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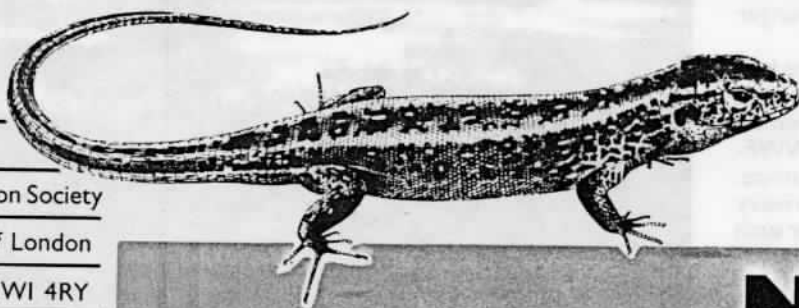
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NEWS

Salamander tunnels in Amherst, Massachusetts, USA

In November 1987 two tunnels were installed in Massachusetts, USA at a migratory crossing for spotted salamanders *Ambystoma maculatum*. After studying several New England sites to find the best for installation of a pilot tunnel project, FFPS's Boston office decided on Henry Street, Amherst, Massachusetts.

There are estimated to be approximately 400 salamanders in this local population. Spotted salamanders are not considered to be endangered or threatened, although this particular population would have been considerably reduced by very heavy traffic if conservation measures had not been taken. It is worth noting that salamander numbers have been dropping off throughout New England. Known reasons for this decline are habitat destruction, collecting and traffic fatalities, plus there is suspicion, as yet not definitely substantiated, that acid rain is a detrimental factor.

Amherst is an excellent location for a pilot project for a variety of reasons. It has an ongoing salamander conservation project under the direction of devoted local naturalist Robert Winston. Amherst has an enlightened human population very receptive to innovative conservation projects. Several conservation groups are active in the area and willing participants in the project. Finally and most important, all municipal officials are very enthusiastic and have been helpful with every phase of the effort.

The project should be fascinating to conservationists for at least three major reasons. It is being conducted in the midst of human development and not at the usual isolated natural site. Because of this, co-operation is required between government, conservationists, local citizens and land owners. Accomplishing this co-operation successfully will be a big step forward in making wildlife conservation compatible with human development. Secondly, it has drawn sympathetic public attention to the plight of reptiles and amphibians. Traditionally these animals have been



Workmen installing the tunnel at Amherst.
(PHOTO: D. Pierson)

overlooked, while popular species, including most birds and mammals, have received most of the favourable attention. Finally, it highlights the problem of roadkills.

It has been estimated that over one million wild animals are killed on roadways daily in the United States. This factor can be said to be like the weather - everyone complains, but no one does anything about it. Amphibians and reptiles may suffer more than any other group of species, for roads are often built across their ancient migratory routes. We suspect that often, particularly in the case of slow moving turtles, that the damage to a local population is insidious. Over a period of time, egg-bearing females are destroyed and the population declines through attrition.

It is the intention of the FFPS to ensure that safe crossings for all wildlife become an integral component of roadway planning and design. Identification of animal crossing sites can be made easily during the planning stage and the roads can be designed and constructed accordingly. Simultaneously

we can take remedial steps to correct existing problems as we are beginning to do in Great Britain and the United States. This is by no means an easy task, but it must be undertaken.

The Amherst tunnels have been built through a co-operative effort, with FFPS working in partnership with the Massachusetts Audubon Society and ACO Polymer Products Incorporated. Massachusetts Audubon Society has provided much of the financial support as well as technical support through its naturalist, Tom Tynning, and University of Massachusetts graduate student in herpetology, Scott Jackson. ACO Polymer donated both tunnels and paid for their shipping from Ohio.

The Henry Street site is a major thoroughfare through a sparse residential district. The salamander habitat is on a wooded slope on the north side of the street. Each year, on the first rainy night of early spring, the salamanders move in a front about 120 metres wide to breeding ponds approximately 100 metres away.

continued on page 2

New UK Fund for Herpetofauna

The Vincent Wildlife Trust, in conjunction with the FFPS, has established a support fund for reptile and amphibian conservation. Grants will normally not exceed £500.

The fund will support conservation of reptiles and amphibians in the British Isles, and also work being carried out by British conservationists in Europe. It is hoped that the fund will be used to support the formation of local and regional conservation groups. Although projects involving practical conservation work and law enforcement will receive priority, surveys, education, and other areas will also be eligible. The purchase of field equipment, publication costs and the costs of regional meetings can be considered. Applications should be submitted by 1 January, 1 April, 1 July or 1 October.

Application forms from:
FFPS (Herpetological Support Fund)
c/o Zoological Society of London
Regent's Park
London NW1 4RY

pressures from an increasing non government organization (NGO) presence. It is always possible that the Bonn Convention (which is concerned with conservation of migratory species) could be used to pursue turtle conservation, but this too is an unproven and even younger instrument.

An equally disturbing factor is the lack of liaison and hence co-ordination of the separate research and conservation initiatives from UNEP, EEC, WWF-International, and the Council of Europe. This may be partly due to the rivalry between Brussels and Strasbourg over such matters, despite the EEC's own ratification of the Berne Convention.

The needs:

1. Maintain political pressures within Europe to ensure improved conservation.
2. Seek co-ordination of existing and future projects.
3. Carry out nesting beach surveys in southern Turkey and Cyprus.
- 4 Identify and protect reported over-wintering sites.

It is encouraging to report that the last of these needs may be undertaken in January 1988, providing enough resources can be found to harness the expertise and enthusiasm of British divers to survey over-wintering turtles.

Keith F. Corbett, Chairman Societas Europaea Herpetologica Conservation Committee.

Toads on Roads Campaign - Hungary

Hungary is probably the most recent country to join the Toads on Roads Campaign. The first efforts were organized in 1987 with the help of the Elte Nature Conservation Club and the National Authority for Environmental Protection and Nature Conservation. In April 1987, 15 people spent their spare time saving frogs and toads in the Borszony Mountains in northern Hungary. Two sites were selected. The Parassapuszta site is a border station between Czechoslovakia and Hungary. An increased number of people (c. 1,000 a day) travel across the border from Hungary when the skiing season finishes at the end of March. They travel to Slovat, where there is skiing until early April, using the international road, which divides the forest and the amphibian breeding site. Unfortunately this coincides with the toad migration. Two years ago efforts were made by the Ministry of Traffic to alleviate the problem in Parassapuszta by way of diversion fences and ditches. Unfortunately however in 1987 the fences, which directed the animals towards culverts, were neglected and the ditches along the road filled with rubbish, leaves and branches enabling the amphibians to clamber up to the road.

At Parassapuszta toads and frogs were rescued during the night, the most active period being between 9pm and 11pm. The male : female ratio increased from 3 : 1 to 5 : 1 as the week progressed. The ratio at



Amphibian breeding site at Parrassapuszta. (PHOTO: M Puky)

Kiralyret was only 2 : 1 where toad length was found to be significantly bigger. The number of individual unpaired females migrating decreased sharply at both sites as time passed. At Parassapuszta there was a total amphibian community of nearly 1,500 amphibians of 8 species.

At the second site at Kiralyret, a popular tourist centre, one threat to the amphibian populations is people rather than heavy traffic. There are frequent sightings of people deliberately harming and killing amphibians. Because of the tourist activity at Kiralyret, it was necessary to be active during the day, both transporting and counting the toads, but also advising the tourists on how best to keep the disturbance to a minimum. Most of the people approached were found to be co-operative. At night, toads were collected, measured and sexed, placed in buckets and taken to the other side of the road. At Kiralyret a total of 940 common toads were transported to breeding sites/ponds in the area.

The species monitored consisted of: common toad, *Bufo bufo*; spade-foot toad, *Pelobates fuscus*; agile frog, *Rana dalmatina*; European tree frog, *Hyla arborea*; fire bellied toad, *Bombina orientalis*; green toad, *Bufo viridis*; edible frog, *Rana esculenta*; and moor frog, *Rana arvalis*. The first recorded occurrence of *Pelobates fuscus* at these sites was made by our group.

It is hoped that a similar, but more wide-ranging international campaign can be organized for next year. Anyone interested in participating should contact:

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Habitat threats to New Zealand herpetofauna

Moko, the quarterly newsletter published by the New Zealand Herpetological Society, carries information on the island's herpetofauna, including aspects of conservation issues.

Derrick Rowe from Auckland reports in the latest edition on current threats to the Kaimaumau swamp, 25 km north of Kaitaia, and the resident populations of Northland green gecko *Naultinus elegans grayi*. This unique peatland habitat is to be drained and the peat treated to extract kauri gum resin.

During the daytime the geckos usually live in *Mingimingi*, a 'waist-high' shrub. At night they may be observed in *Kanuka*, which grows a lot higher and may be a refuge as the ground conditions are probably too wet. The habitat has dense stands of bracken, and ridges and rises with thicker vegetation also used by geckos. Bulldozing of the habitat is planned, though it is unclear when it is to go ahead.

During 1987, members of the New Zealand Herpetological Society helped to monitor four reserve areas in the Auckland area and to 'salvage' geckos from sites being destroyed. The Department of Conservation for New Zealand is to be approached regarding suitable sites, which currently appear uncolonised, for gecko release.

Reptile and amphibian matters at the sixth biennial meeting of the Conference of the CITES Parties, Ottawa, Canada, July 1987

Herpetological issues at the meeting included sea turtles, crocodiles, lizards, snakes and frogs. Sea turtle trade was discussed largely as a result of two new reports, one prepared on contract by the CITES Secretariat on the exploitation of green and hawksbill turtles worldwide, and the other from TRAFFIC Japan, concerning Japan's sea turtle trade from 1970 - 1986.

The report from Japan estimated that during the last 16 years more than 600,000 hawksbill turtles had been killed for trade. The report also estimated that at present 28,000 turtles each year are killed to meet Japan's current import levels of 30 tonnes of hawksbill shell.

During the Conference, France's