

ARC/BHS Joint Scientific Meeting 2018

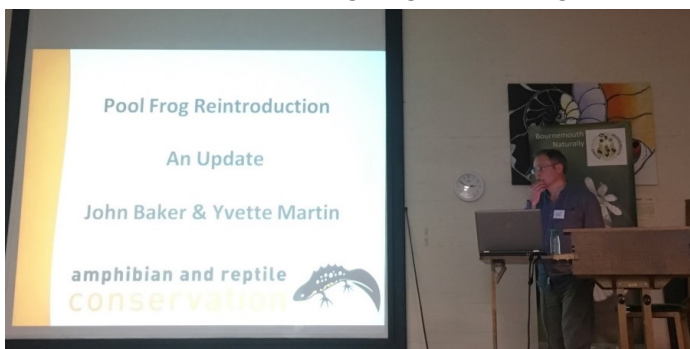
On Saturday 1st December, herpetologists from all over the country descended on Bournemouth for the annual Joint Scientific Meeting. The ARC/BHS Joint Scientific Meeting is a long running event that has been held for the past 20 years, usually at the beginning of December. The Meeting is designed to bring together academics, ecologists and amateur enthusiasts and share new information or research regarding amphibian and reptile conservation. Due to its format, the Meeting is always very popular with the event held at the Bournemouth Natural Science Society museum, although it has been held elsewhere before (such as Dublin in 2015). There are always a great range of talks from projects based both in the UK and overseas with the day ending with a raffle to raises funds for various great herpetofauna related causes.



Arguably one of the most important talks of the Meeting was that given by John Baker, providing an update on the pool frog reintroduction in Norfolk. It's good to hear that the frogs are doing well!

This year was only the second time I'd been to the Meeting in Bournemouth (after presenting some of my research on midwife toads there last year). The range of talks this year covered all topics from how climate

change and deforestation is shaping reptile assemblages in South-east Asia to investigating how often great crest-



ed newts escape bottle traps. There is a wide range of research and conservation that is conducted each year regarding reptiles and amphibians in the UK and the Joint Scientific Meeting is one of the best outlets to hear all about it. Not all of this research is focussed in the UK and there was a nice even balance for those wanting to



learn more about what's going on with species from further afield. The venue itself is great for zoological meeting due to the treasure trove of taxidermy mounts and other specimens giving it an appropriate feel. As well as the talks there were the usual stalls selling books and merchandise from which I purchased two amazing prints from David Sewell.

I should mention that on the Friday night before the Meeting, there is always a curry night organised by ARC's very own John Wilkinson. Unfortunately I missed it this year due to other commitments but I was still able to attend the pub afterwards to catch up with old friends and meet some new herpetologists. Conferences are a great way to network, learn about new techniques for your own work/research and have a great time with other people who all share a common interest. If none of the science, networking or generally welcoming atmosphere temps you – perhaps the raffle will. Hopefully I'll bump into you there next year.

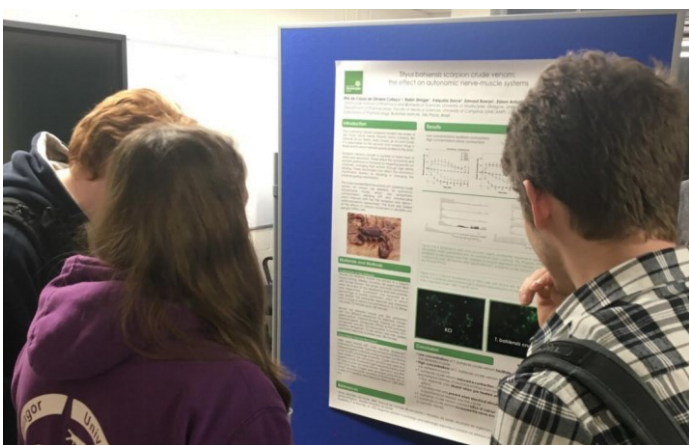
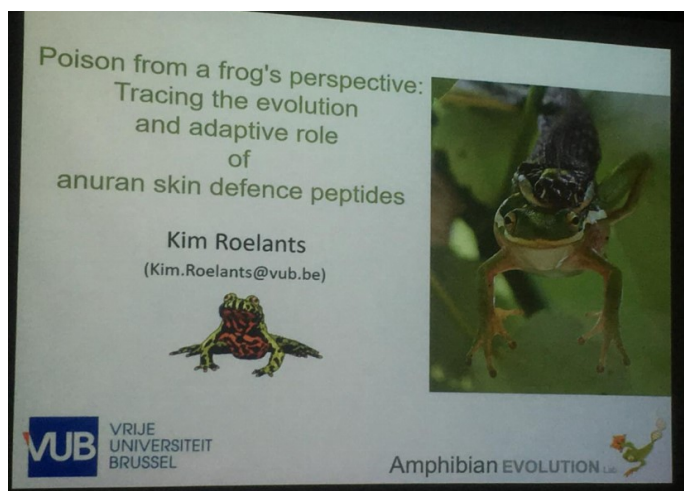
Venom Day

Bangor University

By Steven Allain

Venom Day is somewhat of a unique conference held towards the end of each year at Bangor University. As far as I'm aware it is the only student organised conference in the UK that is dedicated to research surrounding venom (and other toxins such as poison). This year the conference was held on the 8th December and I can guarantee that around that time, a large number of herpetologists must have clogged up the roads and public transport in order to get to north-west Wales for the single day conference. Bangor isn't the easiest place to get to from south-east England but are the scenes along the way worth it! Around 130 delegates were in attendance this year and unfortunately I missed the pub quiz held on the Friday night before Venom Day. This was the first year in the four years that I've been attending the event that there wasn't an Oxford-style debate used to warm up the

For those that have never been to Venom Day, the event is held in the Brambell Building, a giant concrete cube that has all the hallmarks of being constructed in the 1960s. Venom Day occupies on the large lecture theatres which has a capacity of somewhere close to 200 people. As always, I quickly found an appropriate seat so that I could tweet what was going on as well as be in a good position to hear the speaker so that I could take notes during each of the talks. This year there were a wide range of interesting talks covering every topic under the sun from the evolution of centipede venom to anti-microbial peptides from midwife toad skin may one day be used to help treat diabetes. Venom Day never ceases to amaze me; all of the talks were truly informative and well delivered. As a humble amphibian biologist whom has recently moved to working on reptiles, I'm happy to admit that some aspects went over my head a little. The beauty of science is that you can go away and read up on the topics, therefore making sense of what one seemed like gibberish.

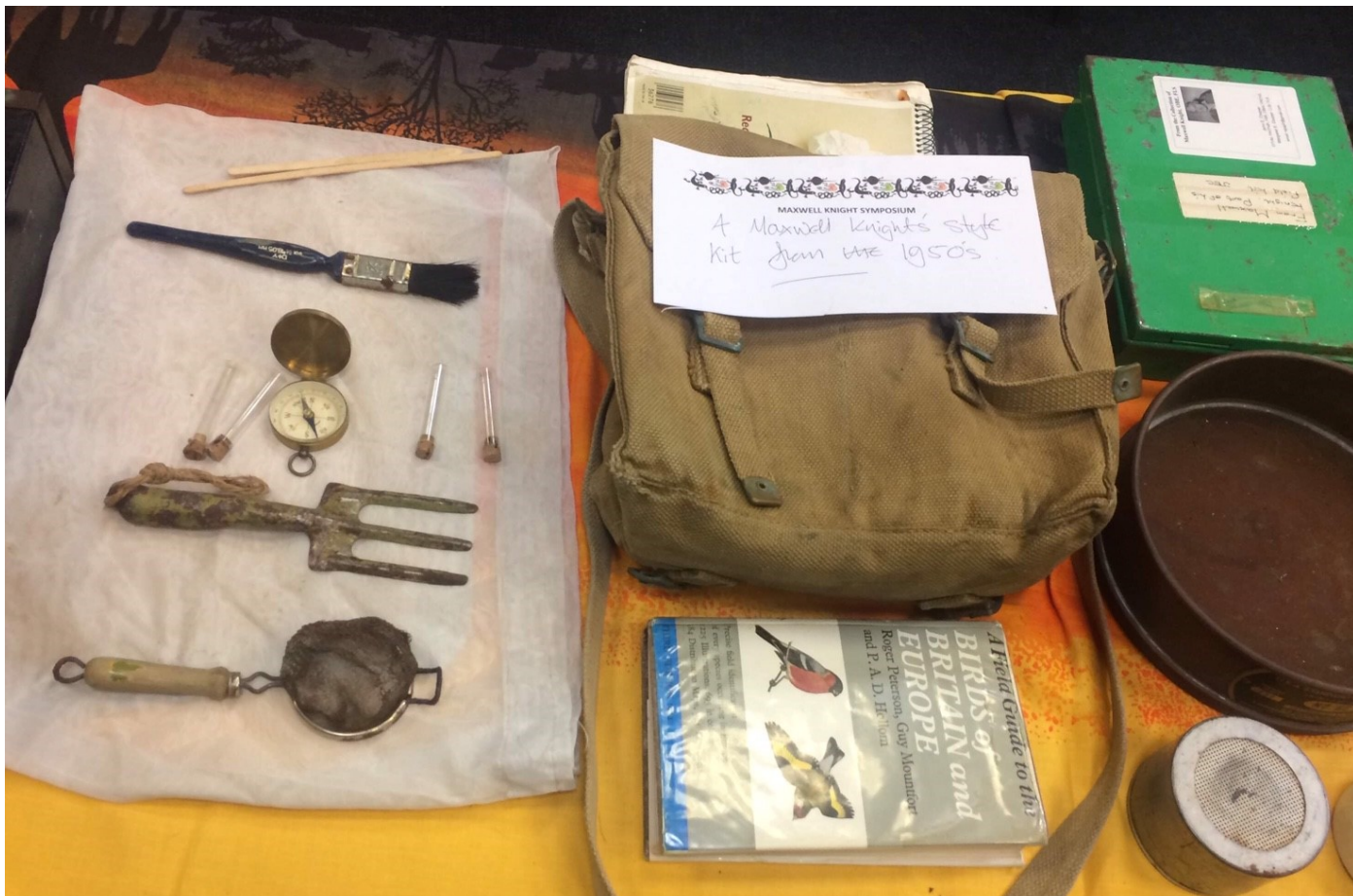


Some of the conference attendees inspecting one of the posters on display during the poster session.

crowd prior to the main event. I can't comment on the quiz myself but from what I heard from other attendees it was quite fun.

My favourite talk of the day, investigating the evolution of anuran defensive peptides (for obvious reasons – it's on frogs!).

One of the things I loved about Venom Day this year is that all delegates got a free Venom Day branded mug – which is now living in my office. Why you may be asking? The organisers wanted to reduce the amount of plastic used by everyone and so mugs were of course the best fit, as most of us can only operate after a copious amount of tea/coffee. Every year after the conference there is always a meal at a local Chinese restaurant that is always very well attended. This is a great time to chat to other attendees or the speakers and discuss the talks or ask questions. Catching up with familiar faces or networking with new people is always one of the best things to get out of a conference. I thoroughly enjoyed Venom Day and I would like to thank all of the speakers, attendees and organisers for making it such a worthwhile pilgrimage.



Major Maxwell Knight, the original “Nature detective” and MI5 Spymaster.

(A man, who lived a life, in parallel tracks)

By Paul H. Eversfield

The successful commemorative symposium held at Birkbeck College WC1 0PD, 24/11/2018 to commemorate one of the founders of the British Herpetological Society, on the fiftieth anniversary of his death in 1968.

It was made clear, that after his service in MI5 during the 1920's and through into the post war years of the late 1940's. Maxwell Knight devoted much of his subsequent life to perhaps his first love, Natural history. Through writing and broadcasting on radio for the BBC, Major Maxwell Knight morphed into the very familiar character; Uncle Max.

During that period, following his writings and broadcasts a very young Prof Jonathan Cooper, was taken to correspondence and meetings with the great man himself. Mentoring and fostering a love of nature including reptiles and amphibians. As an introduction to the symposium,

Jonathan described his early life as a fascinated nature detective, whose frequent forays into the countryside of Essex discovered the enduring passion for insects, among



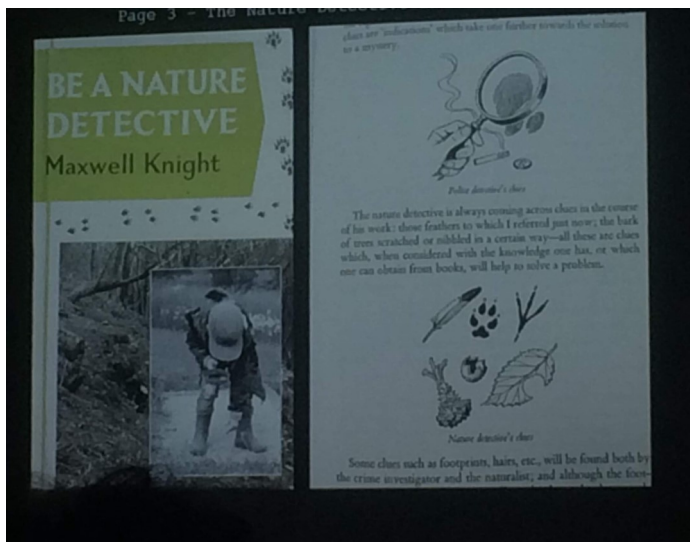
phibians and reptiles. Early membership in 1954 of the Amateur Entomological Society, the Scouts and when his family subsequently moved from their home in Essex to Berkshire, finally in 1955 a meeting with Major Maxwell Knight, aka Uncle Max.

With his books as a guide, membership of the famous Camberley Natural History Society and field trips across the heaths and commons of Surrey, Jonathan, was hooked on a life of a naturalist.

His academic career blossomed further at Bristol University and following a successful degree in Veterinary science, Jonathan went on in 1962 to do a period of VSO work in Tanzania. Continued dialogue and correspondence with his mentor and friend Maxwell Knight, saw him sending live Geckos to “Uncle Max” via the postal service of the time.

Following the African experience, Jonathan and his wife Margaret returned to the UK, where he did follow up academic work on tropical diseases in Edinburgh. It was at this period the tragic news came to them that their dear friend had passed away in November 1968. Friendship continued to flourish with Maxwell Knight's widow Susi and they remained close friends until her death in 1981.

As a legacy of the relationship, Johnathan and Margaret were bequeathed a locked filing cabinet containing an archive of treasured papers, which largely due to their own busy lives and frequent excursions to their second home in Africa, remain a locked treasure unopened for subsequent decades.

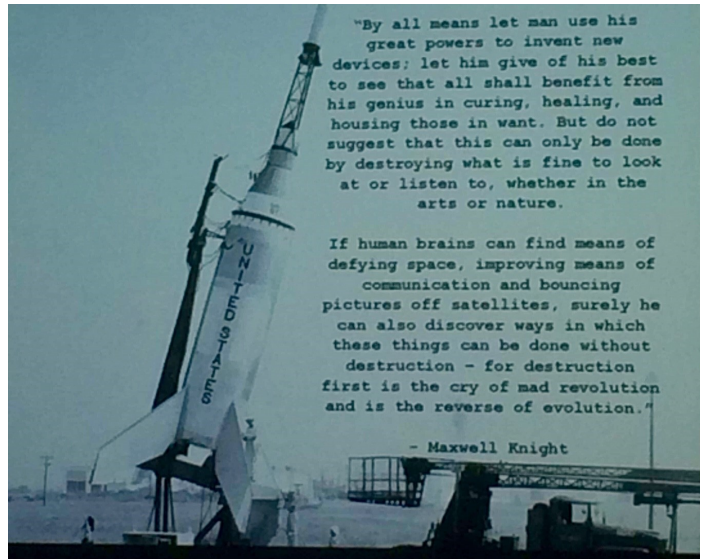


In 1984, a book published, “The man that was M”, written by Anthony Masters opened a Pandora's box. Alleging that Major Maxwell Knight, aside having a distinguished service career and measuring up as the character M in the Ian Fleming James Bond books, perhaps also had a dark side with suggested character traits, which

were alien to the man whom Johnathan and Margaret had befriended all those many years previous.

It seems perhaps that the parallel tracks of the life of this great naturalist, had depths?

However, despite the obvious truths, that emerged about Maxwell Knight, in the fact he was a very accomplished spy master who had been involved at the highest level of secret service work, a subsequent book published in 2017 by Henry Hemming, M: Maxwell Knight, MI5's greatest



spy master, presented the case that some of the darker elements presented in the earlier text had been misrepresented and possibly distorted.

It is fair to say, that until the book published in 1984, Johnathan and Margaret knew little or nothing of the Spy world activities of their friend. However, with a locked filing cabinet archive the intrigue to what was in the draws took on a new interest. At this point, another friend and colleague at Haith's, Simon King, craved the opportunity to access the files and explore the archive.

Frightened face of Nature: Major Maxwell Knight, had been a prolific author in the subject of Natural History and his frequent appearances of the BBC, including a long running radio series: Natures Parliament, showed a deep understanding of the subject. Books such as, “Be a Nature detective”, demonstrated the keen eye and ear for detail. Throughout his life, he had imbibed his passion for the natural world with diverse pet keeping and from Snakes, Lizards and Mongooses, his apartment accommodation was a home to these companion creatures. It is perhaps then that the discovery within the locked filing cabinet was an unpublished volume called Frightened Face of Nature. In it, prophecies of the consequence of degraded environments are presented and early stirrings of concern at what man was doing to the natural world.

With such a treasured archive, Simon and his family are piecing together the unpublished work and expect to get a book published to reflect the thoughts and words of this undoubted great naturalist.

It seems fitting, that for a man, who clearly lived a life in two parallel tracks should have a piece published reflecting the issues of nature and his deep understanding of the subject. Furthermore, to encourage the young people of today in the ways of observing and researching the natural world provides a suitable tribute to a “Massive appreciation of nature”.



BHS Conservation Fund supports sand lizard breeding facility

With funding from BHS and after months of planning a luxurious captive breeding facility for sand lizards has been completed. The vivarium was constructed by Paul Hudson, who for many years has raised hundreds of sand lizards for reintroduction programmes in the north west of England helping to restore their historic range.

It took 3 months of weekends to construct the facility which was then planted up with marram grass to create the species natural habitat.

Paul from Penrith said ‘ *I chose my new house mainly because it has a good location for a captive breeding vivarium so I can continue the work of breeding and reintroducing this important species* ’

For further information visit our Facebook page or <https://www.arc-trust.org/news/pauls-new-lizard-lounge>



CITIZENS,



WE NEED YOU!

...to contribute to Hadlow College's National
'Turtle Tally' Citizen Science Project

Help us collect data on introduced turtle and terrapin species:

- Saturday 30th & Sunday 31st March
- Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th April
- Saturday 13th & 14th April 2019

Visit ***hadlow.ac.uk/turtletally***
for more details on how to get involved.



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0719





Pond creation for the Natterjack toad

Ben Harrower

RZSS Conservation Programme Manager

I have always aspired to work with the natterjack, a toad more associated to the Mediterranean than living along the south coast of Scotland. A toad that runs and has the loudest amphibian call in Europe – what’s not to love?

Through communications with an expert in Scotland’s native reptiles and amphibians - Pete Minting, it was clear that there were opportunities to improve and create habitat along the Solway coast. This is where the BHS conservation fund comes in. I applied for the fund to facilitate pond creation at a site favourable for the natterjack and was successful.

The site is near a small coastal village facing out across the Solway Firth. It sits between two known natterjack populations; Mersehead (RSPB reserve) and Caerlaverock (Scottish Natural Heritage Reserve). The site consists of a small field situated on farmland to the north of the village which has been set aside for specially for the toads and provides a good canvas for pond creation.

With the BHS funding, the aim was to use the funds to



Photo 2: Proposed pond creation area

procure material and secure machinery for the pond creation. A local plant hire company agreed to the task – not



Photo 3: Digger heading for the site. Photo Thomas Doherty-Bone



Photo 4: Soaked through but the ponds looking good. Photo Thomas Doherty-Bone

straight forward when you have to track a digger along the rocky coastline to the site. For the pond lining material – RawMat was used. The logistics of organising labour, material and machinery wasn't straight forward and that wasn't even considering what the weather may do. It came down to the 6th of October 2018 when Pete Minting, Thomas Doherty-Bone (RZSS) and Craig Close (RZSS) met to undertake the work. I unfortunately got tied up with releasing Eurasian beavers in Knapdale for-

est, but the guys got to it in the pouring rain.

The BHS conservation fund along with volunteer support made this work happen. It is hoped in the very near future that natterjacks will now be translocated onto this site to re-establish a long-lost population. I would urge anyone needing small amounts of funding for conservation work to consider the BHS fund. Thank you for the support!



Photos © Laura Grogan



Fleay's barred frog



Chytridiomycosis resistance in frogs

- Like working with animals? Endangered wildlife species?
- Want to make a difference for wildlife conservation?
- Keen to develop your skills in scientific experimental design?
- Want to work with a leading Australian wildlife research team?



Professor Hamish McCallum's research team has a PhD opportunity available for a highly motivated applicant to study frog chytrid fungal disease.

Chytridiomycosis (caused by *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*) is the most devastating disease threat to biodiversity ever recorded. It has caused the decline and extinction of hundreds of frog species around the world.

The successful candidate will have the opportunity to make a direct conservation impact by working with endangered frog species of eastern Australia. The project involves working with captive animals to

To be eligible, applicants must have First Class Honours or equivalent. Peer-reviewed publications are advantageous. Successful applicants will be awarded a **PhD scholarship stipend** (\$27,082 pa) plus project funding and support. **To apply**, submit a CV and one-page statement of your research interests to **Dr. Laura Grogan** with the subject line "PhD application" (l.grogan@griffith.edu.au).

For more information about the research team, the Environmental Futures Research Institute (EFRI), and Griffith University in QLD, Australia, please visit: www.mccallum-disease-ecology.com www.frogresearch.com www.griffith.edu.au

British Herpetological Society Spring AGM

Hadlow College

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH 2019

11.00AM – 4.00PM



Guest speakers include:

Paul and Maggie Coleman

Three Counties Tortoise Group

Talking about their work with Munster Zoo regarding breeding and rearing Cuora spp Asian Box Turtles and discussing North American Box turtles too.

Isobel Grefen and Markus Baur

Auffangstation für Reptilien

Discussing their experiences managing a well established reptile rehabilitation centre that rehomes thousands of animals a year in Munich, Germany.

Jan Clemons

BHS Conservation Officer

Talking about the recent, privately guided BHS trip to Madagascar.

The annual general meeting will be held between speakers and **The National Centre for Reptile Welfare (NCRW)** will be open for tours. Submit your herp photos into our annual competition to win prizes! For further details see our webpage:

<https://www.thebhs.org/>



**Hadlow College, Animal Management Unit
Ashes Lane, Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 0AN.**

Bearded dragon drawing by Hadlow College Level 2 student, Jodie Barnes



Photo competition!

If you'd like to take part in the photo competition, you can contact the NatterJack email on the back page or find further details on our website and Facebook pages.





Advancing Herpetological Husbandry,
the British Herpetological Society
and the International Herpetological Society
Present

Bridging the Gap

Shared Expertise is Critical to Better Husbandry



11th-12th May 2019

Saturday Registration £5.00 (Includes Lunch)

Sunday Registration fee: £40.00

Book at: <http://www.thebhs.org/>



SATURDAY 11th AGENDA:

08:30-08:50 - Arrival tea, coffee and cookies/pastries

08:50-09:00 - Introductions

09:00-09:30 - Sam Perrett - 'Creating a Slice of Nature'

09:30-10:00 - Nathan Rusli - 'From Caecilians to Crocodiles - Herpetofauna Conservation in Indonesia'

10:00-10:30 - Roman Astheimer - 'Spilotes pullatus husbandry'

10:30-10:45 - 15 minutes recess

10:45-11:45 - Julian Clare - 'A basic guide to dwa reptile handling and bite protocols'

11:45-12:30 - Oliver Witte - 'Keeping and breeding Trimeresurus insularis'

12:30-13:30 - Buffet Lunch

13:30-14:30 - Frances Baines and Roman Muryn - 'Heating and Lighting, Ask the panel'

14:30-15:00 - Tea, coffee and cookies/pastries

15:00-16:00 - Frances Baines and Roman Muryn - ...continued

16:00-18:00 - Zoo Tour

CHAMELEONWORLD muji.co.uk



Looking for student research projects!

There are amazing prizes to be won for the best research, this can be a project in the process or completed. The applicants need to submit an A3 poster to be displayed at the conference and the winner will present their project. Submit yours to the NatterJack email on the back page to enter.



**Advancing Herpetological Husbandry,
the British Herpetological Society
and the International Herpetological Society
Present**

Bridging the Gap

Shared Expertise is Critical to Better Husbandry

Venue:
Drayton Manor Park Hotel
Drayton Manor Drive
Tamworth
Staffordshire
B78 3TW
United Kingdom
Tel: 01827 285551

11th-12th May 2019

Saturday Registration £5.00 (Includes Lunch)
Sunday Registration fee: £40.00
Book at: <http://www.thebhs.org/>



Photo © Lorenzo De Roo

SUNDAY 12th AGENDA:

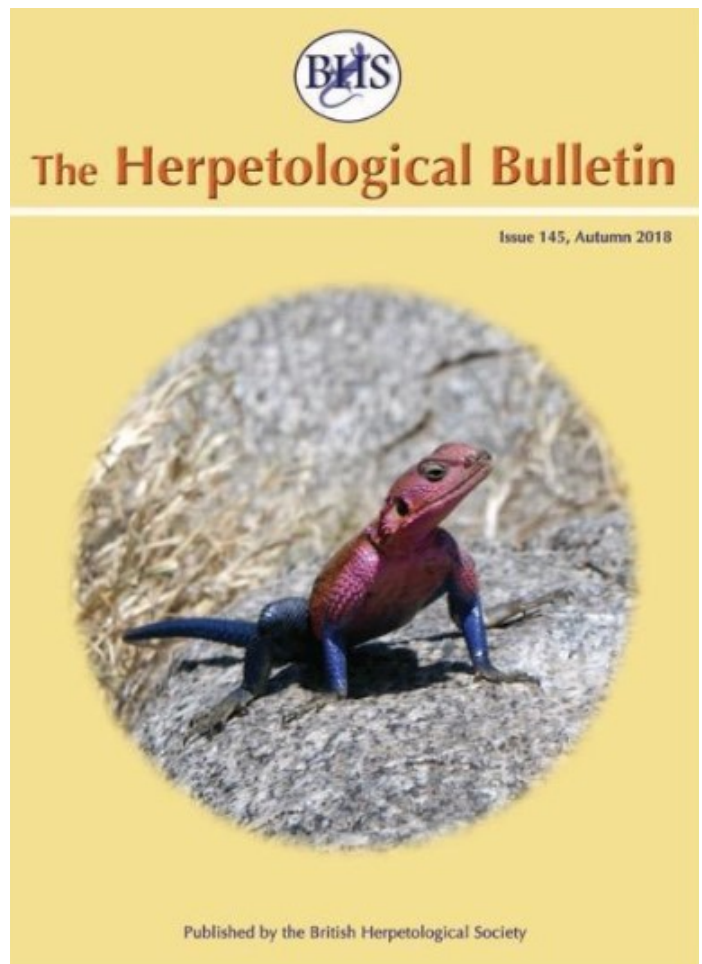
08:30-08:50 - Arrival tea, coffee and cookies/pastries
08:50-09:05 - Chris Mitchell - Introduction
09:05-09:50 - Paul Tapley - 'Torrid times with tiny toads - spawning *Melanophryniscus*'
09:50-10:35 - Phill Robinson - 'Núcleo Serra Grande, the last hope for the conservation of the Atlantic Bushmaster (*Lachesis muta rhombata*)'
10:35-10:45 - 10 minute recess
10:45-11:30 - Ben Owens - 'Dry rainforests and wet deserts - the importance of niche acknowledgment'
11:30-12:15 - Oliver Witte - 'Frogs and Friends'
12:15-13:35 - Buffet Lunch, runners-up poster presentations
13:35-13:45 - Presentation to student by Tell Hicks and judges
13:45-14:15 - Presentation by student competition winner
14:15-15:00 - Mary Pinborough - 'Common pathological issues caused by poor husbandry'
15:00-15:15 - Tea, coffee and cookies/pastries
15:15-16:00 - Ronald Brugge - 'Shinisaurus crocodilurus - Husbandry and breeding'
16:00-17:00 - Stephen Spawls - Keynote - 'African snakes in the wild and in captivity'







Why not take a look at our other publications?



Being a member of the British Herpetological Society gives access
to all three publications for just **£25 a year**.



THE NATTERJACK



Newsletter of the British Herpetological Society *Established 1948*

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 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

**Find out more about The British Herpetological Society
on our website at:**

<https://thebhs.org/>

Check out our social media pages too:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-British-Herpetological-Society-BHS-295241210567422/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/454242811428496/>

Twitter: @britishherpsoc

