



AGREED MINUTES

PRE-MEETING CAERPHILLY COMMON SITE VISIT

Andy Wilkinson, Melanie Dodd, Abbey Lee-Sanders, Lindsay Bamforth, Craig Leitch, Colin Williams and Peter Sturgess attended the site visit before the meeting at 6:30pm. The site visit involved a walk over part of the common to check the reptile tins and to discuss practical conservation tasks, including pond restoration, pond creation and the creation of reptile hibernacula (specifically for adders). The reptile tin checks were successful with 3 species (Slow worm, Common lizard and Adder) being recorded despite the weather conditions.

1. ATTENDANCE

- 1.1 Andy Wilkinson (stand-in Chair), Melanie Dodd, (Secretary), Abbey Lee-Sanders (Cttee member), Lindsay Bamforth, Craig Leitch, Colin Williams
- 1.2 *Apologies received from: Matt Harris, Sue Price, Peter Sturgess, Sinead Lynch (Treasurer), Aislinn Blackmore, Sarah Simons (Cttee member), Claire Pooley (Cttee member), Paul Davies, Stuart Craxford, Rebecca East (Cttee member), Liz Stewart*

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

- 2.1 Minutes were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE LAST MEETING

- Action 1 – Mel circulated the group's recording sheet by email prior to this meeting. A question was posed about the use of Microsoft Excel – have all members got access to this program? Records in Excel can be easily transferred to the SEWBReC database. Agreed to send an email to members to seek views and comments on the format, other issues and information to include, and also to reiterate basic level of data required (who, what, where and when).
- Action 3 – ongoing for all group members to send in records.
- Action 4 (Newport toad patrols) – no report available as both Matt and Sinead not present. Andy suggested that there should be one central coordinator for toad patrols, to let people know when the migration starts. It needs to be better coordinated. Emails need to go out early on to let whole group know and then may be able to get additional volunteers involved. Need to ensure everyone has high-visibility jackets. Agreed to put this topic on agenda for Jan/Feb 2011 meeting to agree way forward before the next season starts.
- Action 5 – ongoing – Matt to organise a regional meeting to discuss toad patrolling with other ARGs and possibly Froglife.
- Action 6 – ongoing – to be done for next meeting in Jan/Feb 2011
- Action 7 – complete (meeting held on Caerphilly Common)
- Action 8 – no report available as Sarah Simons not present (volunteers for Greenmeadow Community Farm event)
- Action 9 – unknown (volunteers for Llancaiach Fawr event)

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- Action 10 – unknown (volunteers for pond dipping activity in Merthyr Tydfil)
- Action 11 – display boards were purchased and have been used at events.
- Action 12 – ongoing (all records of newly created ponds should be sent to Mel)
- Action 13 – ongoing, will be undertaken next survey season
- Action 14 – Andy to check whether Matt's contact details were passed on to wildlife photographer and will send them if not already done.

Action 1: Mel to email group members to request views and comments on the recording form.

Action 2: Mel to include Toad Patrols as an agenda item for Jan/Feb 2011 meeting.

Action 3: Andy to check if Matt Harris' details have been passed on to wildlife photographer and if not, to ensure that this is done.

4. SURVEYS, MONITORING AND TRAINING

- 4.1 Mel reported on the Cefn Fforest Eco-Park reptile survey and the results so far. Slow worms and Common lizards have been found on site. A few of the reptile tins have gone missing. It was agreed that in future the numbers painted on each tin should be put on the underside to deter vandals /thieves.
- 4.2 Training needs were discussed. Mel reported on the NARRS and the methodology. Need to know demand from members for training. Need to know what grid squares are in the GARG area so that members can identify the nearest to them and possibly come forward to take it on.

Action 4: Mel to liaise with Matt Harris to produce a list and a map of NARRS grid square locations in the GARG area.

Action 5: Mel to circulate the NARRS grid squares location map and list to members, ascertain demand for NARRS training and to request volunteers to come forward to take on new grid squares.

- 4.3 Also discussed the group's involvement in education, particularly attending school events/talks. Main constraint to attending school events is time and commitment; taking time off work during the week, setting a precedent by attending some but not others; do we ask for a donation to the group? Lots of members are already working with schools in their day jobs, so promotion and raising awareness of reptiles and amphibians is already happening. Maybe this group should be encouraging schools to get in touch with their local ranger, Wildlife Trust, Education for Sustainable Development Officer or Biodiversity Officer. Potential involvement with Girl Guides/Brownies or Scout/Cubs groups in evenings. Suggested that toad patrol organisers should contact their local schools to see if any children are interested in participating with their parents. It was agreed that the locations of toad patrols in the area should be mapped so that they could be matched up to local groups such as school, youth clubs or Girl Guides. Need to talk about this in more detail at the

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regional toad patrols meeting. Toad patrols involve late nights and so children need to be over 11 (secondary school age). It is also a Health & Safety issue.

Action 6: Mel to liaise with Matt Harris and SEWBRc to produce a map of toad patrol locations in the GARG area and distribute to members.

- 4.4 Mel suggested that the group could look into running an education project with schools next year rather than attending individual school events. For example, schools could be encouraged to undertake amphibian and/or reptile surveys in their grounds or nearby open space, which would result in records being submitted to the group. This would be a more worthwhile project, as it would mean that the group receive records, e.g. tadpole survey. An identification and survey leaflet could be produced and published by the group for schools to use. This needs to be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

Action 7: Education project idea to be discussed in full at the next meeting in Jan/Feb 2010 – Mel to include item on agenda.

Action 8: All members to send ideas and examples for a reptile and amphibian Education Project for the spring/summer of 2011 to Mel before next meeting.

- 4.5 Known toad patrols are: Draethen to Michaelstone-y-fedw Road – Sue Price and Friends of Ruperra volunteers; Newport (Celtic Manor) – Matt Harris, Mr & Mrs Pimblett, Newport CC; Wentwood, Newport – Abbey to check location with Matt Harris and set up a patrol; Bargoed bypass (Caerphilly) – a patrol is needed (Mel, Andy and Maggie Iles); Llanbradach bypass (Caerphilly) – needs to be checked out and a patrol set up if required; and Cwmbargoed Disposal Point, Gelligaer Common – a patrol is needed.
- 4.6 Andy suggested that the proposed works on Caerphilly Common could include a day creating reptile hibernation sites, which would be training for members. Reptile hibernacula creation on Caerphilly Common was discussed and it was agreed that a practical task day would be organised to create new hibernacula and as training for members. This would be arranged to involve Matt Harris and Peter Sturgess, and could include a site visit to Parc Penallta to see the reptile hibernacula that were created as part of Rhys Jones' new TV series. Andy agreed to organise this.

Action 9: Andy to organise a practical “how to create reptile hibernacula” training event for members on Caerphilly Common.

5. EVENTS

- 5.1 Andy reported that Sarah Simons had sent him some feedback on the Pontypool reptile walk, which went well. Children found slow worms and a grass snake during the walk around the park and the group received a £50.00 donation. It was a worthwhile event to attend as the group got paid.

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- 5.2 GARG attended the Caerphilly Biodiversity Roadshow event in Caerphilly town shopping centre on Friday 11th June 2010, which was really successful, introducing a new target audience to wildlife, including the live animals. The aim of the roadshow was to show a new audience what wildlife can be found in their area and to encourage them to take a Parks and Gardens leaflet with activities for children and lots of ID pictures. A “*10 Top Tips for Wildlife Gardening*” sheet was also produced to hand out.
- 5.3 Also attended Newport Wetlands Reserve and Magor Marsh Reserve open days, the Go Wild! event in Bryn Bach Park.
- 5.4 There was a general discussion about what GARG’s aim is in attending events. There is a need to be clear on this. The group’s aim at the moment seems to be introducing visitors to live animals and allaying fears about reptiles, but is this all we want? Where do we want visitors to go next? Do we want them to take something/a key message away with them or do something practical when they get back home, e.g. create a pond? Is our aim to recruit new members? Need to encourage visitors to explore, record, create, etc. Ideas for merchandise included pencils with the GARG website on, pond nets to purchase and a group leaflet to give out. The leaflet would be key, as this could be given out to all visitors to take away with them, rather than having lots of sheets and leaving it to chance. Leaflet needs to be glossy, colourful, exciting and interesting to all ages.
- 5.5 Education and events ideas need to be discussed in full at next meeting in readiness for the event season next year.

Action 10: Mel to include an agenda item on Education and Events for the next meeting; to include a discussion on the publication of a glossy leaflet for distribution at events.

6. PROJECTS

- 6.1 It was agreed to progress with the planned works on Caerphilly Common, including 2 practical days over the winter.
- 6.2 It was also agreed to survey Llantrisant Common for reptiles using some of the tins not needed on Caerphilly Common as a precursor to other practical conservation work. Colin Williams is a new member along with his daughter, who is really keen on reptiles. It was agreed that this would be a worthwhile project to progress in the RCT area. Colin agreed to email some dates to Mel and this would then be agreed with the group committee. It would be a Saturday and would involve a walkover the site to identify suitable locations for tins, lunch and then an afternoon session to lay the tins out. A supply of tins is required, Andy volunteered to cut them up if the group would purchase them. Mel to email and ask for the agreement of the committee to purchase tins for surveys.

Action 11: Colin to email Mel a list of Saturday dates in late Feb / early March 2011 to lay reptile tins at Llantrisant Common.

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7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 No other business was raised.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8.1 To be confirmed, possibly in Monmouthshire (Abbey to confirm with Mel).

Action 12: Abbey to confirm date and venue in Monmouthshire with Mel.