

# Contact Details:

## Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

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## What is Amphibian and Reptile Conservation?

Amphibian and Reptile conservation is a national charity that specialises in conserving our native amphibians and reptiles.

We have our main offices in Boscombe, Dorset.

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation owns, leases, or formally manages over 80 nature reserves across the UK, including 45 sites in Dorset.

**These sites are important areas for rare reptiles and amphibians.**

## How you can help

You can get involved with practical conservation work, surveying and monitoring, volunteer wardening, or becoming a friend of your local site.

Getting involved with training, habitat management techniques and rare species handling can provide excellent experience for a future career in conservation.

**For more information visit our website, or contact the office.**



**amphibian and reptile  
conservation**



# VOLUNTEER NEWS



*The gang at the London Zoo Reptile House* ▲

Photo: Karl Clennell / ARC Volunteer

## In this Edition:

- A day out to the zoo
- Volunteering and your career
- Summer Events

**amphibian and reptile**  
**conservation**



**Dorset | May 2010**

# The Summer is finally here!

**And so are the reptiles!**

**Welcome to a slightly belated spring edition of Volunteer News. Things have been even more hectic than normal here at Amphibian and Reptile Conservation for several reasons.**

Firstly the spring has been so stop-start that when it finally stopped stopping and started in full swing it took us all by surprise!!! The second being that for reasons out of our control the grand HCT/Froglife merger ground to a halt earlier this year. As a consequence we have had a lot of additional admin to sort out in the aftermath! You will notice of course that our name remains the same (to paraphrase a well known 70's rock band) and its all systems go for the spring and summer survey and event season.

In this edition we have exciting articles about several events that have been held this year including an outing to London Zoo as well as an article about the long term benefits you can gain from being a conservation volunteer. There is also an article about a course ARC ran to train staff and key volunteers in the art of how to

handle venomous snakes. While it is sometimes necessary to handle adders when they need to be rescued in the aftermath of heathland fires and other tricky situations I would not encourage anyone to get too close to these wonderful animals that are best viewed from a safe distance.

Due to the fact that management activities stop during the summer because of fire risks I have included a list of events (such as the New Forest Show) that ARC will be attending over the next few months. If any of you wish to come along and lend a hand, even for just a few hours, then please let me know.

**Thanks again to you all.**

*Rowland Griffin*

Dorset Reserves Community Officer





▲ *The remote Newton Gullely site in October 09 when volunteer tasks began (left) and in March 10 after numerous tasks (right).*

Photos: Rowland Griffin ARC



## Dorset Views

### **Rowland Griffin**

*Dorset Reserves Community Officer*

**Yet again we have had a huge amount of success on the tasks since the beginning of the year and I would like to thank all you hard working volunteers that came out and helped.**

John Simmonds and his crew kept plugging away at Ferndown Common. This year they have concentrated their efforts on tackling the arduous task of clearing a horrendously dense stand of gorse that was obstructing fire access from the Wimborne Road car park. Above and beyond the call of duty – Thanks guys!

Noon Hill saw a continuation of clearing the pine scrub from the top of the hill. Stuart Handyside's band of volunteers were joined by Sarah Lynes who fancied a change from Parley Common and came along to show off her chainsaw

skills. It turns out that Sarah is pretty handy with a chainsaw. I must remember not to get on the wrong side of her!

Another success was the string of tasks at Newton Gullely (see pictures). You may remember me rambling on about the sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) bank we held a couple of tasks on in the last issue. Well, as you can see from the photos the bank is now clear and in fact the tasks were so successful that thanks to the efforts of Amy Schuring and Stuart we moved on to the plateau behind the bank (on the right of the photos). Luckily there was still a good covering of heather underneath the pine saplings which is now prime reptile habitat.

It has amazed me how much you volunteers can get done when you get stuck in! **Thanks to you all!**

# We're Going to the Zoo...

**Jon Crewe**

ARC Volunteer Task Leader

**On 15th March a select group met bright and early at the ARC offices in Christchurch Rd ready for the Volunteer's trip to London Zoo. Rowland had dug into the budget and found enough for ARC to say a generous thank you to regular helpers. We piled onto the minibus and set off.**

With easy going through the traffic, (no problem with the route – “Left hand lane Gary – LEFT HAND LANE!!!!”) we arrived early. Rowland lined us up at the gate and announced that we had to be at the Reptile House at 2 and until then we should play nicely! Some of us went straight into the reptile house and pressed noses against the glass, while others had a quick look at things with fur and feathers.

At 2 (ish!) the highlight of the trip arrived; the curator, Ian Stephen, had generously offered us a behind the scenes tour. This was fascinating, with Ian telling us about the thinking behind

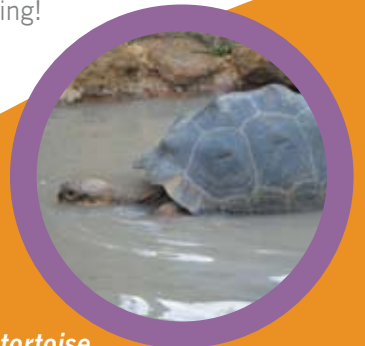
the new Galapagos tortoise (*Chelonoidis nigra*) enclosure and taking us behind the display cases in the reptile house to see some amazing reptiles. *Rhyncophis boulengeri*, the so –called rhinoceros snake, wrapped round Rowland, who despite his unusually deep pockets was forced to hand it back. The rare Boelen's pythons (*Morelia boeleni*) were a first, the Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*) sinister, and the talk very interesting. Another of the highlights was being shown a number of different caecilian species, all of which are highly secretive amphibians that are rarely seen by humans in the wild. The tour ended with the mountain chicken (*Leptodactylus fallax*) an enormous edible frog with a disastrous history. Many thanks, Ian.

We finished up in a pub, of course. Good food, good company and an easy drive back on quiet roads, (much to my relief as the most novice driver). Bit surreal doing the M25 at 63 mph flat out, but relaxing!



**The bizarre looking rhinoceros snake (*Rhyncophis boulengeri*) drinks from water droplets that form on its pointy nose!**

Photo: Jon Crewe  
ARC Volunteer Task Leader



**Galapagos tortoise (*Chelonoidis nigra*) taking a bath!**

Photo: Laura Graham ARC Volunteer

# Summer Events – ARC needs your help!!!!

**With the summer/dry season upon us practical management tasks have ceased until conditions are less favourable for the spread of fires so there are no volunteer tasks to advertise.**

However, we still need your help! Over the course of the summer Amphibian and Reptile Conservation will be attending some of the big public shows in the region. Our aim is to raise awareness of what we as an

organisation do and also the plight of our native reptile and amphibians. Manning our brand new and brightly coloured stand at these shows often requires several people to be on duty at a time to talk to members of the public and introduce them to our native herpetofauna. There will always be a member of ARC staff on hand and full training will be given.

**Below are the dates that we need your help for;**

<i>Date and time</i>	<i>What's happening</i>	<i>Where</i>
30th May 2010	BBC Springwatch	Southampton Common
27th, 28th 29th July 2010	New Forest Show	New Park near Brockenhurst
28th August 2010	Oak Fair	Stock Gaylard Estate, Sturminster Newton
4th, 5th September 2010	Dorset County Show	Dorchester

If you wish to get involved with this side of our work and come and help out at events please contact:

Rowland Griffin on **01202 391319** or email **[rowland.griffin@arc-trust.org](mailto:rowland.griffin@arc-trust.org)**.



# Event Review: Adder Handling Course: April 2010

**Ben Limburn**

ARC volunteer and undergraduate in Ecology and Wildlife Conservation Bsc (Hons) at Bournemouth University.

**Presented by ARC's resident viper boffin, none other than Rowland Griffin (Dorset Reserves Community Officer), the 'Adder Handling Course' provided a unique opportunity to gain an insight into the risky business of handling venomous snakes.**

Rowland began by describing the different types of venom, and their potentially devastating (and horrific!) effects on the human body. A few gory photos acted as a stark reminder of the danger and potency of venomous snake bites. Aided by a series of images showing 'how not to handle snakes', he also discussed the use of snake handling equipment, and focused on the importance of handling reptiles in a safe and controlled manor.

Recognition of the behavioural reactions of any snake is essential to ensure the animal is handled without injury or distress to either party.

With the help of Rowland's pet Western hognose snake (*Heterodon nasicus*) as an 'adder substitute', the group were each in turn able to handle the animal with use of a snake hook.

The emphasis of this course was placed on Britain's only venomous snake, the adder (*Vipera berus*). The day finished with a handling demonstration and release of an adder found on East Ramsdown, a local ARC nature reserve.

The skills gained on this training day have been of great benefit to those involved in situations where translocation of adders may be necessary; such as from heathland fires, or urban environments in which snakes have come into conflict with people. It may also be necessary to handle adders when recording information for scientific study. Rowland gave a very interesting, well presented talk and practical experience which developed our knowledge, confidence in handling, and respect for these creatures.



▲ **The very handsome adder from East Ramsdown.** Photo: Chris Dresh ARC

For information on future ARC training days and events, contact Rowland Griffin: Tel: 01202 391319  
Email: rowland.griffin@arc-trust.org

▼ **ARC staff and volunteers practicing handling an 'adder' in the form of a Western hognose snake.**

Photo: Chris Dresh ARC

# The Future of Volunteering

## A Journey from Volunteer to Reserve Manager!

**Gary Powell**

*Dorset Reserves Manager*

**Firstly I would like to say a big thank you to all the ARC volunteers for their dedication and hard work over the last winter season. As can be seen from the photos on page 2 we can make a massive difference and create some top quality herp habitat. All the tasks this year have been of a very high quality, and I really do consider the volunteers to be part of our overall site management strategy.**

I am particularly pleased to see our Community project succeeding due to my own background as a volunteer. I first volunteered for the HCT (as we were then) in the 2001 winter season, initially for just a day a week when I

could fit it in between looking after my young son and studying Evolution at the Open University. I then managed to secure a six month post for the following winter followed by four more full years with the Field team, which as you can all imagine was a bit of a slog! Both physically and mentally it's tough work and anyone who keeps coming back for more has my full respect!

Due to a mixture of being in the right place at the right time and sheer perseverance I was eventually made Dorset Reserves Manager, a post I have now held for over four years. I often mention to people looking for a way in to conservation that volunteering is perhaps the key element in getting your 'foot in the door' of an organisation. I suspect that this is often viewed as a throwaway line – I am living proof that it can, and does, work!



▲  
**ARC staff and volunteers  
searching for adders on East Ramsdown.**

Photo: Chris Dresh ARC