

CARG Minutes Autumn 2014

20th November 2014

Network Rail Glasgow Office

Present

Brian Beck (BB), Richard Weddle (RW), Liam Templeton (LT), John Sweeney (JJS), Peter Minting (PM), Erik Paterson (EP), John Fowbert (JF).

Apologies

Chris McInerney, Susie Coyle, Dave Garner, Ruth Carruthers, James Stead, Chris Cathrine, Roger Downie, Ewan Kane, Maggie Ferguson, Eilidh Malcolm & Rennie Mason.

Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

Community Service Volunteer (CSV) funding – EP suggested CARG might be able secure small amounts of money from this source (£200?) to cover the cost of events.

Amphibians in Drains – PM has not yet contacted Glasgow City Council but since the last CARG meeting has held workshops with Perth and Kinross Council and Angus Council. Both councils appeared receptive to the idea of installing ladders in drains, if done with the approval of the roads departments. PM to contact Glasgow City Council before next meeting.

Reptile survey training at Whitelee – EP led volunteers on a site visit to Whitelee with the aim of completing some survey training. Although only one reptile (a common lizard) was recorded from the tins lifted, it was a successful event.

Network Rail funding - BB reported that he had started looking into some funding possibilities for Froglife but that to date nothing has been submitted. Froglife have asked if they can survey on Network Rail sites. Brian reiterated that it would be best if an application for a project came from an independent charity such as ARC or Froglife. Brian also offered a team from Network Rail if anyone has the need of a team to help with a clean-up/rubbish removal. General discussion concluded that sites for habitat work or monitoring on Network Rail land are tricky to locate – most operational sites are a no-go and many disused sites with wildlife potential have been sold. Carnoustie sidings suggested as a possible site for monitoring (but outside CARG area).

Kilpatrick Hills – The group had been asked by Eilidh (ES) (Forestry Commission Scotland) to comment on the draft Forest design Plan for the Kilpatrick Hills. Comments on the Plan were submitted verbally to ES by JJS via the comments area within the information leaflet produced by FCS. The proposal is for a more open and mixed woodland than the present conifer blocks it will replace. This was considered likely to have a neutral or slightly beneficial effect on the herptiles of the Kilpatricks and no concern was expressed.

News / updates

ARG UK – EP reminded everyone that the date of the next Herp Workers Meeting (HWM) is 7-8 February in Newcastle. See ARG UK or ARC websites, or #HWM2015 for details. PM also announced

that the recording page of the ARG UK website (the Record Pool website; www.recordpool.org.uk), which is a joint venture between ARG UK and ARC, is being updated to include live maps. The new version of the website should go live in the next couple of weeks.

ARC – PM reported that since the last CARG meeting ARC had held a Symposium on Conserving Scotland's Amphibians and Reptiles at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh (RBGE) and that this had been well-attended by ARGs, including CARG.

Amphibians and Reptiles of Scotland (ARoS) book – PM gave a short presentation on the ARoS book. CARG member Chris McInerney has been instrumental in driving progress with this project. The book will be a joint publication by ARC and Glasgow University. It will be available as a free pdf or as a hard copy for £15. Some financial support for this project has been secured but Chris and PM are still looking for funds to help cover the costs (largely the design and printing costs). If anyone has photographs of Scottish amphibians and reptiles which they would like to be included (with acknowledgment) please contact PM or Chris. John thanked PM for his presentation on the book and it was agreed that CARG would delay a decision about whether to financially support the project using CARG funds until more members were present.

Reports

Amphibians in Drains (AiD)– John gave a presentation on the AiD work undertaken by CARG members during the winter/early spring. This included monitoring drains at a number of sites where concern has been raised that amphibians may be falling into drains. John has identified some of the worst sites where action should be taken, such as installing devices to prevent amphibians falling in or allow them to escape. EP also reported that there are some sites in East Kilbride which could benefit from this kind of work. PM reported that ARC has now purchased Enkamat for use by ARGs in Scotland, one roll of which (5m x 1m) has been provided to John for use by CARG (according to studies by RAVON in the Netherlands, Enkamat can be used to construct effective amphibian ladders).

Big Glasgow Frog Spawn Count – EP has now received data from a total of 33 ponds, with up to 500 clumps reported from a single pond.

Lindsayfield (East Kilbride) Amphibians in Drains monitoring/rescue. John read out Ewan Kane's (EK) report in his absence. EK reported a big drop in the numbers of amphibians falling into the drains here in 2014. EK suggested (EP agreed) that this reduction is probably wholly due to ongoing development of the Lindsayfield area which has resulted in significant population declines due to habitat loss.

Cleddans ponds – Brian reported on his 2014 amphibian monitoring of the ponds in the Cleddans and Cochno Burn area (Clydebank area). Again lots of spawn was been recorded, primarily common frog and common toad spawn. Fly tipping is a problem at at least one of the spawning sites.

Lochwinnoch Bioblitz – Ewan Kane attended Lochwinnoch in May of this year to deliver a torchlight survey event for their bioblitz, the event was well attended for the second year in a row CARG has been involved.

Loch Lomond adders – John reported that Chris McInerny has continued his monitoring of the reptile populations on the east side of Loch Lomond, which appear to be faring well.

Amphibian survey training, Chatelherault – EP provided an amphibian survey training event at Chatelherault in the spring which 14 people attended.

Planning ahead

Habitat - EP asked if anyone knew of ponds in the North Lanarkshire area which needed restoring, with a view to new projects. PM replied that the RSPB has a plan to create ponds at the Baron's Haugh RSPB reserve near Motherwell, which might benefit from CARG volunteer assistance. PM also mentioned the possibility of pond restoration/creation at a site near Quarter which might be an enjoyable project for volunteers. RW reported that a friend's group for Ravenswood Marsh LNR may be interested in volunteer assistance for pond restoration. Brian suggested a clean-up operation would be useful at the fly-tipped site near Cleddans, which is used by spawning amphibians. EP to email CARG to scope interest for these options. John emphasized that there was a need to firm up a plan for a project for CARG members to do.

Training – PM mentioned that ARC will be running a number of training events in spring 2015 which CARG members will be welcome to attend. This will include a free amphibian training event at Gartcosh. If CARG members attend, this will allow them to be licensed to carry out basic GCN surveying. ARC has a great crested newt (GCN) survey 2015 project (launched at ARC Symposium in October), where help is needed to search 1km grid squares for GCNs. EP and Liam from CARG have signed up to survey some squares. PM to send more details to EP, including date of training event. RW mentioned that the Eglinton Country Park rangers have expressed an interest in receiving training on herps and that other ranger services may be interested in this.

Communications

EP appealed for members to post more items on the CARG Facebook page, to keep it lively. John asked if it was necessary to retain the CARG website as well as the Facebook page, as the majority of news now seems to go on FB pages. It was agreed that it was useful to retain it; EP said that, for example, it was sometimes better to put large or more detailed items on the CARG website.

AOB

There was a brief discussion around possible projects that could be funded through the ARG-UK 100% fund. JJS proposed to canvas the whole group for ideas and PM offered to send to JJS an application form for the 100% fund

Date of next meeting

5th February 2014 (at a NEW location t.b.c, as Brian announced that Network Rail are in the process of moving offices but still within Glasgow).

Thanks again to Brian Beck and Network Rail for providing a venue for CARG meetings