



BOND IN THE POND

Kent Toad Patrol Newsletter 2023 Season

NEWS FROM YOUR POND AND OUR FIRST FUNDRAISER



HELLO TOAD PATROL VOLUNTEERS



Welcome to the end of season **Bond in the Pond**. We can hardly believe it's all over! The season started at the majority of the sites in mid-February and peaked 4 to 5 weeks later. The sites that started earlier had very little to report before mid-Feb. The latest of the patrols finished at the end of March. As last year, the toads started to move and then a period of cold weather descended putting everything on hold. Unlike last year however, it was followed by some better milder weather and some rain and the toads were able to leave not long after spawning, their numbers then dwindling quite quickly at the end.

You'll see from the figures that overall, there has been a lift in the number of toads rescued in comparison to last year. We can only hope that this is the beginning of a positive trend. We can also report that the number of frogs and newts seen increased too. In the case of the frogs this has partly been attributed to them breeding much later and so their appearance coincided with toad patrolling. Alan's Bough Beech team recorded 194 Smooth Newts, three times as many as in 2022! 8 Great Crested Newts were also seen here, the only toad patrol site with them that we were aware of until Colleen's



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Stone Street patrol moved just one on 17th March. Wendy's Painters Forstal patrol had good numbers of volunteers registered but struggled to get coverage on good evenings. Despite this challenge, the team still managed to move 370 on their peak evening. If you know the site, you'll know that it's quite a long stretch of road that is covered, so that's a brilliant achievement

Claire and Diane between them patrolled two sites, Monks Horton and Stowting and rescued 130 toads. As a result of their efforts the Stowting patrol will be officially registered with Froglife and hopefully more volunteers can be enrolled.

Paddock Wood team had very good figures and it seems that a lot of this is down to a very enthusiastic local couple that went out twice on some evenings. Long may they live in the area!

Terry's Westerham patrol has had an amazing first season with nearly 3000 toads helped across the road. It'll be very exciting to see what next year brings.

The Hollingbourne, East Langdon and Alkerden Lane sites have been removed from Froglife's database as patrols for various reasons. Get in contact if you would like more details.

PATROL FIGURES FOR 2023

Froglife, who compile the nationwide records, always state that making comparisons between years is tricky as numbers can be influenced by a number of things, but it's certainly encouraging to see an uplift, whatever the reason.

The Numbers are in for the Kent 2023 season, but Froglife are still gathering data for the rest of the country:

Patrol Site	2023 Toads Moved	2022 Toads Moved	% Change
Stone Street	6,406	4,464	43%↑
Westerham	2,853		
Painters Forstal	1,656	1,250	32%↑
Paddock Wood	627		
Foxenden Manor	288	236	22%↑
Bough Beech	248	107	131%↑
Monks Horton	67		
Stowting	63		
Knockholt	59	50	18%↑
Total	12,267		

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REFLECTIONS ON MY FIRST TOAD PATROL BY LUKE PEMBROKE



Back in January, I happened across an Instagram post calling for Toad Patrol volunteers. My inner herps nerd was curious as to what these were all about. After a quick google, I was in touch with Amanda and Jackie at Krag who assigned me to the Bough Beech Patrol. February and March rolled around quickly. Over the following weeks I found myself headed out in the evenings, donning a high-vis jacket, bucket in one hand, torch in the other, keenly scanning my local tarmac toad-way for these warty little anurans* crawling their way towards the nearby breeding pond. As you can

imagine, toads vs cars poses a serious problem.

I was glad to be a part of this effort by a dedicated community of conservation volunteers across the country. I met some great people, passionate about protecting UK Wildlife, and it also gave me a chance to brush up on my macro-photography; toads really are the perfect models! We were even lucky enough to encounter seven Great Crested Newts crossing at Bough Beech which was the cherry on top of a fantastic toad patrol season. Heading out on patrols made me feel more connected with nature again, reminding me of simpler times as a kid, out exploring with my brother looking for toads and newts. Patrolling was such a rewarding experience. I strongly encourage you to sign up to a toad patrol in your area next year. Our toads need us! Froglife estimates that 20 tons of toads are killed on UK roads each year. In addition to this, toads are at threat from habitat loss, pollution, and climate change. Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) populations have declined by 68% in the UK over the past 30 years!

*Anura is an order of animals in the class Amphibia that includes frogs and toads. More than 5,000 species are described in the order.

If you use Instagram Luke is well worth a follow. He has been posting beautiful photos and videos about his 30 Days Wild. <https://www.instagram.com/luke.pembroke/>

FIRST FUNDRAISING EVENT AT BELMONT HOUSE



We had our first fundraising event on the May 1st Bank holiday at Belmont House. Many thanks to Wendy for making this happen and for helping on the day and in particular taking care of the youngsters who enjoyed interacting with all the activities. We spoke to over 70 people who wanted to talk toads, frogs and newts. People shared photos of their washing up bowl ponds with newts in residence. Along with audio recordings for us to identify, they were Marsh frogs (*Pelophylax ridibundus*)!



Questions were varied including how to report sightings, people interested in patrolling and children making their toad crowns. We were fortunate that the very talented Jack Skylark carved our toad raffle prize. We raised just over £70 towards next year's patrol equipment essentials.



We are hoping to do some more fundraising events and have been invited to the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (<https://www.whitecliffscountryside.org.uk/>) event in August.

We're waiting for details and will post on Facebook and Twitter when we have more information. We would really appreciate more volunteers willing to help run the stand and talk with members of the public about patrolling or reptiles and amphibians. We found hearing about the positive stories of what people are doing in their own spaces to support wildlife very rewarding. If you are able to do a few hours it would be great it doesn't have to be a full day.

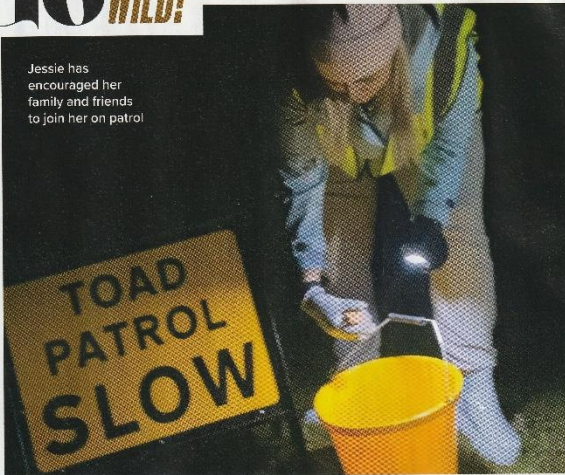
KENT TOAD PATROL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

You may have noticed that we have two Facebook accounts posting about Kent Toads on Roads. The original Kent Toad Patrol and this 2023 season Krag Toads on Roads. Why do we have two different pages? This came about over problems in administrator access to the Kent Toad Patrol page and so the Krag Toads on Roads account was created. The issue has now been resolved but for the time being the two accounts will be running.

TOAD PATROL IN BBC WILDLIFE MAGAZINE

GoWILD!

Jessie has encouraged her family and friends to join her on patrol



MEET THE VOLUNTEER

"I go out with the sole purpose of saving lives"

Jessie Bartholomew-Smythe volunteers for a Froglife toad patrol in Sevenoaks, Kent

LAST YEAR, PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER Jessie Bartholomew-Smythe joined a group of evening volunteers at her local Toads on Roads patrol.

What is a Toads on Roads patrol?

Toads on Roads is a project that helps toads and other amphibians cross roads, coordinated by the wildlife charity Froglife. The volunteer-led patrols enable them to migrate back to their breeding grounds – the body of water where they hatched. Research shows that due to human development and encroachment on their habitat, common toads have, on average, declined by about 68 per cent over the past 30 years.

How many volunteers do you work with on your local patrol?

We're a group of about 30 patrollers and we take it in turns to go out at night during the toad migration season, which runs from February to April. First, we check if the toads are on the move – they favour warm, damp weather conditions – and if there are large numbers we let the other volunteers know that we need more help on the patrol.

I remember one particular evening when we moved a total of 1,779 toads.

Why do you volunteer?

I love to think that I'm helping a species, or even an individual animal – like in the parable of the starfish, which tells us that everyone can make a difference, even if that difference affects only one individual. In addition, I've found that going out in the evening with the sole purpose of saving lives is the perfect antidote to anxiety.

What feels special about your volunteering work?

Everything! When I die, the first night I went out patrolling will be part of the highlight reel that flashes before my eyes. I will never forget driving those country roads one drizzly evening in late February last year to meet a complete stranger in the dark. That was Colleen, our patrol leader, and I've been going back ever since. Now when I arrive at a patrol site, I scan the road for the white chests and glints in the eyes of the many small, wet 'rocks' that are ready and waiting for me to save them, and I just can't wait to get started. 🐸

BBC Wildlife Magazine April 2023 featured an article on the work of the Sevenoaks Toad Patrol team. If you'd like to read the article you can through your local library. It is possible to borrow the BBC Wildlife magazine for free electronically. Using the Libby app you can register your library card and download the magazine along with many others as well as newspapers, books and audiobooks, all free.

We really liked Jessie's enthusiasm and the sharing of the importance of patrolling which literally saves lives.

Great work Colleen and the Sevenoaks toad patrol team.

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THE FAVERSHAM & DISTRICT COMMUNITY LOTTERY

is a weekly lottery that raises money for good causes in and around Faversham.



- Tickets cost just £1 a week
- Win a Sony Home Theatre bundle
- Please help give our fundraising a boost
- Chance to win up to £25,000

PLAY NOW:
SCAN THE QR CODE OR GO TO
www.favershamdistrictlottery.co.uk
AND SEARCH FOR Kent Toad Patrol



Supporters must be 16 years of age or older. See website for terms & conditions. Ends by 24/06/2023.

FAVERSHAM & DISTRICT
COMMUNITY
LOTTERY

Kent Toad Patrol is participating and 50% of ticket sales will be donated to Krag for Toad Patrol equipment. Tickets are £1 each. All you need to do when you buy a ticket is select Kent Toad Patrol as your good cause.

Along with the weekly money prize, each month there's a big prize to win and June's is a home theatre system!

[Faversham Lottery Toad Patrol](http://www.favershamdistrictlottery.co.uk)

NEW SIGNS FOR PAINTERS FORSTAL



Three new permanent toad patrol signs have been funded by Kent Highways and they will be installed by the end of July, ready for next year's season.

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WHAT WE DO IT FOR

This is what we love seeing for our efforts, toad spawn, strings of toad pearls.



You may be interested to know that this particular string of spawn was laid on the 6th May, six weeks after the last spawn had been laid in the area! Do get in touch if a similar thing happened near you, or you have other stories to share. toadpatrolcoordinator@gmail.com

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to friends and family and encourage them to join us. If you are interested in creating better environments for our amphibians and other wildlife there are plenty of good resources out there to be found, here are some links to a few of our favourites

<https://www.arc-trust.org/help-amphibians>

<https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/wilder-gardens>

The poster at the end of this newsletter has some basic information that benefits all wildlife. If you are able to print it and have somewhere public you are able to display it that would be great. If you would like a professionally printed copy, or a few, get in touch.



And lastly, but most importantly....

Thank you to each and every one of you

Toad Patrol wouldn't exist without all of you wonderful people giving up your time to rescue the toads and other amphibians from being squashed on the roads or stuck down drains. We hope to see you all again in 2024.

What do toads need?

- Food - slugs, worms, spiders and insects
- Somewhere to live - woodlands, hedgerows, grassland and gardens
- Somewhere to breed - clean, deep water



How can you help?

- Don't use chemicals in your garden
- Leave a few areas of your garden messy
- Add a log, stick or stone pile to your garden
- Join your local toad patrol by emailing your postcode to toadpatrolcoordinator@gmail.com