

Amphibia and Reptilia in the London Area, 1981 and 1982

by PETER W. KING*

AMPHIBIA

GREAT CRESTED NEWT *Triturus cristatus*

MIDDX. Uxbridge Technical College, a well established colony (TQ063847).

SMOOTH NEWT *Triturus vulgaris*

HERTS. Spawns in many garden ponds in Totteridge and High Barnet areas. Often seen in garden of 27 Southway (TQ255937). Nearest breeding pond to there is at 49 Southway.

KENT. 206 Green Lane, Eltham (TQ435729). One seen in garden. Adults and tadpoles in garden pond, Hayes Way, Beckenham (TQ389683).

MIDDX. Breeds in Uxbridge Common Pond. April 1982, six half-grown specimens under stone in garden of 23 North Common Road, nearby. Six in a garden pond, Dewsbury Road, Dollis Hill, N.W.10, in 1981. The Hill, public garden near Spaniards Road, Hampstead, some tens in an ornamental pond, 1981. Park Wood, Ruislip, June 1982 (TQ098890). Garden ponds in South Harrow (TQ137865) and Greenford (TQ142855). Pond in a nature reserve, Perivale, July 1982 (TQ160836). Uxbridge Technical College, large colony (TQ063847).

SURREY. Bookham Common, not seen very often but probably common.

PALMATE NEWT *Triturus helveticus*

MIDDX. Ten in a garden pond, Heybridge Avenue, Pinner, 7 June 1981.

COMMON TOAD *Bufo bufo*

ESSEX. 23 Lytton Road, Leytonstone E.11. One found hibernating on 1 February 1981, several seen in the very small pondless garden in Summer 1981. One very small in garden of 21 Severn Drive, Upminster (TQ572882), on 23 June 1981.

HERTS. Spawns in garden pond of 21 Southway (TQ255938). Fairly often seen in gardens in Totteridge and High Barnet areas. Frequent in garden of 27 Southway (TQ255937). One female with spawn found on 1 February 1981 (very early!) in Darlands Lake (TQ245934). Bentley Priory nature reserve, Stanmore, 6 September 1981. Cheshunt gravel pits, path by a marsh (TL3603), one male seen on 11 July 1981.

KENT. Keston Lake, Holwood Park Avenue, Keston, has a breeding colony. Regularly seen on allotments, Bourne Vale, Hayes (TQ403668).

MIDDX. Alexandra Park (TQ3090). Hampstead Heath, common over most of the heath. One male seen, garden of 7 Aberdeen Park, Islington, N5 (TQ321856), 8 April 1981. Present all summer 1982 in a garden at Eastcote with a well established pond (TQ112878) and also all summer 1982 at Greenford in a garden with pond (TQ142855).

SURREY. Pinewood Court, 23 Clarence Avenue, S.W.4. Two in amplexus in a car port on 25 March 1981. Taken in by Peter Holland and allowed to spawn in a fish-tank, then released. Spawn grew up to young toad state in captivity. Twenty-seven toadlets were liberated on Wimbledon Common and nine toadlets released in the garden of Pinewood Court, 75 Dupont Road, S.W.20 (TQ238693), usually present. Toadspawn seen in Queensmere, Wimbledon Common. Mitcham Common, scrub and long grass around large pond, frequently seen. Footpath through Croydon Cemetery, just east of Mitcham

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Common; dozens seen crossing on a wet evening March 1981. Shirley Park Golf Course, Shirley, one seen August 1981. Bookham Common, seen frequently over much of the common.

COMMON FROG *Rana temporaria*

ESSEX. Walthamstow Marshes, North Marsh (TQ3587), small amount of frogspawn 28 March 1981.

HERTS. Abundant in the garden of 96 Forbes Avenue, Potters Bar (TL265010). Extreme dates 8 May to 11 October 1981 and 12 February to 23 October 1982. Increasing in abundance in garden of 27 Southway, Totteridge, N.20. (TQ255937). First seen here in 1977 (one), one in 1978, three sightings in 1979, the latest on 13 December, six sightings in 1980, ten in 1981 and 19 in 1982. The garden here is small and there is no pond. Nearest possible breeding ponds are at 21 and 49 Southway. Mr D. Griffith also writes that he has studied all the accessible ponds out of those frog ponds studied by Savage (1961) in Totteridge about 45 years ago, but that he found no frogs or spawn in any of them. Many, e.g. Totteridge Long Pond (TQ235941) are now very polluted. Nevertheless, the common frog is very common in the Totteridge and High Barnet areas still, breeding in garden ponds though. Also in Totteridge one minute frog was seen near the garden (TQ254937) and another minute frog was found in the churchyard (TQ248942). Darlands Lake nature reserve (TQ245934) 21 March 1981, four and five spawn clumps respectively in two ponds, 20 September 1981, one adult.

KENT. 206 Green Lane, Eltham, S.E.9 (TQ435729). Two frogs present for most of 1981, first spawn in pond 13 March but no froglets reached stage of leaving pond. Another frog dead, disembowelled. Yet another was killed by a cat next door. In 1982 one frog was killed and eaten by a cat on 13 February but spawn was seen on 13 March and a tiny frog was seen on 11 July. Three adult frogs were present when the pond was drained on 18 July and were still present in the pond in September. John Mitchell knows of two gardens close by 206 Green Lane where frogs are also present and he considers their numbers to be increasing. Broad Lawn (TQ433730), up to 30 present in a small pond. Lots of spawn every year. Rookery estate lands, Bromley Common (TQ415665), seen frequently, breed in Rookery Lake (TQ415670). Also frequent at the allotments, Bourne Vale, Hayes (TQ403668), and spawn and frogs are general in garden ponds in Hayes, Beckenham and West Wickham.

MIDDX. Alexandra Park (TQ3090) common both years. 7 Hodford Road, Golders Green, N.W. 11 (TQ250868), several spawn every year in a garden pond. 112 Corringway, Ealing, W.5, two adults in summer 1981 in lily pond and on 24 March 1982 spawn, tadpoles and one frog found in the pond. Uxbridge Common pond contained many breeding frogs in Spring 1982 and in the large overgrown garden of 23 North Common Road, just opposite, frogs are often seen. Two yearlings found under a stone in April 1982. At 83 Wentworth Avenue, Finchley, N.3 (TQ256915), the first spawn in 1981 was seen on 9 March, when there were 18 adult frogs in two small ponds. Dewsbury Road, Dollis Hill, N.W.10, two in pond 1981. Hampstead Heath, less common than toads. Present in all warmer months in garden ponds at Eastcote (TQ112878), South Harrow (TQ137865), and Harrow (TQ145875), during 1982. Greenford (TQ142855), found in garden pond from June to September 1982. Early March 1981, one in garden of 54 Whitehall Park Road, Chiswick, W.4.

SURREY. 20 to 30 breed each year in the garden of 118 College Road, Dulwich, S.E.21. Common in gardens of houses in Welcomes Road, Kenley, and often seen squashed on the road. One seen in a greenhouse at 102 Burdon Lane, Cheam, several times in August 1981. Garden at 75 Dupont Road, Raynes Park, S.W.20 (TQ288693), one adult seen 11 February 1982. Early March 1982, abundant spawn seen in ponds and temporary standing water all over Wimbledon Common (TQ2271 to 2273, 2371 to 2373) and also in Scio Pond, Putney Heath (TQ2273). Streatham Common, the Rookery, spawn in pond in ornamental garden every year: 30 adults and abundant spawn in pond on 6 March 1982. (TQ310708). Garden of 142 Harborough Road, Streatham, S.W.16 (TQ307717), one

adult each summer. Six adults in garden of 65 Sunnyhill Road, Streatham, S.W.16. (TQ304718) on 4 February 1982. One seen in garden in Heybridge Avenue, S.W.16 (TQ309707) in August 1982. One disturbed from ground-covering vegetation in old orchard, 128/130 Sunnyhill Road, Streatham, S.W.16 (TQ306717), on 31 October 1982. Breeds in pond on Tooting Bec Common every year. Mitcham Common, often seen near large pond in dense wet grassland and scrub. Bookham Common, sometimes seen in wet weather near ponds and in low lying areas prone to flooding. Spawns in most ponds.

REPTILIA

GRASS SNAKE *Natrix natrix*

HERTS. Darlands Lake nature reserve, one seen 9 August 1981 (TQ245934).

KENT. Hayes Common (TQ413649) seldom seen but one photographed on 14 March 1981: exceptionally early, but March 1981 was very mild.

MIDDX. Late record for 1979, one from Hendon Wood Lane, Greenford, summer 1982, found in numbers at a garden pond (TQ142855). Stanmore, a garden backing on to a golf course (TQ169913), seen on odd days in summer 1982.

SURREY. A two-foot-long specimen was found in a hole in a wall on the Tulse Hill Estate, S.W.2 (TQ306740). It was identified by the R.S.P.C.A. and reported in the *South London Press* on 6 August 1982. Bookham Common, seen occasionally both years. I found a cast-off skin on 14 August 1981 in an area of felled logs on the common.

ADDER *Vipera berus*

KENT. Has been seen in recent years on a heathy part of Hayes Common (TQ413648) but was not seen in 1981 or 1982.

SURREY. Banstead Heath, one seen 26 July 1981 (TQ228552), another seen 5 September 1981 (TQ233554). This population seems to be declining.

COMMON LIZARD *Lacerta vivipara*

KENT. Hayes Common (TQ405652), abundant in 1981. Keston Common (TQ4264), abundant in 1981, first seen on 17 April, two basking at TQ415648.

SURREY. Abundant on the more open areas of the southern half of Bookham Common. Adults not very often seen, but numerous young of the year always found from late August onwards.

SAND LIZARD *Lacerta agilis?*

HERTS. Mrs M. Evans reports these from her garden in Totteridge near The Pastures, off Totteridge Lane (TQ251940). They are commonly seen on an old wall and breed in the compost heap. She seems certain of the identification.

LIZARD *Lacerta* sp.

HERTS. Late record for 1977, Brick Lane, Arkley.

SLOW WORM *Anguis fragilis*

HERTS. Garden of Mrs M. Evans, Totteridge (TQ251940). July 1981, one seen on a golf course near The Pastures, Totteridge (TQ249944). Also known from a railway embankment at Totteridge (TQ259947).

MIDDX. Two on a builder's rubble dump, Mill Hill, 1981. Seen every summer in the garden of 83 Wentworth Avenue, Finchley, N.3 (TQ253912) and on a railway embankment, also in Finchley.

SURREY. Richard Kearton reserve, Warlingham, in 1981. Welcomes Road, Kenley, two road victims in 1981. Bookham Common, seen occasionally, near the station. I caught one pregnant female basking on an elm log here, in Station Copse, on 10 July 1981.

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If anyone has been omitted from this list, would they please accept my apologies for the oversight.

REFERENCE

SAVAGE, R. M. 1961. *The ecology and life history of the common frog* (*Rana temporaria temporaria*). Pitman, London.

Book Review

Guernsey's Earliest Flora: Flora Sarniensis. By Joshua Gosselin, with an introduction and commentaries by David McClintock. Ray Society, London. 1983 [1982]. 210 pp. £14.

Joshua Gosselin (1739-1813) was born in Guernsey of one of the island's leading families, and although visiting various parts of England spent most of his life on the island, becoming a Greffier or Deputy Greffier (Clerk of the Royal Court and Keeper of the Public Records, a Crown Appointment), a post that he held for over 30 years. He was also an officer of the island's militia for nearly 44 years, and Colonel of his regiment for 12 years. Apparently naturally gifted, he was an antiquarian, artist and naturalist, and began in 1788 a flora of the island under the title *Flora Sarniensis, or the Genera of Guernsey Plants*. This he arranged in the order and nomenclature of the first edition of William Hudson's *Flora Anglica*; somewhat later he commenced the compilation of a herbarium of the plants of the island. An abridged version of the *Flora Sarniensis*, with all localities and page references to Hudson's *Flora*, was published as a supplement to W. Berry's *History of the Island of Guernsey* (1815).

The MS drafts of the *Flora Sarniensis* and the herbarium apparently disappeared shortly after Gosselin's death though the latter was bequeathed to his granddaughter, Mary Carey, who died in 1823 at the early age of 26. The first draft of the MS *Flora* reappeared at an auction in Dublin in 1950, was sold with other botanical MSS, and is now in private hands. The second draft, virtually identical with the first, was presented to the Guille-Allès Library at St Peter Port in 1919. Gosselin's herbarium, after being missing for nearly 80 years, was refound in 1900 in the possession of Edgar Dupury, a Guernsey chemist. Dupury died in 1901 and the collection passed to his daughter. Later it came into the hands of a Miss Marquand, who c.1946 presented it to La Société Guernesiaise as 'A collection of dried plants, collector unknown'. About 1970 the herbarium was identified as that made by Gosselin.

With the bringing together of the MSS and herbarium, David McClintock, who has long been interested in the flora of Guernsey, was able to revise and edit the account of over 600 species which comprise the *Flora Sarniensis*, and with the aid of the herbarium and other material provided much additional historical data. Thus, it is now shown that Gosselin was responsible for 500+ first records for the island, and also that his herbarium provided the earliest evidence of the occurrence in the British Isles of a number of species, including *Lotus subbiflorus*, *L. angustissimus*, *Epilobium lanceolatum*, *Centaureum pulchellum*, *Centaurea aspera*, *Orchis laxiflora* and *Lagurus ovatus*, as well as for such critical species as *Trifolium occidentale*, *Polygonum rurivagum*, *Bromus ferronii* and *B. thominii*.

The book, which includes a sketch map of Guernsey showing the localities referred to by Gosselin c.1790, is a valuable contribution to the historical floristics of the Channel Islands.

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