



# Toads on Roads Info Pack

Important Information for Toad Patrollers (updated Jan 2023)

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[www.kentarg.org](http://www.kentarg.org)



# Information Pack

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## Background

Common toads are very particular about where they breed and follow the same migration route back to their ancestral ponds each year. If something is constructed in their path, they carry on regardless. Unfortunately, if this something is a road, then the toads are at risk of being killed by traffic or becoming trapped in drains.

To save these intrepid travellers there are various steps that can be taken - including displaying road warning signs to make drivers more aware, lowering kerbs and setting up a Toad Patrol. A Toad Patrol is a group of volunteers who help local toads and monitor the stretch of road that they are crossing.

Froglife holds the database of amphibian migratory crossings for The Department for Transport. A leader of a toad crossing that features on this database can apply to the local authority for road warning signs to be installed during the migration period (February to April) or for dropped kerbs to be installed along the stretch of road the toads are using.

Monitoring by Toad Patrols over the last 30 years has shown significant population declines in common toads. In 2016 Froglife released a report showing, on average, toads in the UK have declined by 68% in this time period, and the decline has been greatest in the southeast of England. You can read the report [here](#).



## 1. What does Toad Patrolling involve?

### How do I Patrol a toad crossing?

Patrollers are volunteers who take on the task of saving toads by seeing them across the road in spring at their habitual crossing. This usually involves moving toads from one side of the road to the other by picking them up around their middles, placing them in a bucket and then carrying them over.

You will need a clean bucket (thoroughly rinsed of any cleaning products etc that might have been used in it), a hi-visibility jacket, a strong torch, gloves and any other equipment noted by your Patrol Leader. Some patrols may be able to loan equipment, this is usually dependent upon funds being available. We do not recommend head torches as they are not powerful enough for patrolling and it's also too easy to accidentally shine them into the eyes of other patrollers or passing drivers. They can however be useful for recording, if there is a dedicated recorder noting down the numbers. Most patrols are coordinated locally by a volunteer Patrol Leader, who advises how the patrol is run, ensures all volunteers are aware of any specific safety issues at the site and manages a rota to arrange the right number of volunteers per evening.

Safety is paramount, and we ask that as a patroller, you **read the Staying Safe section** within these notes, and take responsibility for following them, along with any additional briefings from the Patrol Leader.

Some patrols are very busy and intense with thousands of toads crossing over a month, needing many volunteers; others are slower, with rainy nights bringing toads in their tens rather than hundreds. Crossings can be long, a couple of miles, and/or complex - there may be several ponds in the same area. Toads may also be migrating *along* a road not across it.

For new patrols it may not be known exactly where the crossing is. Sometimes the toads are clearly heading in a particular direction, and just watching them for a few minutes will reveal it. Others may take more time, and a bit of ingenuity. Asking passers-by, looking on maps and peering over hedges might reveal an answer - just remember, toads are not necessarily heading for the pond that is nearest!



If you decide you would like to become a patroller, you can find your nearest patrol by visiting the Froglife website <https://www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads/tormap/>.

If you are planning to patrol with a child, please note that for safety reasons, anyone under 16 must be accompanied by their parent or guardian. Read the section on patrolling with children below and consider for yourself if you are happy with the risks in your locality. Some sites are not suitable for children and the Patrol Leader will let you know if this is the case.

## **When will I be asked to Patrol?**

Toads tend to start moving around dusk and will continue into the night, depending on how cold it gets; usually you only really need to patrol during the first part of the evening when there is a high likelihood of them encountering traffic.

Toads can emerge from hibernation any time from January onwards, depending on local weather conditions; they tend to emerge a little later than frogs. The patrol can then last through until May, although it is usually February to April.

Amphibian movements are very dependent on weather, so it's crucial to check local forecasts; key signs to look out for are: first mild temperatures (at least  $>5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), together with rain. This is usually done by the Patrol Leader or someone local to the site in contact with the leader. Once the toads start to move the leader will organise a rota of volunteers to patrol on suitable evenings.

You will be asked to an induction during daylight hours, shown the patrol route and given a safety briefing before starting to patrol.

## **Why should I record Numbers?**

Froglife asks Toad Patrollers to record the numbers of toads and other amphibians they help across the road, and how many they see killed. The numbers are collated



by the Patrol Leader and at the end of the season are sent to Froglife. How the numbers are recorded varies from site to site and you will be given instructions by your leader. This data feeds into national monitoring projects and helps Froglife determine how the UK's toad population is faring as a whole. The numbers can give you a good idea of how successfully your patrol is in helping local populations, but bear in mind there can be other influences on toad numbers such as the weather causing them to move later at night, when they're not seen.

## 2. Staying Safe

**Road safety guidelines (patrols are unique and not all of these will be relevant to your patrol site):**

- Where there is no footway or verge, walk in single file along the right-hand side of the road.
- Cross busy roads in a group, and if applicable, at the point designated by the Patrol Leader.
- Wear reflective clothing -- *when picking up toads, kneel sideways on to the road to ensure that the high-visibility strips are visible to both sides of traffic, and where possible make sure that your reflective clothing is not covered by coats and bags.*
- Wear sensible footwear for the conditions.
- Carry a torch and take spare batteries or a spare torch.
- Be sensible and remain aware of your surroundings.
- When vehicles approach, make sure you are visible. Turn your back to clearly display your hi-vis jacket with the TOAD PATROL wording obvious.
- Be alert to your surroundings - do not use headphones or your mobile phone in the road.
- If traffic is coming towards you and a toad, encourage the driver to slow down by raising and lowering your arm in a calming motion, before rescuing the toad. If the driver does not slow down, please move out of the road.
- Please remain courteous to drivers, neighbours, and each other.



- **Other safety measures**

- Make sure you have someone with you, or that someone knows where you are.
- Stay in touch - If possible, carry a mobile phone and the numbers of other patrollers if you are in a group.
- Wear warm, waterproof clothing and gloves, if it is cold. – *toads like wet weather more than we do.*
- Make sure you know where the safe place to release toads is.
- Keep safe from germs – *You may want to wear disposable gloves when handling amphibians, these should be powder free vinyl, not latex or nitrile which may be harmful to amphibians. Wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. Please do not use hand sanitiser before patrolling as amphibian skin is sensitive to this.*
- Be careful of cuts and scratches and avoid contact with dirty water. If patrolling away from home, carry a first aid kit.
- Some patrols may find it appropriate to arrange advance warning signs for drivers to help protect both the toads and you – these might be provided by the Council, or homemade, but must be approved by Highways.

Follow any additional safety instructions from your Patrol Leader, which may be verbal, or written.

In order to be covered by Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance while Toad Patrolling you will need to be a registered member of Krag. Once you have expressed your interest through the Froglife or Krag website to become a Toad Patroller, you will be sent a sign-up sheet which will cover the details. N.B. There is no compulsory fee to be a Krag member for the purposes of Toad Patrol.



# 3. Patrolling with children and vulnerable people

KRAG welcomes children who volunteer at suitable toad crossings. It is a rewarding way of supporting nature for a stronger future, moreover, children bring sharp eyes and toad-rescuing energy.

However, we cannot ask children to take the same responsibility for themselves that adults do, nor can we ask them to decide if a patrol is safe for them – this is entirely down to the parent or guardian. You are the best person to make these decisions as you know your child and their capabilities. We thus ask that anyone under 16 is accompanied by a parent or guardian, and that they are registered by the parent or guardian too. We suggest parents listen to the advice of Patrol Leaders, who know the area and the hazards well. In some instances, we may ask that children do not patrol at certain sites.

The same applies to vulnerable adults in need of support, in which case we would ask that a keyworker or parent accompanies the adult participating.

## **Patrols with children will be safer and more satisfying in some circumstances:**

- If the collection area is wide and level and with space for children to rescue toads away from the road.
- The road is a minor road with slow traffic and good visibility.
- In ideal circumstances: the edge of the road is fenced, or a temporary fence is erected.
- Children collect toads into a bucket on one side of the road, then are escorted across the road by an adult for release.
- Children are briefed not to follow toads onto the road, and not to rescue toads from the road or narrow verges.
- All parties follow the safety instructions.
- Children assist with emptying buckets of toads on one side of the road only.

Occasionally we have enquiries from groups such as scout groups about helping with a patrol. Unfortunately, KRAG cannot take liability for children without their parents or guardians if they are working at the roadside, however it may be that the group's own insurance covers you for this activity.





# 4. Notes on your personal information

KRAG commit to hold your data securely and only for the purposes it was given. We will provide some data to the affiliated organisation that provides our insurance (ARG UK Ltd).

When you volunteer with us as a Toad Patroller, your contact and emergency contact's details are automatically passed to the Patrol Leader and/or Coordinator.

The Patrol Leaders and Coordinators are volunteers. In a small number of cases, they are professional or voluntary representatives of an organisation, for example a Wildlife Trust, Amphibian and Reptile group, County Council, or local city farm. In all these cases, the organisation will only keep the information for the purpose it was given and will not share it.

# 5. Roles

**Patroller** – A volunteer who helps toads across roads.

**Patrol Leader** – Coordinates the local patrol. In some cases, they are the only patroller. Responsible for risk assessment, communication, general support, and data recording at the end of the season.

**Coordinator** – supports all patrols in an area. Not all areas have one. The Coordinator will usually manage the database of volunteers, coordinate fundraising and profile raising across the area. In some cases, they will stand in for Patrol Leaders when they are absent. They will collate all of the Kent Toad Patrol data to send to Froglife.

**Council** – Is responsible for making decisions about signage. In some areas, they have an ecologist who can help and champion Toads on Roads crossings. They may be able to provide other help.



**Froglife** – Coordinates the overview of all crossings across Britain and updates the official Department of Transport database of crossings. This work is currently unfunded, and they are seeking support to develop it further.

Further information on Toads on Roads and Toad Patrollers can be found here

<https://www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads/>

- In addition to death by cars themselves, common toads also fall foul of badly designed road features such as high kerbs which steer toads towards drains, where they become trapped and die.
- Many of the toad crossings registered under the Toads on Roads project have the iconic Toad Crossing signs approved by the Government's Department for Transport
- Research by Froglife and the university of Zurich found that the common toad has declined by 68% in the last 30 years  
(<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0161943>)
- One third of the world's 6,000 amphibians are officially threatened with extinction ([www.amphibianark.org](http://www.amphibianark.org) )



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