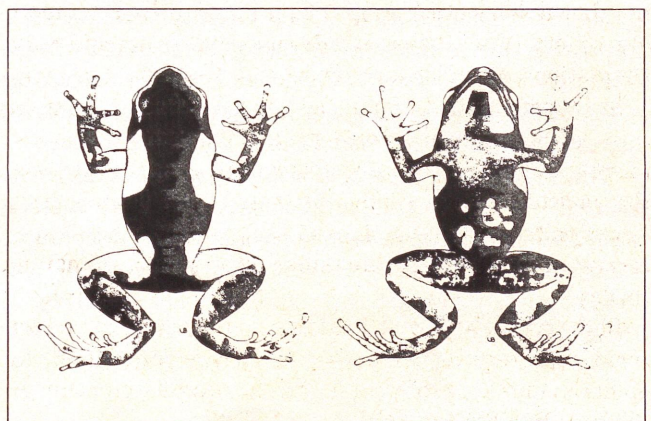


Amphibia-Reptilia

Publication of the Societas Europaea Herpetologica

Amphibia-Reptilia is published by the Societas Europaea Herpetologica (SEH), an international scientific society which takes as its aim the furthering of scientific research, participation in all problems regarding the conservation of amphibians, reptiles and their habitats, and the encouragement of closer collaboration between all European and non-European herpetologists. The Executive Council of the SEH consists at present of eight persons representing five European countries.

Amphibia-Reptilia is distributed free of charge to members of SEH. Membership is open to anybody interested in herpetology in its broadest sense, either as a professional or as an amateur. Membership for individuals is DM 75.—*, for institutions DM 145.—*. For further information on SEH or to apply for membership, please write to: Dr. Marinus S Hoogmoed, General Secretary SEH p/a Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie P.O. Box 9517 2300 RA LEIDEN The Netherlands



History of National Herptile Recording In Britain

Probably the earliest attempt to gather together distribution records of the British Herptiles was that by Taylor who, in 1948, published a paper on their distribution in the British Journal of Herpetology. This comprised of a set of maps on which presence or absence in vice-counties was plotted, and a list of two hundred and thirty seven references from which the maps were produced. This paper was revised and updated in 1963, again in the B.J.H. with a further set of maps. In this revision dots were used to plot localities where possible. The references were not published, but a full list was prepared and lodged with the Nature Conservancy in London and Edinburgh.

The records used to prepare these sets of maps came as field records from individual naturalists with whom Taylor corresponded and from a wide variety of published sources.

Taylor's 1948 maps were used as a basis for the distribution maps printed in the New Naturalist Book 'The British Amphibians and Reptiles' by M. Smith, published in 1951 (revised in 1954).

In 1966 the Biological Records Centre initiated, mainly at the instigation of the then Head Dr F.H. Perring, a reptile and amphibian recording scheme. This was intended to improve our knowledge of the distribution of these two groups and was based on the familiar pattern of records, presence in ten kilometre squares of the National Grid.

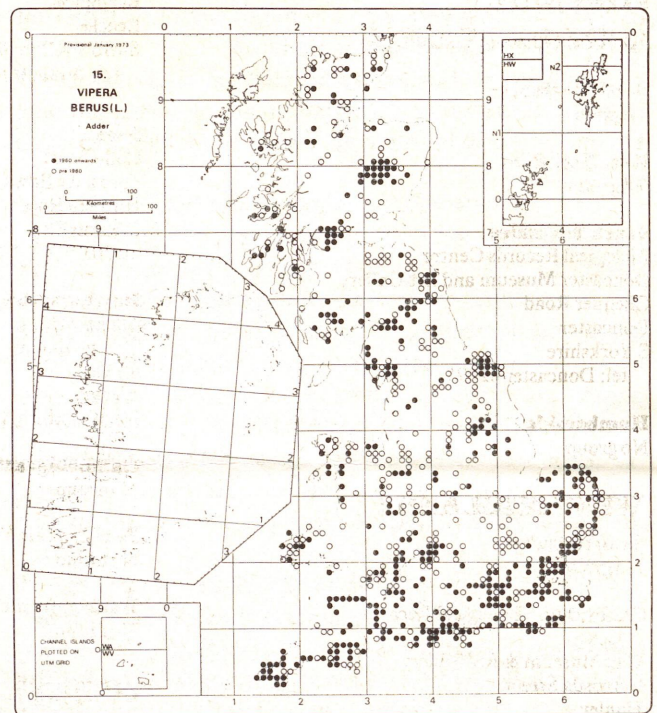
Rather inevitably a great deal more attention was paid to the common and easily identified species such as the common frog and common toad. A variety of more restricted schemes were run to record only these species, such as the Everyweek survey in 1968 (Common frog only) and Dr A.S.Cooke's breeding site survey (1968-71) which included both frog and toad.

Some other species did receive attention, notably the rare species i.e. the smooth snake, sand lizard and Natterjack toad. These three were surveyed in detail by members of the British Herpetological Society in the late 1960's. Dr I Spellerberg conducted a survey of the grass snake at the beginning of the 1970's.

Some species are still underrecorded as a glance at the distribution maps that I have compiled (1973, 1984) will show. The adder and the three newts stand out in this respect, though the position with the Great Crested Newt at least is improving due to the current survey being run by Mark Nicholson at Leicester Polytechnic. Earlier recording schemes (for most groups, not just herptile) concentrated merely on records of presence in ten kilometre squares.

There is clearly a great deal of information available that amateur recorders could easily collect. Such information would be of great use to anyone trying to study or conserve these animals. I hope that the next phase of herptile recording will produce a considerable increase of our knowledge of these two groups.

Henry Arnold (Biological Records Centre)



The adder is one of Britain's underrecorded herptiles, as the distribution map of records (1973) shows.

Provisional list of County Herptile recorders and other contacts

This list aims to identify the County groups concerned with recording and conservation of herpetofauna in Britain. It is hoped that all recorders will be identified, so that a complete list of groups and individuals can be revised and circulated before the end of the year. Please inform us of any mistakes or changes of address at the FFPS office.

NORTHERN

Northumberland
Tyne and Wear
Durham
Cleveland

Dave Race and John Durkin,
N.E.R.A.G.
15 St Andrew St
Darlington
Co Durham

NORTH WESTERN

Cumbria
No group

Lancashire
No group

Greater Manchester
No group

Merseyside
Mr R Paul
21 Moss Grove
Prenton
Wirral
Merseyside
tel: 051608 3427

Cheshire
No group

North West Biological Field Data
Bank
Merseyside County Museums
William Brown Street
Liverpool L3 8EN

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIRE

North Yorkshire

No group

West Yorkshire

No group

South Yorkshire

Biological Records Centre
Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery
Chequer Road
Doncaster
S Yorkshire
tel: Doncaster 62095

Humberside

No group

WEST MIDLANDS

Staffordshire

No group

Staffordshire Biological Records
Centre
City Museum & Art Gallery
Bethesda Street
Hanley
Stoke-on-Trent ST1 4HS
tel: Stoke-on-Trent 29611

West Midlands

Paul Bryce
96 Shenstone Avenue
Stourbridge
West Midlands

Warwickshire

No group

Hereford & Worcester

No group

EAST MIDLANDS

Derbyshire

No group

Nottinghamshire

No group

Lincolnshire

Maurice Johnson
City & County Museum
Lincoln

Leicestershire

Joan Mathias
Leicestershire Biological Records
Centre
96 New Walk
Leicester LE1 6TD
tel: Leicester 554100

Northamptonshire

No group

EASTERN

Norfolk

John Buckley
77 Janson Road
Shirley
Southampton
tel: 0703 782966

Suffolk

Mark Jones
6 Brookside Cottages
The Street
Brampton
Beccles
Suffolk NR34 8DZ
tel: Brampton 462

Essex

Colin Plant
Passmore Edwards Museum
Norman Road
London E.6.
tel: 01-534 4545

Hertfordshire

Michael Clark
Tewin Orchard
Tewin
Welwyn
Hertfordshire AL6 0LX

Cambridgeshire

No group

Bedfordshire

No group

Buckinghamshire

No group

GREATER LONDON

Tom Langton
FFPS
c/o Zoo Soc Lond
Regents Park
London NW1 4RY
tel: 01-586-0872

SOUTH WESTERN

Cornwall

W. J. Wright
Tremeneth
Shrubberies Hill
Porthleven
Helston
Cornwall TR13 9BJ

Devon

No group

Somerset

No group

Avon

No group

Wiltshire

Marion Browne
Latimer Lodge
West Kington
SN14 7JJ

Gloucestershire

Colin Twissel
174 Abbots End Rd
Brockworth
Gloucs
tel: Witcome 2469

Dorset

Dorset Environmental Records
Centre
c/o Dorset County Museum
High West Street
Dorchester
Dorset
tel: Dorchester 62735

SOUTH EASTERN

Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire Biol. Recording Scheme
Oxfordshire County Council
Dept of Museum Service
Oxfordshire County Museum
Woodstock
Oxford OX7 1SN
tel: Woodstock 811 456

Berkshire

No group

Hampshire

Hampshire Biological Records Centre
Hampshire County Museum Service
Chilcomb House
Chilcomb Lane, Bar End
Winchester
SO23 8RD
tel: Winchester 66242/3

Isle of Wight

Oliver Frazer
Mottistone Mill
Brightstone
PO30 4AW
tel: 0983 740318

Surrey

No group

Kent

Eric Philp
Kent Biological Archives &
Records Centre
c/o Natural History Section
Maidstone Museums & Art Gallery
St Faiths Street
Maidstone ME14 1LH.
tel: Maidstone 54497

West Sussex

No group

East Sussex

No group

SCOTLAND

Lothians

Mrs E.L. Hamilton
Woodridge
Ancrum Road
Dalkeith EH22 3AJ

Orkney

Chris Booth
34 High Street
Kirkwall

Dundee, Angus, E Perthshire, N Fife

Dundee Museum Biological Records
Centre
Dundee Museum
Albert Square
Dundee DD1 1DA
tel: Dundee 25492

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ulster Museum
Botanic Gardens
Belfast BT9 5AB
tel: Belfast 668251-5

WALES

Gwynedd

Elisabeth Pulford
School of Animal Biology
UCNW
Deinol Road
Bangor
Gwynedd LL57 2UW

Powys

FM Slater
Llysdinan Field Centre
Uwist
Newbridge on Wye
Llandridnod Wells
tel: 059789308

Gwent

No group

Dyfed

Ms S.K. Seery
WWNT
7 Market Street
Haverford West
Pembrokeshire
Dyfed

Pembrokeshire

Bernard Davies
Hanwell House
6 Plas-y-Gamil Road
Goodwick
Pembrokeshire

First Herpetofauna recorder's seminar

This event is being held in London, and is hosted jointly by FFPS and the Biological Records Centre. It is the first of what will hopefully become an established annual meeting, which aims to assist those with an interest in the field recording of herpetofauna on technical aspects of collecting information.

By bringing recorders from all over Britain to a central point, the meeting should also be able to identify and help with co-ordinating future surveys and conservation initiatives.

The seminar is to be held on Saturday 26th October, and the days programme will be split into a morning and afternoon session. In the morning there will be a number of short talks from people involved in field recording in different areas of Britain, which will explore such topics as the current techniques in handling, recording anatomical features, and the general distribution and status of amphibians and reptiles in each county.

The afternoon session will be made up of slightly longer presentations by experienced researchers and data gatherers, on such important general topics as the history of recording in Britain, the objectives of recording, recording forms, and possible new recording systems that could be applied in the UK.

One of the main objectives of the day will be to consider the conservation opportunities that the increasing interest in reptile and amphibian monitoring offers.

The seminar should bring together a wealth of widespread knowledge, and we are looking forward to an interesting and constructive day. The seminar is being held in the meeting rooms of the Zoological Society of London, and space is limited to two hundred people. Further details are available from: Meetings Secretary, at the FFPS office.

Diary

August 18th-23rd
SEH Herpetofauna Congress Prague.

*October 23
Dinosaurs, Myths and Misconceptions Dr A Charig

October 26th
FFPS/Biological Records Centre
Herpetofauna recorders seminar.

*November 19th
Marine Iguana's on the Galapagos Islands. Dr A. Laurie

*Denotes meetings of the British Herpetological Society. For details, write to: Membership Secretary, British Herpetological Society, c/o Zoo. Soc. Lond., London NW1 4RY.

The First World Congress of Herpetology is to be held at the University of Kent in 1989. The conference Director is Dr Ian Swingland, Ecology Research Group, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NX, UK.

Operation Tortoise. News Update

Operation Tortoise(OT) is the major, four-year project to research and conserve the rare and endangered species of tortoise. Co-ordinated by Dr Ian Swingland, University of Kent, and Chairman of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Tortoise Group, the work has already brought much new information to light over the last few months.

David Curl has recently returned from a five-month period in South Africa, and has brought back data on 11 species. John Greig and Bill Branch, also based in South Africa have rediscovered *Homopus bergeri*, in S.Namibia. The South American stages of OT are now well underway, with Paul Walker from the Zoology Department of Leeds University leaving for Peru.

Acknowledgements

The production of Herpetofauna News has been greatly assisted by Edward Wade (artwork).

Herpetofauna News

Available free to interested members of FFPS, or for a minimum donation of £5 for four copies/year to the FFPS Herpetofauna fund.