

**Gwent Amphibian and Reptile Group Meeting
Tuesday 10th June 2008**

DRAFT MINUTES



A short meeting was held prior to a GARG event organised by Sarah Simons as part of Wales Biodiversity Week – a talk on slow worms by Rhys Jones.

1. ATTENDANCE

Matt Harris	(Chair)
Melanie Sutherland	(Secretary)
Sarah Simons	(Cttee member)
Rebecca Johnson	(Cttee member)
Rebecca East	(Cttee member)
Rhys Jones	

Apologies

Abbey Lee	(Cttee member)
Sue Price	
Katherine Cooper	
Kate Stinchcombe	
Maggie Iles	
Geri Thomas	

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting were briefly discussed and accepted.

MH reported that the NARRS training circulation had not been done and apologised. Sarah had invited Rhys to give a talk this evening.

Sarah had checked through the GCN distribution maps for Torfaen and Blaenau-Gwent. There were a few anomalies, which need to be rectified. Rebecca East had noticed a mistake in the Torfaen records, as there was one that should be in Wrexham. Mel had not had a chance to do this for Caerphilly as yet. Some surveys have been undertaken in Torfaen.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Mel reported that there are now 26 paid up members of the group and the committee is made up of 6 members. Mel reported that Abbey Lee is currently the committee member covering Monmouthshire and would still like to be involved with the group, but is not sure how much time she will be able to give as she is pregnant with triplets. Sue Price has informed Mel by email that the Friends of Ruperra volunteer group have successfully set up a new Toad Patrol in Draethen. Sarah asked for photos of this for the Capita website. Mel agreed to check with Sue. Matt suggested better organisation of the patrols for next year, which has been difficult this year due to adverse weather.

4. HALT POND PROJECT

Mel agreed to send out a reminder to the group about volunteer surveys of the site.

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5. TRELLECH REPTILE MONITORING PROJECT

Matt reported that a few visits to monitor the Forestry Commission sites near Trellech have been carried out this year. Thanks were paid to the volunteers that have been surveying so far. Matt has not seen much improvement in reptile numbers on the sites as previously thought with only one grass snake, a few adders and common lizards recorded. The site will continue to evolve with reptiles colonising as the habitat becomes more suitable over the next 10 years. Ponds have not yet been surveyed for amphibians. Visits are currently once a month rather than every 2 weeks. On the last visit no adders were seen at all. Matt is confident that he has found the location of the main hibernaculae, which is pretty much where they are first seen at the beginning of the season in Feb/March and not anywhere else on site. The site was visited this month, although not much was seen, there was still the odd common lizard basking. Transect maps are available. Volunteers that have visited the site and walked the transect with Matt are given the go ahead to carry out surveys themselves. Let Mel know what dates you would like to survey and then an email can be sent round to find out if anyone else would like to assist. This ongoing survey is a priority for 2009.

6. GREAT CRESTED NEWT SURVEYS AND TRAINING

Training for Gwent Wildlife Trust didn't go ahead as hoped this year due to a delay in organisation and being unable to book Dorothy Wright to lead. It is planned to arrange a training event early in next year's survey season, probably April/May. GWT, Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly staff and volunteers have shown interest so far. Suitable venues are required with adequate indoor facilities at a low cost and easy access to great crested newt ponds. Some suggestions were made, including Usk Primary School in Monmouthshire, St Fagan's in Cardiff or Parc Penallta or Halt Pond/Rudry Village Hall in Caerphilly. It was agreed that Caerphilly provides a fairly central location. Matt suggested organising some site visits in August to check for GCN larvae, which was agreed. GCN surveys in 2009 should focus on Blaenau-Gwent and Monmouthshire, where there is a lack of records.

Matt reported that the Usk Environment Group have arranged an environmental day to visit a farm to survey ponds on 23 June 2008. Matt will probably attend and circulate information.

Mel agreed to circulate a reminder email to the group to check GCN records.

7. NARRS

Rebecca Johnson reported that she has managed to survey her allocated site this year in Cardiff with records for frogs and toads. Mel and Maggie Iles have not managed to do the survey yet.

8. WEBSITE

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Rebecca Johnson agreed to make the online recording form more obvious for the Year of the Frog 2008. Sarah agreed to send more photos from Capita. All records need to be submitted to Rebecca Johnson.

NB Since the meeting Rebecca has left SEWBREC for a new job in Oxford and will no longer be involved with the group. Lindsay Bamforth is the SEWBREC contact for the website. A new records collator is required for the group.

9. EVENTS

Matt reported that the Go Wild! event is taking place this Saturday, which he will be attending. Some animals have been caught to take along to the event, but the leaflet stock has diminished. Matt agreed to contact HCT and Froglife to obtain more publicity information for events. Sarah Simons volunteers to assist at the event. Mel offered to sort out some group publicity and membership forms to use with the website address. Matt also reported that the group have been invited to the Newport Wetlands Reserve Open Day again this year.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Matt reported that at least one GPS was required for the group, mainly for the Trellech monitoring project. Rebecca East reported that the basic one was very accurate – its black and white with 3 m accuracy, 8 figure GR, and costs £70. It's an additional £30 for the data cable. Software is extra cost or free to download from the Internet. Rhys Jones agreed to send the details to Matt. Group agreed to purchase of GPS.

_ Meeting Ends _

Kris Roberts and Leyton Williams – Davies set up for Rhys' talk.