

The British Herpetological Society



Founded in 1947 by Dr Malcolm Smith, the British Herpetological Society (BHS) is now more than sixty years old and still going strong – pretty good for an organisation run on a voluntary basis! writes BHS Development Officer Mark Hollowell.

Dr Smith's main interest when he started the society – becoming its first President – was Britain's herpetofauna. Whilst retaining a strong focus on the study and conservation of our native reptiles and amphibians, the BHS today has a much wider remit. This includes promoting knowledge of captive breeding and husbandry techniques as well as actively supporting international reptile and amphibian conservation efforts.

Throughout its life, the society's core aims have remained unchanged – to promote interest, awareness and learning relating to the study of reptiles and amphibians and, where possible, to provide direct support for activities that further these aims. The society caters for members of all ages, starting with junior members and runs an active Young Herpetologists' Club (YHC). Institutions such as universities and libraries also support the society.

Publications

Today, the BHS has four main areas of focus – conservation, captive care and breeding, scientific research and education. Dedicated groups and committees bring effort and expertise to bear on each of these aspects. Key to realising its objectives are the society's high quality publications, which members can choose to receive either in printed or online format.

The Journal is the society's prestigious quarterly scientific journal, containing new research on a range of topics and studies. *The Bulletin* is also published quarterly and contains reptile and amphibian-related

articles of more general interest – including captive breeding and husbandry as well as book reviews.

The Natterjack is the society's monthly newsletter and includes herpetological news items, updates on events and meetings, plus a section where members can advertise captive-bred animals or items of equipment for sale. Members of the YHC receive both *The Natterjack* and their own dedicated newsletter. All publications



are produced by the voluntary efforts of dedicated society members, which is quite an achievement!

Meetings

The society currently holds two main general meetings a year – the AGM in spring, which normally takes place in London, frequently at the zoo, and an autumn meeting usually held in Amersham, Buckinghamshire. Both feature talks from speakers on a range of herpetology-related topics. The Amersham meeting also includes displays of live animals brought by members. Both meetings, of course, offer a chance to catch up with other members, ask questions and share experiences. In addition, the BHS research committee (in

conjunction with Amphibian and Reptile Conservation) organises an annual scientific meeting - focusing on native herpetofauna research - which is always extremely well attended.

The society has also given financial support to a number of international conservation projects, as listed on the society's website. Conservation of native UK reptiles and amphibians is supported via a land fund, which serves to contribute to the purchase of important sites, and direct site management activity by BHS members, particularly in the Dorset area. Recent years have also seen very popular annual field trips to various areas of the country in search of particular species.

The BHS is a registered charity – one of the few herpetological societies worldwide to be so – and is managed on behalf of its membership by an elected council. All income from membership subscriptions, publication of books and bequests directly support the society's objectives of promoting the study and awareness of reptiles and amphibians.

We welcome new members whatever your area of interest in herpetology – many species are maintained and bred by BHS members so expertise is always available as well. We offer a range of membership options – and joining is easy via the website. So please, have a look at the website or talk to us when you see the BHS / YHC table at events around the country. In 2010 the BHS remains as active and relevant as ever in the field of herpetology. ■

Further info

For further information, and details about joining, see the BHS's website at <http://www.thebhs.org/>

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