**AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE REPORT FOR 2018**

Spring 2018 started early in Barrowden with a clump of frog spawn appearing on on 17th February – the second earliest record in my recordership. There was then a hiatus of a couple of weeks before more appeared there and a further two weeks before it appeared elsewhere. Toads appeared on 11th March which is par for the course.

A survey of the ponds at Rutland Water Nature Reserve was carried out at the end of April and the beginning of May. Smooth Newts were found in 9 ponds, but Great Crested Newts in only two and no newts were found in eleven. The lateness of the survey probably meant that newts were under-recorded.

The reptile survey at Rutland Water was discontinued as the natural vegetation succession had made many shelters inaccessible, the decreasing yields of the three previous years suggested that a lot of energy might be expended for little reward and other commitments meant that there was insufficient time to do justice to the survey. Although no lizards or slow worms had been found during the survey, which was one of the main reasons for it, the widespread distribution of grass snakes, five species of small mammal and the odd toad and smooth newt and abundant ants was informative.

Viviparous Lizard was recorded at a new site in Stretton, but, alas, for the third consecutive year there were no Slow Worm records, whereas both species of snake were recorded in average numbers and places.

**Common Frog** *Rana temporaria*

Common Frogs were recorded from 18 sites in 8 parishes (Barrowden, Belton, Egleton, Exton, Leighfield, Little Casterton, Oakham and Wing). Evidence of breeding was found at 11 sites in 7 of those parishes (all except Belton). The first spawn was found in Barrowden on 17th February, which was five days earlier than 2017, which was itself an early date. The earliest date for which I have records since 1982 was 15th February in 1990. Following this early start there was a hiatus of 16 days before more spawn appeared in Barrowden and almost a month before any was reported elsewhere in the county. Most spawning had finished by the second week in April. The last frogs of the year were croaking in Barrowden on 4th November.

**Common Toad** *Bufo bufo*

Common Toads were recorded at 10 sites in 5 parishes (Belton, Exton, Ketton, Leighfield and Wing). Evidence of breeding was found at 3 sites in Exton and Leighfield. The first toads were seen at Leighfield on 11th March. There were only a few records of dead toads – four road casualties and one caught by a Grass Snake in Wing. The last record of the year was a freshly dead road casualty in Wing on 22nd December, which is the latest date on which toads have been observed in the county.

**Smooth Newt** *Triturus/Lissotriton vulgaris*

Smooth Newts were recorded at 13 sites in 4 parishes (Barrowden, Egleton, Hambleton and Wing). They were found in 9 ponds at Rutland Water Nature Reserve. The first record was on 14th March in Wing and the last on 4th October also in Wing.

**Great Crested Newt** *Triturus cristatus*

Great Crested Newts were found at 6 sites in 5 parishes (Belton, Exton, Hambleton, Thorpe by Water and Wing). They were only found in two ponds at Rutland Water Nature Reserve. The earliest record was on 5th January in a Wing cellar. The first pond record was on 14th March in Wing. The last record was on 30th December when a single male was present in a Wing pond as well as three in a cellar.

There have never been any records from Exton previously.

**Viviparous Lizard** *Zootoca vivipara*

Lizards were recorded from 5 sites in 5 parishes (Ketton, Pickworth, Ryhall, South Luffenham and Stretton). All records were of single individuals and the first record was on 16th April at Ketton Quarry and the last on 2nd September at Stretton Woods. This is the first record from Stretton.

**Slow Worm** *Anguis fragilis*

As in 2016 and 2017, there were no reports of Slow Worms in 2018.

**Grass Snake** *Natrix natrix/Natrix helvetica*

Grass Snakes were recorded at 21 locations in 9 parishes (Barrow, Barrowden, Belton, Egleton, Exton, Hambleton, Ketton, Leighfield and Wing). The first record was on 22nd March at Leighfield and the last on 4th October at Barrow. The survey of reptiles at Rutland Water was discontinued in 2018. Seven records involved dead snakes – four were found on the roadside or on tracks, two females were found dead with bite marks while in the act of laying eggs and one was killed by a cat.

**Adder** *Vipera berus*

Adders were seen on 2 occasions at Ketton Quarry on 16th March and 16 th April, when two were seen.

Records were contributed by:-

T Appleton, D & J Ball, L Biddle, N Burrows, L Bywater, T Caldicott, L Clark, J & R Dejardin, R Edwards, P Gallimore, M Grimes, V Hemsley, A Hill, P Killips, P Langston, A Lawrence, R Lemmon, T Mitcham, D Needham, P Scott, G Williams and L Worrall.