

## Contact Details:

### Bournemouth office:

655a Christchurch Road,  
Boscombe,  
Bournemouth,  
Dorset BH1 4AP

T: 01202 391319

E: [enquiries@arc-trust.org](mailto:enquiries@arc-trust.org)

### Peterborough office:

2a Flag Business Exchange,  
Vicarage Farm Road,  
Fengate,  
Peterborough PE1 5TX

T: 01733 558844

[www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org)

## 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 and in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire.

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

**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.

# VOLUNTEER NEWS



*Smooth snake (Coronella austriaca) on Duneats Hill in October 2009 ▲*

*Photo: Rowland Griffin / ARC*

## In this Edition:

- Spring task dates
- Reptile Surveying
- Living Water Project

**amphibian and reptile conservation** 

**Dorset | December 09**



**amphibian and reptile conservation** 

# A Warm Wintery Welcome to the December 09 Edition of 'Volunteer News'.



**Have a very Herpy Christmas!**

*Illustrated by Anna Weeks*

[www.myspace.com/anna\\_traume](http://www.myspace.com/anna_traume)



**It's been a busy season so far here in Dorset with lots of successful tasks on our reserves. Not only have we had the normal turnout of regular volunteers coming out to help on tasks, we have also seen a number of new faces showing up (not least of all myself). So I would like to thank everyone for making me feel so at home.**

We have lots of interesting articles for you in this edition; including updates from the reserves here in Dorset, and upcoming plans for next year's herptile survey season (can the spring come quickly enough!). We also have the first of hopefully many updates from other ARC volunteer groups around the

country, in this issue we take an exciting look at a new community project based in London and Glasgow.

Many of you will have noticed strange goings on at a couple of our urban heathland reserves, namely fencing being installed to allow grazing of cattle. In this issue we also explore the reasons behind this management technique. Last but by no means least we have those all important task dates for early next year.

**See you on a heath near you in 2010.**

*Rowland Griffin*

Dorset Reserves Community Officer

**It May Be Winter But The Survey Season Approaches Fast, Thank Goodness!!**

## **Ben Limburn**

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

For those of you with reptile surveying experience, you'll be very familiar with the task of 'find the refugia' and thinking to yourself "I'm sure it was here last time I visited". For those of you not so familiar with surveying for reptiles I hear you ask, "What the dickens are refugia?!"

Also known as 'cover-boards' or 'tins', refugia are a readily used tool to survey for the presence of reptiles and their continuous monitoring at a given site. Refugia are laid down to encourage reptiles to bask on top or underneath in order to aid identification or capture. Refugia usually take the form of metal corrugated iron sheets, but other materials include plyboard, bitumen corrugated sheet roofing and patches of roofing felt. If you haven't got the memory of an elephant, or it is your first visit to a site, using a map to locate the refugia as you trek across miles of land can be a mentally and

physically challenging exercise!

As part of my work experience placement with ARC this summer, I have developed the use of handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) units that make the task of locating refugia a lot easier; much like the way you would use a car sat-nav to find an address. My preliminary trials have proven the system to be very accurate, with the aim of using this technology to carry out repeated reptile surveys over a designated transect line on heathland nature reserves in 2010. This would involve recording reptile sightings at set refugia points and within the distance between them.

Surveying for reptiles is essential for monitoring populations and assessing the effectiveness of conservation methods. They are also a great practical experience that volunteers can get take part in.

---

If you'd like to get involved in this project, or the National Reptile and Amphibian Recording Scheme (NARRS), please contact **Rowland Griffin** on:

**[rowland.griffin@arc-trust.org](mailto:rowland.griffin@arc-trust.org) or 01202 391319** for further details.



**Left: Ben conducting a reptile survey this summer.**



**Right: A male slow worm (Anguis fragilis) basks on a refugia.**

*Photos: Liz Lowther / Wildlife Photographer*



## Dorset Views

**Rowland Griffin**

ARC Dorset Community Officer

**The autumn season has seen lots of very successful tasks being carried out on our reserves all over Dorset. As well as visiting old favourites such as the Parley and Ferndown Commons, the Dorset Volunteer Team have also paid some much needed attention to a few reserves that we don't get to see that often.**

In October we had two tasks at Newton Gulley led by Stuart Handyside and Amy Schuring, a little known reserve that is tucked away behind an oilfield on the Purbeck Coast and currently overrun with pine saplings. Our volunteer tasks focussed on removing pine from a bank that will eventually provide excellent habitat for the local sand lizard population. In fact on our first visit two juvenile sand lizards were spotted very close to where we were working. Later on in the season the bank also received the attention of two Duke of Edinburgh teams working under the watchful eye of Amy again, this time wearing her Urban

Heath Partnership badge, so it hopefully won't take too much more effort to get this bank finished in the spring tasks.

Ferndown tasks saw John Simmonds and co continue to clear a bank that was started earlier in the year again this has quickly become very good reptile habitat. A very hard working group of volunteers turned up to help Sarah Lynes with the task on Parley and were able to clear a significant stand of gorse that made a path difficult to walk through. In addition, this work will increase basking opportunities for reptiles come next spring. Great Ovens saw another continuation when a small band of volunteers removed a sizeable area of pine saplings following on from large scale tree removal work that our full-time field team carried out earlier in the year.

Thanks to everyone who came out and helped on a task this autumn. On the next page you will find the next batch of volunteer task dates for the New Year. So keep those Wednesdays free and if you can't then we'll see you at the weekends!



*Task on Gt. Ovens that removed pine saplings after larger trees had previously been cleared by the field team.*

◀ Before      After ▶

*Photos: Rowland Griffin / ARC.*



Date and time	What's happening	Where	Additional info
20/01/10	Practical Task	East Holme	Meet at Holme Lane SY 914 855
23/01/10	Practical Task	Parley Common	Meet at Lone Pine Drive SZ 086 991
27/01/10	Practical task	Ferndown Common	Meet at Wimborne Road Car Park SU 065 007
03/02/10	Practical task	Lytchett	Meet at Shore Lane SY 979 924
06/02/10	Practical task	Town Common	Meet at Sandy Lane SZ 146 949
10/02/10	Practical task	Ferndown Common	Meet at Wimborne Road Car Park SU 065 007
14/02/10	Practical task	Great Ovens	Meet at Morden Rd Car Park SY923 903
17/02/10	Practical Task	Noon Hill	Meet at Noon Hill Drive SU 099 088
20/02/10	Practical Task	Lions Hill	Meet at Grosvenor Close SU 107 042
24/02/10	Practical Task	Ferndown Common	Meet at Wimborne Road Car Park SU 065 007
27/02/10	Practical Task	Parley Common	Meet at Lone Pine Drive SZ 086 991
03/03/10	Practical Task	Newton Gulley	Meet in lay-by opposite Nordon Park & Ride SY 955 829
06/03/10	Practical Task	SW Hyde/Trigon	Meet opposite Wareham Forest Tourist Park SY 888 915
10/03/10	Practical Task	Newton Gulley	Meet in lay-by opposite Nordon Park & Ride SY 955 829

If you would like to join in with a task or get more details and directions to the sites please contact:

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

All tools, equipment and biscuits provided. Wear suitable clothing and footwear and bring own lunch. **Tasks usually run from 10am until 3pm.**

## The Living Water Project Gives a Helping Hand to Urban Herpetofauna

**Alex Draper & Eilidh Spence**  
ARC Living Water Project Officers

**Amphibian and Reptile Conservation has secured £49,980 from the Grantscape Inner London Nature Conservation Fund to create new, or enhance existing, standing water and associated terrestrial habitats across seven parks and greenspaces in the London Borough of Lambeth.**

Led by South London Living Water Project Officer Alex Draper, work has already finished restoring one pond and creating another new pond at Palace Road Nature Garden in Streatham Hill. The project will continue until October 2010 and will create at least nine new shallow ponds or marshy areas across the borough.

The project involves volunteers in practical work and trains them to help future management and monitoring of the new ponds. "These works will directly benefit amphibians but also create opportunities for reptiles, invertebrates, birds, plants and bats" says Alex. Many of the ponds will be created using a new type of liner. Bentonite geosynthetic clay liners are able to seal themselves after small

punctures a useful trait for ponds in urban areas.

Following the huge success in London, ARC has recently extended the Living Water Project to Scotland. Project Officer Eilidh Spence explains more about her plans for taking the project to Scotland and improving Glasgow's ponds.

"Our main objectives are to create new ponds and manage existing habitats to develop a coherent network of ponds that will enhance biodiversity in Glasgow. Community involvement will be a strong theme and we're aiming to educate local people about habitat maintenance and the importance of these fragile ecosystems".

"I believe that this is an incredibly important project in Glasgow, as ponds are ideal natural classrooms for children to view the amazing changes that animals like frogs and toads go through as they metamorphose into adults".

Glasgow Living Waters is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Biffawards.

To find out more or volunteer with the project contact Alex on: [alex.draper@arc-trust.org](mailto:alex.draper@arc-trust.org) and Eilidh on: [eilidh.spence@arc-trust.org](mailto:eilidh.spence@arc-trust.org)



**Left: Old liners are removed pond from Streatham Hill, London. Right: New self-sealing pond liners being installed.**

Photo credits Alex Draper / ARC.

## Bringing Hooves Back to the Heaths

**Gary Clarke** Dorset Urban Heaths Grazing Partnership (DUHGP)

**Heathlands in and around the SE Dorset conurbation are being targeted for habitat improvement under a Natural England-funded Environmental Stewardship scheme.**

Dorset's urban heaths are remnants of a formerly extensive tract stretching from the New Forest to the Purbecks. They have been disconnected from traditional agricultural use for many decades, leading to deterioration in habitat quality. Now, the various bodies which manage these vital habitats have pooled resources made available under the scheme to form the Dorset Urban Heaths Grazing Partnership (DUHGP) in order to re-establish carefully controlled grazing by domestic livestock.

The partnership's Grazing Manager, Gary Clarke, said, "Grazing is recognised as a key management technique for maintaining and improving heathland habitat quality, and is widely used across the country, including in urban areas".

Stock fencing is currently being installed on our Parley Common and Dunyeats Hill reserves and gates are being provided wherever existing footpaths enter the compartment, so walkers (including those with dogs) will not be prevented from following their usual routes.

▶ **Shetland Cattle helping volunteers with habitat maintenance.**



▶ **Shetland cattle grazing on Canford Heath.**



Photos: Gary Clarke / DUHGP

Grazing, a traditional form of heathland management which is already used on heaths throughout Dorset, is being reintroduced in order to help restore this rare habitat back to ideal condition. Shetland cattle are a very hardy native breed which can thrive by browsing on brambles, gorse and other scrub, and so will greatly assist us in managing the habitat for the benefit of the rare reptiles, birds, insects and plants which live here.

For more information please contact Gary Clarke via email at: [gary.clarke@rspb.org.uk](mailto:gary.clarke@rspb.org.uk)