

TOAD PATROLS

FACTSHEET



Worcestershire

Why do toads need patrols?



Populations of common toads are declining and because of this they are now included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Toads

are rather picky about their breeding grounds – and will return to the same ponds for generations. In the right conditions, entire colonies of toads will move from hibernation sites to their breeding ponds over the course of a few days. They move on damp mild nights from February to April and in some populations this can mean over 1000 toads moving over a very short period of time. In Worcestershire, most movement tends to be in the first 2 weeks of March but this is dependent on the weather.

One of the greatest hazards to this movement of toads is the traffic on our roads. Many hibernating sites are now cut off from the breeding ponds by a network of roads – and this danger can decimate toad numbers across the country.

What can I do to help?

You can look out for toad crossings, monitor local toad populations or organise a group of volunteers to help patrol your toad population at their most vulnerable time of year.

What if I've located a toad crossing?



The easiest way to help toads is to look for their breeding ponds. These are usually larger than average garden ponds, sheltered and well established. Locating one will help identify where toad populations are and whether a toad patrol is needed in your area. If you locate a toad crossing it's important to register it via www.froglife.org - this will allow monitoring of locations and populations. Froglife hold the national migration database and can provide insurance for toad patrols.

How do I set up a toad patrol?

Effective and efficient toad patrols can be undertaken with a minimum of help – but it's great to get whole communities involved! However, a regular time commitment for a short period of time is essential.

Once you've identified a site, you need to register it with www.froglife.org. Then contact the highways authority of your local council as you'll need to dig a few roadside holes. (This can be done on private land just beyond the highway if it's not possible on the verge). You'll need to invest in some fine meshed chicken wire netting (13mm holes), canes and buckets, as well as high visibility clothing to ensure you stay as safe as the toads!



Firstly you'll need to dig the wire into the verge by the side of the road for the length of the crossing - this prevents toads from reaching the road. The wire needs to be set about 50cm back from the road (although it may need to be further away on a busy road), on the side of the road that the toads start to cross! It should be about 50cm high, supported by canes, with an 'L' shape at the bottom - the foot of the 'L' facing towards the toads and covered with soil. At either end of the wire fence and about every 10m in between, you'll need to dig holes deep enough to fit the buckets you've bought. Sink the buckets into the holes so their rim is flush with the surface. During the night toads reach the fence and walk along the line of it until they fall into the buckets. Someone needs to check the buckets every morning to pick them up, cross the road and release the toads on the other side.



If there are enough volunteers with enough time, it would be really useful if toad numbers are counted. This information, along with a grid reference for the location, should then be sent to your local biological records centre.

Don't forget to remove the wire and buckets, and fill in the holes, once the migration has ended. Once breeding has taken place the toads will be on the move again – and you don't want to wire stopping them from reaching safety and returning to the road! If you're able to, once the initial migration has ended, why not move the fence to the other side of the road?

Where can I find volunteers to help?

You may be able to find enough people in your street, village or neighbourhood. Try putting up a couple of posters in local shops or pubs. Your local volunteer centre may help – or you could even try approaching your local newspaper. If you're struggling to find enough people visit www.froglife.org for details of your local Amphibian and Reptile Group.

Anything else I need to know?

Think about your safety!

- Always wear bright, reflective clothing so that you're easily seen by motorists.
- Don't cross a road in poor visibility, on blind bends or hills, at accident blackspots or with fast flowing traffic. If toad crossings are at any of these sites, make sure you cross in a safe place and walk back to the crossing to release the toads.
- Consider taking out insurance to cover you and your volunteers – try the BTCV (www.btcv.org)

For more information about frogs and toads, visit www.froglife.org

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust is the county's leading charity, working to conserve and restore wildlife and wild places. If you'd like further information or would like to join, please visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk or call 01905 754919.

Information about toad populations in Worcestershire should be sent to: Worcestershire Biological Records Centre, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcestershire, WR3 8SZ

Photos: GH Green