

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

BUFO BUFO (European common toad: JUVENILE BASKING BEHAVIOUR.

Fieldwork on the ecology of *B. bufo* on the British Channel Island of Jersey was conducted during 2005–2007. During summer 2006, several daytime visits were made to one of the study sites (Grosnez pond in the Les Landes maritime heath in the NW) to assess pond desiccation. This particular pond was created by stone quarrying in past centuries and is fed by water draining through a cliff face, below which it is situated. It is heavily shaded by the cliff and other large rocks except when the sun is very high in the sky.

On several occasions in May and June 2006, 30 to 40 yearling (20–35 mm) toads (Fig. 1) were seen active along one side of the pond during the early afternoon and in full sun. On at least one occasion the air temperature at this location was in excess of 30°C. Small insects (particularly immature grasshoppers) were abundant there and shelter was available in the form of nearby vegetation and several rocks (Fig. 2). The toads were actively foraging or (apparently) basking, some being very dark in colour (Fig. 1), and “ran” away to hide when I approached. Several at least remained in this area of the pond perimeter until mid-August (C. Lenoir, *pers. comm.*).

Basking behaviour is known in other juvenile toads (reviewed by Carey, 1978) and specifically described for *B. americanus* (Taigen, 1981), as well as high altitude species such as the Andean *B. spinulosus* (Sinsch, 1989) and arid-landscape

dwellers like *B. debilis* (Seymour, 1972) and *B. granulatus* (Navas *et al.*, 2007). In European *Bufo*, this type of behaviour is more typical of juvenile green toads (*B. viridis*; *pers. obs.*) and natterjacks (*B. calamita*; T. Beebee, *pers. comm.*) but has not, to my knowledge, previously been described in *B. bufo* (R. Oldham, T. Beebee, *pers. comm.*). Meek & Jolley (2006), however, recorded diurnal sentinel/basking behaviour of adults in their study on *B. bufo* in France and daytime migration has been observed (e.g. Harrison, 1985).

For other *Bufo* spp., juvenile basking behaviour is attributed to the need to raise metabolism and therefore allow increased energy allocation to development (Taigen, 1981; discussed by Navas *et al.*, 2007). I suggest that this is also the case with the juvenile toads at Grosnez pond due to its heavy shading and the (often harsh) conditions on the surrounding heathland.

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Figure 1. Some of the juvenile toads seen active in full sun at Grosnez pond, Jersey, summer 2006. © J. Wilkinson.



Figure 2. Grosnez pond photographed from the adjacent cliff top. The area enclosed by the white line (NW side) is where the juvenile toads were seen. © J. Wilkinson.



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