

Toads are in national decline due to habitat loss, disease, road casualties and recently, climate change. More of this later.

The patrol was started by Nea and Andy Horsford in 2009, with me joining them later.

The objective of the patrol is to help our local toads reach their ancestral spawning pond which is in the garden of Fruit Tree Farm on Guist Bottom Road. We patrol the lower end of the road 7 days a week in February/March from dusk for about 2 hours, picking up the toads, putting them in a bucket and placing them safely by the pond. We now have 21 enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers with at least 2 out every night if the weather conditions are suitable for the toads (usually wet or damp!)

This year we saved 101 toads along with numbers of frogs and common newts. Over the years we have helped over 3000 toads and again numerous frogs and newts. We have seen a marked decline in migrating toads over the last 2 years mainly due, I believe, to climate change. Toads will only migrate when the temperature is above 6 degrees centigrade and preferably when it is wet or damp. We have experienced some very cold/dry conditions in February/March which is the migrating 'window' and they are simply not bothering to migrate and hence spawn.

Because the patrols are organised on a rota basis, volunteers never get to see each other so some years ago I organised a Tea Party in July so that we could all get together. This has proved very successful and has now been extended to a pre patrol party in January.

We are affiliated to the Froglife charity which collects our data, and data from other patrols across the country, to monitor toad numbers year by year. They also offer advice and information on organising patrols. We hold a collection at our party and donate the money to the charity.

We are all volunteers; we receive no funding so any help you could give financially would be most welcome.

Terry Houghton

Organiser of the Stibbard Toad Patrol

Apologies for not attending, I am in Scotland on holiday.