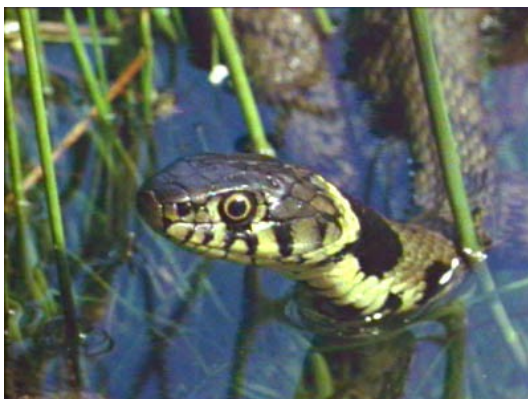


Grass snakes in Rushcliffe

Gordon Dyne

Many people don't realise that Rushcliffe is quite a good area for amphibians – frogs, newts (smooth and crested) and toads – and also for grass snakes. The area's network of streams, field ponds and, to a degree, garden ponds (particularly for frogs and smooth newts) provide good habitat. This year there has been a scattering of grass snake reports from the western edge of Rushcliffe – from Edwalton, Tollerton, Bunny and Costock, including one of hatchlings, plus an undated report of grass snakes basking along the railway line near Ruddington.

So how do you know if you've seen a grass snake? The key features to look for are the yellow 'collar' just behind its head [photo, right] and the black spots along its body, which is around 120–200 cm in length. There are only two sources of confusion: a slowworm (legless lizard) that is much shorter, about 50 cm, and described as coppery brown; and the adder (or viper) which has a black zigzag pattern along its back. However no adders have been recorded in Rushcliffe for over 20 years. There has



been the odd unsubstantiated report, but after such a long absence a photograph (or several) would be essential for a record to be accepted. Taking a photograph is a good idea anyway if you are in doubt or can't remember the key points of identification.

Although we know grass snakes are in the area all records are useful, as are records of slowworms and any other reptiles, amphibians and mammals, which are often poorly recorded. For a record to be usable we need a date, a fairly precise location (if possible a four figure OS map reference), number seen (or estimate) and the specific species. If in doubt take photos! Email reports to me (gordon.dyne@gmail.com), or get in touch directly with the relevant county recorder, as listed on our web site, southnottswildlife.org.uk.

South Notts Group AGM

South Notts is an active NWT local group, with an energetic committee. Our role is to be the Trust's presence in Rushcliffe, engaging members and non-members alike through our talks and walks programmes, fund raising events and stalls at summer fêtes.

However any committee benefits from an infusion of new blood! Our AGM next April will elect the 2012/13 committee. Any NWT member in Rushcliffe is eligible to put themselves forward – but may wish to attend a couple of committee meetings as an observer beforehand. If you are interested please get in touch with Gordon Dyne, on 0115 878 4842 or gordon.dyne@gmail.com.

Spring Fair 2012

Planning for next year's Spring Fair, to be held in Ruddington in May 2012, is now well advanced. Over the years our fair has become well-known for offering good-value plants, home-baking and second-hand books. What we can offer for sale depends entirely upon what goods our loyal supporters donate. So if you'd like to help us by agreeing to grow a few plants, bake some cakes, or send those books you'll never re-read, please contact:
Plants:

Gordon Dyne on 0115 878 4842

Baking & books:

Margie Richards on 0115 937 6320
Alternatively, you can email us at sf12@southnottswildlife.org.uk.

Walks and talks

Our winter and spring programme includes – hopefully – something for everyone! There are winter bird watches, and visits to Wilwell, Wilford Hill Wood and Bunny Wood to enjoy the sights and sounds of spring. Topics for our speakers include the wildlife of mountain terrains, the amazing inner workings of plants and a tour of the spectacular seabird colonies around British coasts. Finally, our annual meeting is rounded off with a look at new developments at Attenborough, the NWT's key south Nottinghamshire reserve.

Birding for beginners

We are running a whole-day bird watch in mid-February. Led by Neil Glenn, an experienced bird watcher and tour leader for Avian Adventures, this session is intended for people with an interest in birds but little experience in identification and other aspects of bird watching. There's a £5 fee, but well worth it if you're a birding newbie!

www.southnottswildlife.org.uk

Our web site has information about local reserves (Wildlife Trust and others) with species records. Also details of our walks, talks and work parties, and other items relating to wildlife and nature conservation. The online edition of this newsletter is there, along with links to local and national wildlife related web sites.

www.arguk.org

Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK is the umbrella body for over 60 study groups throughout the country, including one in Nottinghamshire. Their website has links to the groups, identification guides and online sighting reports. There's also news of their projects, meetings and events, and advice on things like habitat conservation.

Newsletter contact details

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Out & About Programme

Wednesday 11th January 2012 – *Birds of Wollaton Park* – Meet 10am in the top car park near the hall, for a walk round the park with Neil Glenn (0115 983 0946)

Wednesday 15th February – *Beginners' guide to bird watching* – If you're interested in taking up bird watching then this day-long session is for you. Numbers are limited and there is a small charge of £5 for Trust funds. For full details contact Neil Glenn (0115 983 0946)

Sunday 18th March – *Early spring wildflowers at Wilwell Cutting Nature Reserve* – Meet 2pm at the road entrance on B680 between Wilford Village and Ruddington (on right after ring road bridge). Gordon Dyne (0115 878 4842)

Sunday 1st April – *Woodland in spring at Wilford Hill Wood* – Join wardens Mick & Carole Wheat (0115 921 5389) for a walk round this 'secret' wood, which is not usually open to the public, on the edge of West Bridgford. Meet 10.30am by the traffic lights at the **top** of Wilford Hill, past the crematorium entrance climbing up the A60

Sunday 15th April – *Dawn chorus at Bunny Wood* – Meet 6am in Bunny Wood car park, on the left of the A60 climbing up from Bunny village. Led by Dennis Heffernan (0115 923 1838)

Sunday 29th April – *Bunny Wood open day* – For woodland flowers and other beasts in spring, from 10am till 4pm. Car park is on the left on the A60 climbing up from Bunny village. Chris Terrell-Neild (0115 937 4906).

- Please wear appropriate outdoor clothing and boots when attending Out & About events

Talks Programme

Talks are held on the first Thursday in the month, at 7.30pm in room 5 at the West Bridgford Methodist Church, which is by the junction of Patrick Road with Musters Road, West Bridgford. (See www.southnottswildlife.org.uk for street map.)

Admission (including refreshments at the interval): adults £2.50 / children free.

5th January 2012 – *Magic of the mountains* – Gordon Gadsby takes us on a journey through Scotland, the Lake District, Snowdonia and the Alps, looking at the scenery, wildlife and flowers. The talk will include a description of the ascent of Monte Rosa in the Alps.

2nd February – *How plants work* – With Dr Kevin Pike. A fascinating talk on how plants grow, their life cycles and adaptations to different environments.

1st March – *Britain's seabirds* – An illustrated talk by Dr David Parkin. Find out more about the population of seabirds to be seen around the coast of Great Britain.

26th April – South Notts AGM – Followed by *Changes at Attenborough Nature Centre* – A talk presented by Bill Wheatley. Come along to hear about the new habitat developments and future plans for this important wildlife site. **Free admission and refreshments at this meeting.**

Talks contact: Dennis Heffernan (0115 923 1838)

Reserve Work Parties

All work parties welcome new members!

Work parties usually take a break in the Christmas—New Year period: please contact reserve managers to confirm.

Training and equipment will be provided. Take protective gloves and boots when attending a work party.

Bingham Linear Park – Meets on the third Sunday of each month, 10am at the Tithby Road entrance. Tasks include scrub clearing, coppicing etc. Contact Bill Bacon (01949 838585) or Jenny Craig (01949 838899)

Bunny Wood – Meets 10am till 4pm on the third Sunday of each month. Winter tasks include fencing and ride work, coppicing and help with the Christmas log sale. Contact Chris Terrell-Neild (0115 937 4906)

Keyworth Meadow – Work parties on occasional Friday mornings in late summer and autumn as needed. Please contact Neil Pinder (0115 914 4896)

Owthorpe Ponds (near Cropwell Bishop) – A concealed gem with woodland, grassland and pond areas. Offers of assistance to Peter Birkin Tebbutt (0115 989 0096)

Sharphill Wood – Work parties are on the fourth Sunday of every month except August and December, 10am to 4pm. Contact Bill Logan (0115 914 6999; email sharphillwood@yahoo.co.uk, or complete the form at www.sharphillwood.org/contactusform)

The Hook (Ladybay) – Meets for two hours on the first Sunday afternoon of each month, 2pm at the reed bed/silt trap by the Melbourne Road entrance. Check www.friendsofthehook.org.uk for confirmation or contact Sam Hudson (07766 447054)

Wilford Claypit – Meets on the second Saturday of each month, 1pm to 4pm. Work will consist of scrub clearing, willow control and path laying. Contact Derek Rudge (0115 910 0712 or 07950 211083 or email derekrudge@hotmail.co.uk)

Wilwell Farm Cutting – Meets on the first Saturday of each month, 1pm till 4pm. Work includes grassland maintenance and coppicing. Contact Gordon Dyne (0115 878 4842)

Other reserves such as the **Green Line** (West Bridgford), **Skylarks** (Holme Pierrepont) and **Wilford Hill Wood**, do not have regular work parties. If you would like to help at one of these sites please call the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust's office (0115 958 8242) and sign-up for one of the work parties organised by the NWT Estates team.

Clean that bird feeder!

Many people in Britain regularly feed birds during the winter and spring, with bird feeders, tables and feed being big-selling items at garden centres. All this is great news for birds, leading to much improved survival rates for small hedgerow and woodland species during bad weather and the breeding season. But, there has been a significant rise in bird diseases over recent years, especially in avian pox, which has spread rapidly since its first appearance in the UK about 5 years ago. Research suggests that this spread is facilitated by birds gathering at 'feeding stations', i.e. bird tables, bird feeders, bird baths, etc. **Please help reduce the spread of bird diseases by regular and thorough cleaning of bird feeders, bird tables and bird baths.**