



Newsletter of the British Herpetological Society

Established 1947

## An interview with Achmad Ariefiandy, Komodo Survival Program

We had the opportunity to ask Achmad Ariefiandy who is the Senior Research for the Komodo Survival Program some questions regarding Komodo conservation and give an overview of the current situation.

**A new tourism development has been announced for the Komodo key sites. How is this going to affect or benefit the wild populations?**

Basically, what the Indonesian government did during 2020-2021 on Komodo National Park is renovating old tourism infrastructure at Loh Buaya valley, they replaced old and scattered infrastructure and built a new integrated building and jetty. The government also replaced the old concrete pathway and made a new elevated deck (2m height) from the jetty to the main building (Tourist Information Centre), to minimize contact or avoid interaction between visitors and wildlife.

The other thing to consider is this project is being built on same the location that previously had buildings and human activities (tourism), small part of Loh Buaya valley, a designated tourist area in Rinca Island that has been open for public visitation since 1989. The current renovation and construction area is only 0.013km<sup>2</sup> (a very small portion of area if we compare to the total Rinca island area ~200km<sup>2</sup>). The remaining island area (more than 99,9%) is strictly protected and remains untouched.

There has been misleading information which states that the government is going to build a so called “Jurassic Park” and change the entire island into amusement park. The truth is they only renovated the old existing infrastructure in a tiny area to mitigate the future conflict (mitigate interaction) between visitor and wildlife. This was needed to mitigate the impact of the increasing trends of tourist visitation to Komodo National Park. The



new infrastructure also will serve as tourist information centre, that will deliver better education and knowledge about Komodo dragons and conservation to the visitor.

In the media, there is also information regarding the Indonesian government giving permission for a private company to establish a private resort in Komodo National Park. However, as far as I can see, to date there are no



activities like this yet. According to my knowledge, even if the news is true, such a permit is only allowing such activities in the designated tourism area zonation. The total area dedicated for the tourism zonation is less than 1.5% of the total terrestrial area in Komodo National Park, so it is still considered very small compared to the core zone and other protected areas in KNP.

The Komodo National Park also has a strict regulation to allowed activities and construction within the park, so in the end, if the private company(s) finally obtain the permit and are allowed to build any infrastructures, they are only allowed to build semi-permanent buildings. They are only allowed to build in less than 10% of the tourism zonation, which means the maximum infrastructure that is allowed to be built on the island is less than 0.1% of the total terrestrial area.

With strict regulation and monitoring, I think it will not significantly affect the Komodo dragon (*as long as the activities and infrastructures are environmentally friendly, pass the environmental impact assessment, and they obey and follow the government regulation without any compromise*). However, I personally rather prefer that the entire island is free from any resort or accommodation for tourists. It will be much better to have all the tourists stay on the boat (liveaboard) or just stay at Labuan Bajo (nearest town), to keep the entire

island as wild as possible.

Each year, since 2002, Komodo National Park and Komodo Survival Program conduct Komodo dragon and ungulate prey population monitoring programs. There are 11 sites, on 5 islands (Komodo, Rinca, Padar, Gili Motang and Nusa Kode) within Komodo National Park that regularly monitored using camera traps and mark-recapture methods. To date there are more than 1,200 komodos that have been tagged and monitored.

**Flores island has always been ‘the unknown/forgotten habitat’ for the species. What is different between this island and Rincha/Komodo islands? Are the dragons protected in the same way?**

Flores is a very large Island (~13,500 km<sup>2</sup>) compared to Komodo (~300 km<sup>2</sup>) and Rinca (~200 km<sup>2</sup>). Komodo dragons are a protected species no matter where they live, however, the entire Komodo and Rinca Islands are protected areas within the Komodo National Park and Komodo dragons roam these entire island areas. On the other hand, even though Flores island is huge, at the moment the Komodo dragons only live on the west coast and north coast of the island, estimated only occupied ~500km<sup>2</sup> areas. Within this area of distribution, only around 15% are highly protected Nature Reserves (i.e. Wae Wuul, Riung and Wolo Tadhoo) and around 35% are protected forest. These forests are less protected com-







pared to nature reserves, which are managed by the local government. The remaining 50% of the area are non-protected.

The other problem is on Flores, Komodo dragon live side by side with human settlements. With 1.8 million humans on the entire island, this has resulted in human-wildlife conflict which was inevitable.

With this, it has made Komodo dragon conservation more challenging on Flores compared to the Komodo National Park.

On Flores, Government authorities (BBKSDA NTT) and Komodo Survival Programs regularly monitor the Komodo dragon population at Wae Wuul Nature Reserve, Ontoloe Island, Pota and also in un-protected areas, Longos Island.

**Climate change is a global issue in our daily news. Are dragons going to be affected by these climatic changes and in what way?**

Climate change (including the possible threat from sea level rise) will potentially affect wildlife that live on small islands and low land areas (i.e. habitat near coastal areas). There are some Komodo dragon population that live on very small islands, for example, Nusa Kode (7.8km<sup>2</sup>) and Gili Motang (9.5km<sup>2</sup>) within Komodo National Park. On the other hand, on Flores, even though it is a large island, their distribution lies in areas restricted only in lowland forest and savanna in the coastal areas. The increasing temperature and possibilities of sea level

rise most likely will affect the habitat around coastal areas and might potentially reduce suitable habitat for Komodo dragons. This might result in a reduction of the habitat patch occupancy, unless, they have the capability to adapt with climate change. Unfortunately, at the moment we don't have any information on how well Komodo dragons might adapt to the global climate change and sea level rise.

**How do you envision the future of conservation for Komodo dragons?**

On Komodo National Park, the Komodo dragons are well protected, as long as the Government continues to maintain protection and mitigate the impact of tourist visitation (that shows the increasing trends), I think Komodo dragon will be just fine.

On Flores, even though it is more challenging, the increase in attention during the last decade, and better understanding of the situation and information regarding Komodo dragon population, it is expected that conservation efforts will increase and continue in the right direction.

The only way to secure and conserve the remaining Komodo dragon population on Flores is through direct involvement from all stake holders. Not only from government and NGOs, it also needs commitment from local communities. Therefore, education and community awareness programs, along with initiatives that benefit local communities in protecting Komodo dragons and their habitats is crucial.





# The British Herpetological Society's Student Grant Scheme

Written by Becca Perl

The BHS Student Grant Scheme was set up by our Research Committee Chair Dr Chris Gleed-Owen in 2004, to help early-career herpetologists. It is open to applications twice a year, in June and December. For more information, see here: <https://www.thebhs.org/funding/bhs-student-grant-scheme>

Chris explains: "Twice a year, students from around the world can apply for project funding. We prioritise projects in developing countries, and particularly ones working with endangered species. We've funded projects in Nepal, India, Thailand, Uganda, South Africa, Madagascar, as well as the UK, Portugal, Malta, and other European countries. We have a limited budget and are able to help about five students a year, so unfortunately we have to turn lot of worthy applicants away."

He adds: "There was a particularly good intake of applications in 2021, so we accepted some corporate sponsorship to make up the shortfall in funding, and help more students."

The 2021 recipients, each of whom received £300, were:

- ♦ **Aabha Pokharel** who is studying frog assemblages in Madi Valley, Nepal.
- ♦ **Ellie Dobbs** who is studying the conservation status of Maltese snakes.
- ♦ **Pawan Pareek** who is studying nesting habitat of the red-crowned roofed turtle in the Chambal Sanctuary, India.
- ♦ **Srijana Timilsina** who is studying gharial habitats and human conflict in Chitwan National Park, Nepal.

Pawan Pareek said of the funding: "I am truly grateful to the British Herpetological Society for this support. The grant helped me fund my PhD research work to document information about nest site selection of critically-endangered red-crowned roofed turtles (*Batagur kachuga*)."

In order for the scheme to help more students, The British Herpetological Society is looking for new corporate sponsors. If you can offer any help with funding, or have any useful suggestions, please contact Research Committee Chair Chris Gleed-Owen by email: [chris@cgoecology.com](mailto:chris@cgoecology.com).

# Recent legacies to the BHS

Written by Trevor Rose

Like many charities, BHS relies on donations in various forms to fund its activities and meet its aims and objectives. We pride ourselves that our running costs (including the production and distribution of our publications) is covered by membership fees, but with spiralling costs each year there is little left for funding of other important and often unique projects in research and conservation.

BHS has been very fortunate to have been the beneficiary of two large legacies that have boosted our conservation fund and hence our ability to contribute significantly to some important projects.

In January 2019 we heard the sad news that Ronald Ward-Howlett had passed away aged 86. Mr Ward Howlett was a long-standing member of the BHS although we lost contact in recent years when he evidently resided in a nursing home. As a professional he had been in banking and finance, listing herpetology as his main interest. He sadly died with no known surviving relatives and left a large and complicated estate to three equal beneficiaries: British Herpetological Society, Zoological Society of London and the Linnean Society of London.

In January 2020 we received the legacy from Mr Ward Howlett's estate, a cheque to the value £36,000. In May 2021, we received a further legacy payment of £30,000. Executing the estate is complicated by the fact that the owner of the residential home where Mr Ward Howlett died has since been jailed for fraud so there are complicated legal matters which are ongoing.

Another long-standing BHS member, Mr Michael Warburg died in December 2020. Mr Warburg was an engineer in automation technology but had a passion for great crested newts, and in retirement was active with Friends of Chorleywood Common (after founding the organisation in 1990), later becoming its president. He left a legacy of £10,000 to BHS in his will, with an additional gift of £20,000 being added by his surviving wife, Rosemary. We cannot overstate how very grateful we are for the legacies gifted to the Society.

We are saddened by these losses to our membership but humbled by their generosity in passing. These legacies will be recognised as they are assigned to well deserving causes that meet the Society's aims and objectives. Such kind gifts significantly contribute to the conservation of our native reptiles and amphibians, for example with the recent purchase of Blackmoor in Hampshire and Parley Common in Dorset, to which BHS donated £25,000 and £10,000 respectively.

By leaving a bequest to the Society you too can help to secure the future for our native reptiles and amphibians, and contribute to their study and conservation. There has never been a more important moment; the world's herpetofauna faces threats of unprecedented scale, and only a great deal more work – which inevitably means more money - has any chance of alleviating this situation. The BHS has the necessary expertise and influence, but only limited funds, to make an impact in this vital area.

*A legacy to the BHS is a gift that will live forever.*



**British  
Herpetological  
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# Disease in your frogs or tadpoles?

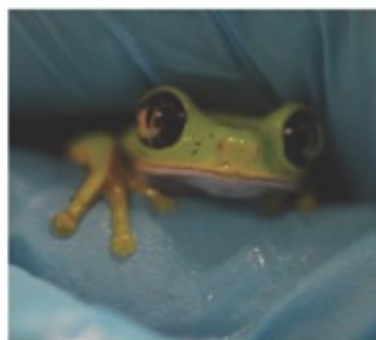


Have you seen any disease, noticed unusual symptoms, or had unexpected deaths in your tadpoles?

Are your tadpoles bloated – maybe with pink or yellow discolouration around the abdomen?

Have you observed any change in their behaviour, such as: sudden and erratic movements, swimming in circles, loss of equilibrium, sluggishness, floating at the surface or death?

Scientists at the University of Oxford need your help. They are trying to track the spread of a newly identified disease of tadpoles. If you suspect that your tadpoles are showing signs of the disease symptoms mentioned above, please make contact at <http://tadpole-doctor.co.uk>.



**<http://tadpole-doctor.co.uk>**

The Royal Society and the University of Oxford bear no responsibility for this project.





**Book your tickets here today!**

**Saturday March 12th - Sunday March 13th 2022**

**AHH / BHS Conference 2022 at Drayton Manor Park**

**"Working Together"**

**Keynote speakers:**  
Dr. Jonathon G. Howard  
Research veterinarian  
aka "Beardie Vet"

Robert Mendyk,  
Curator of Herpetology,  
Audubon Zoo, New Orleans

**After-dinner Speaker:**  
Tell Hicks  
Artist and Herpetologist



**Saturday March 12th - Sunday March 13th 2022**  
**at Drayton Manor Park**

**AHH / BHS Conference 2022**  
**"Working Together"**

**Students: CALL FOR POSTERS**

**Does your project feature reptiles or amphibians?**  
**Take the opportunity to showcase your research at the 2022 event of the year!**  
**Discounted ticket prices to those who submit posters.**

**You can download forms and guidance at: [www.thebhs.org](http://www.thebhs.org)**  
**For further poster queries contact: [suzannesimpson@northkent.ac.uk](mailto:suzannesimpson@northkent.ac.uk)**

**Full Conference Program coming soon! Presentations - Stalls - Guided Zoo Tour**  
**Visit [www.thebhs.org](http://www.thebhs.org) for more info and book your tickets now!**



## AHH/ BHS Conference Programme

### Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022

8.30 – 9.00	Registration		
9.00 – 9.45	Chris Mitchell	Into the future together - working with our zoos	Drayton Manor Park Head of Zoo Operations
9.45 – 10.30	Dr. Peter Sound	The Politics of Herpetological Husbandry	DGHT (Germany); President, EATA
Break			
10.45 – 11.30	Francis Cosquiere	My Life with Coachwhips	Founder member of AHH
11.30 – 12.15	Mary Pinborough	Keeping Safe: Biosecurity and Quarantine	Director, PALS
Lunch			
1.15 – 1.45	Tim Baker	The Lair of the Dragons: Smaug at Drayton Manor	DMP Keeper
1.45 – 2.00	Student poster presentation		
2.00 – 2.45	Dr. Huw Golledge	The Welfare of Rodents used as Food for Reptiles	CEO & Scientific Director, UFAW
Break			
3.00 – 3.45	Dr. Jonathon Howard Keynote speaker	Seasons in the sun: Bearded Dragons in the wild	"Beardie Vet"; Vice President of the Australian Herpetological Society
After Dinner	Prof. Mark O'Shea MBE	Reptile and Amphibian Art in Miniature: An adventure into herpeto-philately	Professor of Herpetology, University of Wolverhampton

Our Conference  
Sponsors: Thank you!



## AHH/ BHS Conference Programme

### Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2022

8.30 – 9.00	Registration		
9.00 – 9.45	Oliver Witte	The Citizen Conservation Initiative - Together against species extinction	Law Advisor, DGHT
9.45 – 10.30	Adam Radovanovic	The Husbandry & Reproduction of the Saharan uromastix	Curator of Reptiles, Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park
Break			
10.45 – 11.30	Roman Astheimer	Cohabitation - a form of enrichment?	DGHT (Germany)
11.30 – 12.15	Robert Mendyk Keynote speaker	The Husbandry and Reproduction of Monitors	Curator, Audubon Zoo; Editor of BIAWAK
Lunch			
1.15 – 2.00	Dr. Gerardo Garcia	Komodo dragons: an open letter to you	Curator of Reptiles and Lower Vertebrates, Chester Zoo
2.00 – 2.45	Dr. Krissy Green MRCVS	Reptile mental health: Excessive anthropomorphism or emerging welfare concern	Exotics veterinary surgeon ARK Veterinary Group
Break			
3.00 – 4.00	Robert Mendyk Keynote speaker	It Takes A Village: Building Bridges and Working Together	Curator, Audubon Zoo; Editor of BIAWAK
4.00	Close of Conference		

Our Conference  
Sponsors: Thank you!





# Have you seen turtles in the UK?



Take part in our research on the distribution of released pet turtles in UK waterbodies. Submit your sightings of turtles to our survey and find out more on our website: [www.turtletally.co.uk](http://www.turtletally.co.uk)

## Turtle Tally UK Citizen Science Project



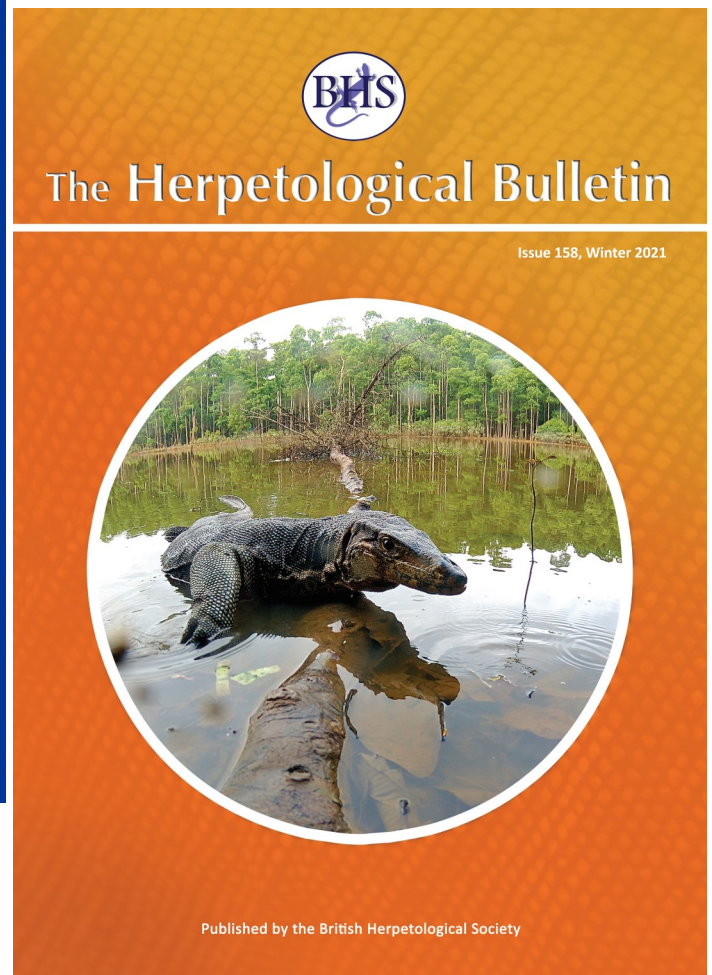
Website: [www.turtletally.co.uk](http://www.turtletally.co.uk)

Contact us: [turtletallyuk@gmail.com](mailto:turtletallyuk@gmail.com)

University of  
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# Why not take a look at our other publications?



Membership with the British Herpetological Society  
gives access to all three publications for just  
**£25 a year** (student members, £18).





To our BHS members,

We are always interested in hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to share anything regarding herps. We would love to hear about your animals, your experiences, their care and husbandry, ideas, training, research and more.

It is important to us that you have that opportunity to share with the wider community, as we all benefit from sharing knowledge and experience.

Kind regards,

*Suzie Simpson*

**Email:** [natterjack@thebhs.org](mailto:natterjack@thebhs.org)

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