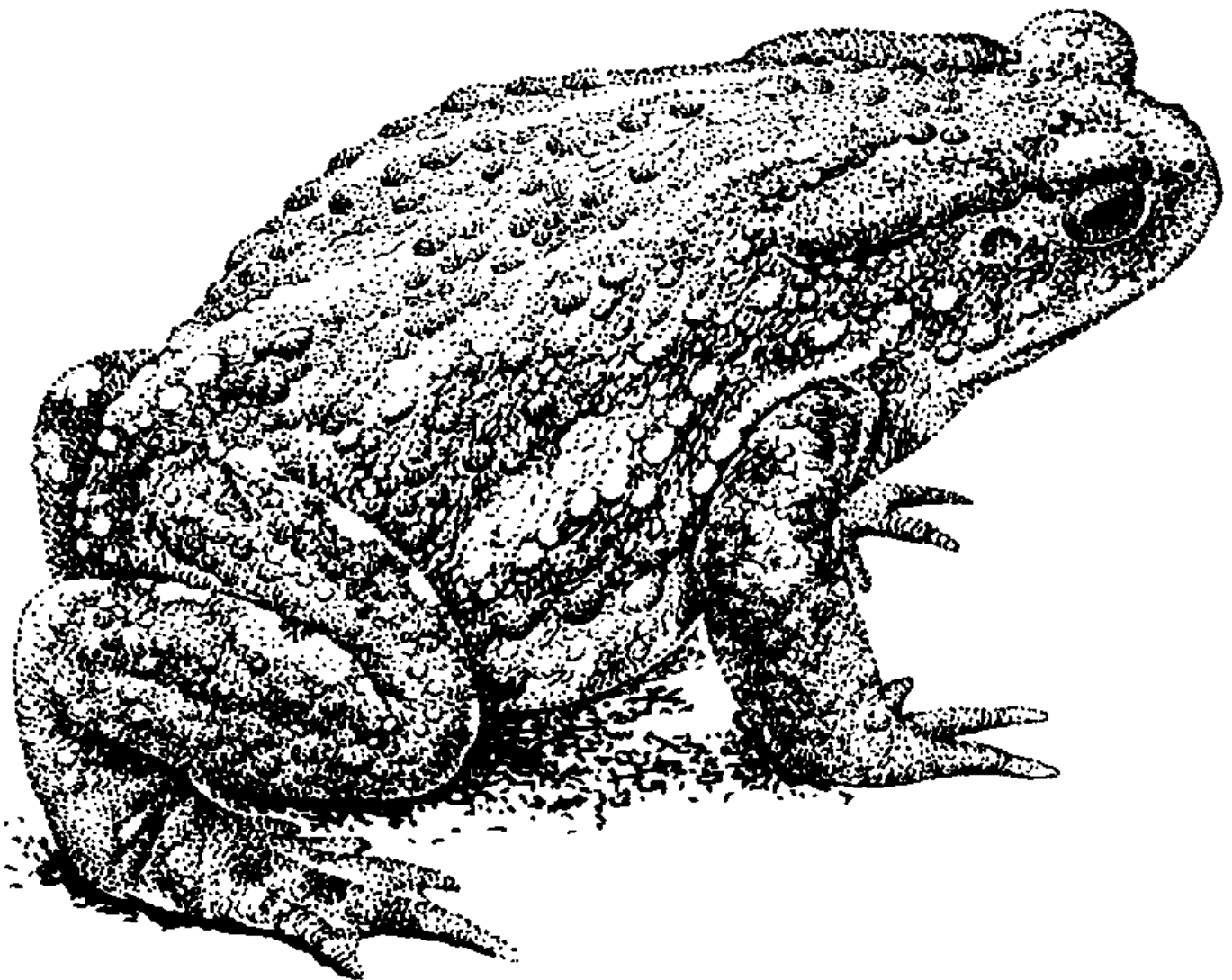


Tees Valley Biodiversity
Public Postcard Survey

Amphibians and Reptiles 2007

Survey results



**The Tees Valley
Biodiversity Partnership**

Thank you for taking part in the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership's reptile and amphibian postcard survey.

We've had a tremendous response with 101 people submitting a total of 407 records, resulting in 239 individual records of species distribution.

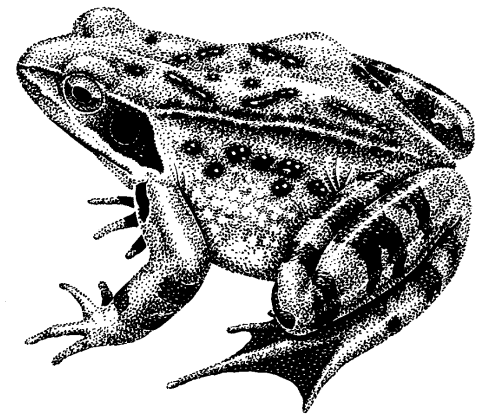
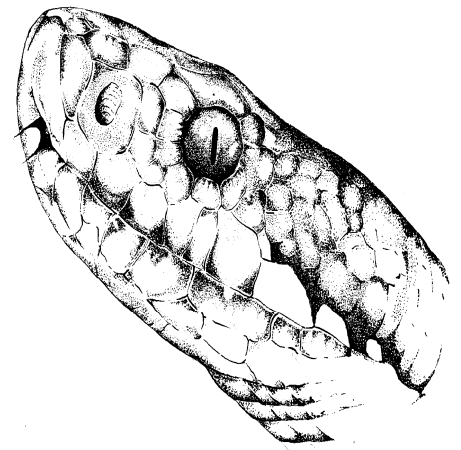
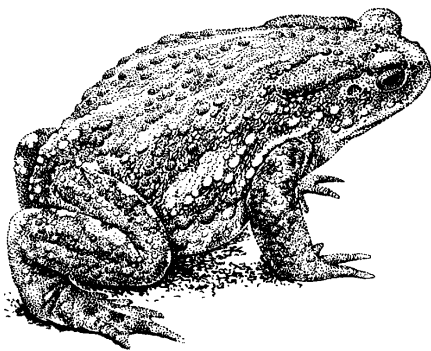
Where people saw both adults and spawn or tadpoles in the same place these have been combined in this analysis but were important so that we knew breeding locations.

Records were received from: Darlington (3); Hartlepool (22); Middlesbrough (23); North Yorkshire (30); Stockton (72); Redcar & Cleveland (88). Of the 239 records, 172 were from people's gardens.

To put your records into context there were previously only about 1,000 reptile and amphibian records known for the whole of the Tees Valley including Darlington. We've highlighted some of the findings from the survey and hope to do a more detailed analysis of all the reptile and amphibian records in Cleveland at some point in the future.

Frogs

108 records proved this to be our most widespread amphibian, as it is nationally. Eighty-one of these were from gardens, with breeding being recorded in 58 of those gardens. Frogs aren't particularly fussy where they breed but, with fewer wetlands in the wider landscape, garden ponds are now recognised as being vital in maintaining their populations, as this survey reflects.



Toads

53 records in total of which 36 were from gardens, with breeding being recorded in 14 of those gardens. This is notable, as garden ponds are not generally thought to be suitable for toads to breed in. It would be interesting to get further details of these ponds, eg size, presence of fish, etc, to see if there is any pattern to those ponds used by toads.

Small Newts

Smooth Newt and Palmate Newt records were combined for the purposes of this survey, as the two species can be quite difficult to tell apart. Also they have the same legal and conservation status, so a precise identification isn't always essential. In total 50 records were received, 44 of which were from gardens. It is likely that the vast majority of these will be smooth newt as this species is much more common in the Tees Lowlands area and is certainly the most suburban of our newts. Three specific records of Palmate Newt were also submitted; all three from gardens in Stockton. It has been suggested that Palmate Newts are not native to the lowland areas in the Tees Valley and that the few verified records we have from those areas are the result of introductions. Certainly the species is associated with upland, acid areas but that might just be because the other species don't do so well there. As more records come in it may be that the picture will change. No records were received for Alpine Newts, an alien species, which is known to be established in Stockton and Redcar and Cleveland.

Great Crested Newt

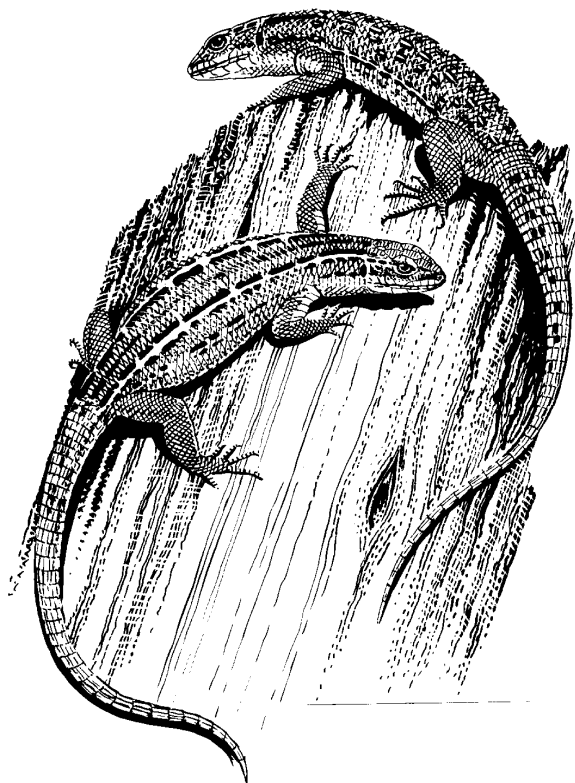
Six records were received, covering all of the local districts other than Hartlepool. We don't know about the two North Yorkshire records but the Darlington, Middlesbrough and Easington records were new sites. Confirmation was also received of the continued existence of GCNs at a site in north-west Stockton; this is quite a significant record as the site is fairly isolated from any other known GCN populations and is now probably the furthest west GCN site in Cleveland.

Common Lizards

Reptiles are much rarer than amphibians so any reptile record is very significant. In the north east there have previously only been verified records of Common Lizard in the upland areas and the coastal fringe. Of the eleven Common Lizard records received, four were in gardens, which is the first time common lizards have been recorded in gardens in the Tees Valley. Of even more significance, four of the records, three of them from gardens, were from inland, lowland areas.

Adders

Two records, both on the North York Moors, just south of the A171. This species is probably not uncommon on the North York Moors, just under recorded. We will copy these records to the national adder monitoring project.



Grass snakes

None were spotted but this wasn't unexpected as the only previous record for Cleveland is an old one from the boundary of Hartlepool and Easington. However they are regularly found further south in Yorkshire as far north as Ryedale, with a rumour that they might be at Osmotherley, so there is always the possibility that some might be out there.

Slow Worms

Probably the most significant of all of the records received were those of Slow Worms as there have been so few records of them previously, in fact only 10 for the whole of Cleveland. This survey produced 7 records of Slow Worms, albeit 5 of them from over the border in North Yorkshire. However the North Yorkshire records are also very useful as the latest annual report of reptiles and amphibians in Yorkshire, covering the year 2005, had no records of Slow Worms for the whole of Yorkshire in that year. Of the Slow Worm records in Cleveland, one was from Hutton Village where the species had been previously recorded; the other was from South Loftus. Apart from an odd record in a garden in Stockton that was probably an introduction and a recent record from Kilton Woods, all the Slow Worm records had been from Guisborough or Saltburn. This new record adds to the suspicion that they might be more widely dispersed in the Redcar & Cleveland area. Both of these records were from gardens but of the 12 records we now have, only 4 are from gardens, which is also interesting because nationally the species is quite strongly associated with gardens and allotments.



Survey Summary

As you will have gathered from the above notes, the results of this survey have added significantly to our knowledge of reptile and amphibian distribution in Cleveland and the surrounding area. The records from outside of Cleveland will be passed on to the appropriate species recorder and all records will be sent to the regional and national recording schemes. This survey shows the benefits of having lots of eyes and ears out there recording things and we would encourage you to continue to send in any future records of Reptiles and Amphibians that you make to the Trust.

Get involved

If you have enjoyed taking part in this survey and want to get further involved, the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership will be taking part in a regional garden pond survey this Spring/Summer. Details of how you can take part are available from the Tees Valley Biodiversity Coordinator.

A North East Reptile and Amphibian Group has recently been formed and welcomes new members of all levels of expertise. For further details of this please contact Naomi Hewitt; Exploring Your Environment Project; Tyne & Wear Museums; Tel: 0191 222 7868 or Email: naomi.hewitt@twmuseums.org.uk

Ian Bond

North East Reptile and Amphibian Group

*Thank you to Barrie Metcalfe for processing the records
Illustrations by kind permission of Natural England*

Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan

The Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is a plan of action for threatened or characteristic habitats and species in our area. It is carried out by the Tees Valley Biodiversity Partnership, which is a partnership of local organisations and people working together to benefit our wildlife.

There are loads of great wildlife projects happening, and lots of opportunities to get involved. for everyone, whether you are conservation professional, community group, schools, business, farmer, angler, gardener or simply a local resident with an interest in the wealth of wildlife in the Tees Valley.

For more information contact Sue Antrobus
Tees Valley Biodiversity Coordinator
01287 636383
santrobus@teeswildlife.org