

Clyde Amphibian and Reptile Group Meeting Minutes 15.12.2010

Present:

Anna Muir (co-Chair)

John Sweeney (Secretary)

Ewan Kane (Membership Secretary)

Eilidh Spence

Barbara Mable

Marianne Fox

1. ARG Developments

The Esme Fairbairn Trust funding, which allowed all ARGs to have insurance cover for surveys, has now expired. ARC have asked local groups to contribute £250 towards keeping the insurance cover available for all. The e-mail was received by John in late November, with the contribution requested by 10th December. This deadline has now passed, but the group would be happy to contribute if the money is available in the bank account (see Item 5: Finances).

John reminded the members present that this personal accident covers any member completing a Volunteer Working Agreement and depositing the document with the CARG secretary.

- John to contact David Orchard to explain the delay, find out the deadline for contributions and clarify whether we are still covered.
- Anna to report back any updates on this matter from the Herpetological Workers Meeting (HWM).

2. Upcoming Events and Training in 2011

- The ARG-UK Herpetological Workers Meeting is taking place on the 29th and 30th January 2011 in Cardiff. Anna is presenting her research at the conference, details can be found on the ARG-UK website.
- Froglife will be holding a training day with Buglife on the 27th April 2011 to encourage combined surveying for amphibians and invertebrates.
- Froglife aim to hold survey training courses in Glasgow and then North Lanarkshire in 2011. Glasgow University students will be targeted for the Glasgow course. Early April or early June is most likely to fit around exams. Training would take place in the Graham Kerr/ Boyd Orr before taking a minibus to a site to practise techniques.
 - CARG to provide extra bodies to help with training.
 - Anna to enquire about use of University minibuses.
 - Eilidh and John to take out trained students to carry out some surveys after the event (with help from other CARG members).
 - For each trainee, a training pack will be produced as part of the course fee including ID guides etc. This pack will also contain membership forms for CARG, the price of which will be added to the course fee. All trainees can then be added to the mailing list so they can take part in organised surveys and be covered by ARG-UK insurance.
 - Eilidh to report back to group once details have been confirmed.

3. Reports

Area Reports

Only one area report was received from Renfrewshire, where John reported that he knew of no targeted amphibian surveying in 2010. No information was received on survey work in Glasgow – other than for the Living Water Project, or the monitoring of the GCN population in East Dunbartonshire.

Living Water Project

Eilidh reported that this year Froglife carried out four spawn surveys and six night surveys which over 30 volunteers at project sites in Glasgow. In addition to this over 1200 volunteers have collectively given more than 500 hours to the projects events and practical conservation work in Glasgow. Three new members of staff have recently been appointed and the Living Waters project will expand into North Lanarkshire in 2011. Sites have been selected by staff members from N.L council and the aim is to begin pond creation work at the start of next year, depending on the weather.

Chatelherault Amphibian Survey Training Workshop: 14th April 2010

A total of ten potential volunteer surveyors attended the event, held at Chatelherault Country Park. The workshop began with an indoor presentation by John and Maggie concentrating on identification and survey methods. There were also two outdoor practical sessions to practice recording amphibians at several ponds within the park, during which frog, toad and palmate newt (adults and larvae) were recorded. A mentoring scheme was proposed to the volunteers, whereby an experienced CARG surveyor would accompany them on their first few survey outings. This suggestion was considered by all to be a good idea and the mentoring will be taken forward in spring 2011.

BIG Lottery Funding

A progress report on the BIG Lottery Fund Application was requested.

- Ewan to clarify status of application with Petrina.

Autumn Reptile Surveys

John carried out two reptile surveys in the Aberfoyle/Loch Ard area during the Autumn, with the help of 3 volunteers. Three common lizards and two slow worms were recorded across the two visits. All of these were found on or under the artificial refugia (tins and felt mats) set out beforehand. These refugia will be left out over the winter and spring surveys undertaken in 2011.

Consultations

John was approached 5 times for consultations on sites in West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire. He was only able to give information for one of the sites he was questioned about due to lack of a centralised database. The consulters were referred to the Glasgow Museums Biological Record Centre.

- Need for CARG database (see Item 7: Other business).

4. Communications

Website

It was noted that Petrina may shortly have to give up her role as webmaster. Anna offered to take on this responsibility should Petrina have to give it up. In order to make website updates more frequent and for less pressure to be placed on a single webmaster, it was concluded that it would be useful to have:

- a) A blog for event reports that could be accessed by contributors (note: care to be taken not to name sites where there are great crested newts).
 - b) An area on the site where upcoming events could be added directly by those organising them
- Petrina to report back on website management and potential for adding a blog to the site.

Mailing List

Concern was raised that members may be missing from the general mailing list. It was clarified that there are currently 47 members currently on the mailing list and the member who had not been receiving e-mails was added to the mailing list. It was also suggested and agreed that it would be useful to have a "key members" mailing list, including the committee plus active general members. This core mailing list could be used as a way to communicate matters arising between meetings, deal with matters more rapidly and ensure full information dissemination.

- John to create key members mailing list and forward to all on the list for their use.
- Key members to report back to John if they know of others who should be on the list.

5. Finances

The balance of the CARG bank account was unknown within the group. John informed us that two of the three signatories within the account were no longer active within the group. The signatories need to be changed urgently so membership money can be deposited and the balance accessed.

- John to contact Maggie to find out who the two other signatories are.
- John to contact signatories and arrange signing over of authority.
- John to join Maggie as signatory on the account, along with a third member if required.

6. Planning Ahead

- John will be repeating the reptile survey at Aberfoyle in April/ May of 2011.
- Froglife will be running a number of surveys in 2011, details to be confirmed nearer the time.
- Organisers to submit details of all events to CARG website once confirmed.

7. Other Business

CARG database

It would be very useful to hold a centralised database of amphibian and reptile data that could be accessed when data was requested.

- John to get in touch with Paul Tatner from the University of the West of Scotland to enquire whether this could be created by a work placement student (in the same way as the website was created last year).
- Ewan to double check that a working space could be found for them at the Renfrewshire Offices.

OPAL grant scheme.

There is potential for applying to this fund run by the Heritage Lottery. Grants are for £5000 and can be used for training events

- Eilidh to check background to fund and whether projects in Scotland are eligible.

Potential for a Scottish Herp Workers Meeting

Anna enquired as to whether members thought there would be interest in an Amphibian and Reptile day meeting of talks and workshops, to be held in Scotland. It was generally thought that this would be useful and that there would be attendance both from within Scotland and the North of England if it was held in the Central belt.

- Anna to discuss with Edinburgh Zoo, as a potential location for the meeting.
- Members to ruminate about for future meetings.

Tuppence a Toad

Eilidh informed the group about the Tuppence a Toad Campaign being run by Froglife. There are very few toad crossings registered in Scotland and a plea was put out for information on areas that could use a toad crossing patrol to aid safe migration of toads to their breeding sites.

- All members to report any toad road crossing sites that they know about to Eilidh and to keep an eye out this season for crossings.
- Eilidh to write a paragraph on this campaign for the CARG website

Combining meetings of CARG and the Glasgow University Herpetology Group

To encourage cross participation and minimise travel for attendees, it was agreed that in the future CARG meetings would be held immediately after Glasgow University Herpetology Group Seminars. **The next CARG meeting is planned for the week beginning the 21st February**, with GU Herp Group talks at 6pm and CARG meeting at 7pm.

- Anna to send out doodle poll to key members to finalise date.
- Anna to get pricing for janitorial cover to use the Graham Kerr for meetings.

8. Presentation

Anna gave a brief presentation of her research, her findings so far and the importance of having conservation action plans at population rather than species level.