



Newsletter of the British Herpetological Society

Established 1947

# BHS Annual General Meeting 2023

Written by Suzie Simpson



Each year, the BHS look to provide an opportunity to meet our members, to share the work we have been doing and to give researchers the opportunity to present in front of an audience. This year was no exception and was held at the Amersham Community Centre. The venue has a great space for delegates and we were so pleased to have so many stall holders attend to sell products and provide information.

Our first speaker was our very own, Steve Allain (DICE, University of Kent) whose talk was on establishing a monitoring protocol and investigating the characteristics of skin lesions in barred grass snakes (*Natrix helvetica*) in eastern England. The objectives here were to determine whether capture-mark-recapture methods were applicable, estimate the population size comparatively against the number of snake encounters, establish demographics of infection, determine occurrence of ophidiomycosis and the severity of lesions. Steve used Wild-ID software to assess photos and markings of the grass snakes to identify individuals. Steve accumulated 1,164

captures over three Summers and out of 656 individuals caught, 191 of these had skin lesions (29%). He summarised that there is a growing need to assess grass snake populations on a national scale. His methods were effective regarding capture-mark-recapture techniques. Biosecurity was highlighted as important as with any disease spread issue and fieldwork practices.

The BHS business section of the meeting covered Council changes for 2023/2024 along with the Chair's report about the current status and activities of the Society. Membership has been increasing steadily for the last few years and the trends remain positive. We have 50 Young Herpetologist members and with further focus on our younger members, we hope to encourage more into the membership in future. Our financial situation has been largely stable and has improved as of last year. We have strong publications being released regularly including The Herpetological Journal, The Herpetological Bulletin and the NatterJack newsletter. We also have reports being released by the committees which is great to see the

research being funded and carried out. We continue to increase our online footprint and are present on several social media platforms which promote events and news stories. We work collaboratively with many other organisations such as ARC Trust, Turtle Tally UK, the National Centre for Reptile Welfare (NCRW), SUN, and others providing support and, on occasions, funds such as for land purchases. A copy of the Chair's report along with other AGM documents can be found within the 'AGM 2023' folder under 'Members Downloads' on the website.

At the AGM, we sadly said goodbye to two long standing Trustees who have been Council members in different capacities for many years and who decided to stand down this year —Jan Clemons and Kim Le Breuilly. We are extremely grateful to both Trustees for their long service and extensive contributions to the ongoing success of the Society. A more detailed appreciation will follow



in a future NJ edition.

Our second speaker was Rachel Hester, whose talk covered unravelling the invasion history of the non-native alpine newt and the amphibian pathogen Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis in the UK. Rachel discussed the inva-



sion process and invasion genomics. She explained what we already know about this invasive species such as where they were introduced, that populations have tested positive for Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis (Bd) and they have a wide and patchy distribution. What we are unsure of is whether they are spreading, how many introductions there have been? Were they the reason *Bd* was introduced to the UK? How many populations are genetically distinct? Are they thriving? And is the dispersal by humans or natural?. Rachel is continuing to carry out genetic analysis to figure out some of the answers to these questions and we hope to hear her updates.

Our final speaker was Joshua Fulford from Chester Zoo talking on the Parson's chameleon and other reptile conservation, husbandry and breeding programmes.

Josh talked through the housing and husbandry for the chameleons kept at Chester Zoo. Bear in mind, when reading further, Parson's chameleon incubation periods are approximately 2 years!

All of them are kept in the Tropical Realm, at Chester Zoo, with adults on display and juveniles off display. Adults are kept in large walk-in enclosures with other species such as *Phelsuma grandis*, *Oplurus cuvieri*, *Zonosaurus maxima* and *Uroplatus henkeli*. They have holding enclosures outside of breeding season and in



breeding season to ensure there is no crossing of localities. The adults are fed large insects such as brown and black crickets, locusts, Pachnoda grubs, Dubia cockroaches, katydids and stick insects. Alongside wax-

worms, mealworms, flies and moriworms which Josh says gives good exercise for their tongues. They also provide the females with quail chicks seasonally which is a good source of calcium. Supplementation started with Nutrobal once a week but now they provide regular dusting of CalciumPlus and EarthProA. Those individuals that are gravid or unwell are provided more. Feeding also varies seasonally so they found they would feed 0-1 times a week in Winter periods and 5-7 in the Summer. In line with this, they observe more activity in the Summer and less during Winter. Humidity is maintained through manual spraying processes or misting systems setup and all exhibits are ventilated well.

They had several breeding attempts since 2018 where 34 eggs were laid in the November that year. Incubation was carried out for 3 months at 23 degrees Celsius using 1:1 water to vermiculite substrate. Unfortunately, by February 2019, several had collapsed and there was fungal growth. They were then moved to a new location and the temperatures altered for the remaining time. The final egg collapsed in July 2020 and there was a developing neonate but it had a spinal deformity. They continued with attempts for the 2020/2022 period and observed the males 'colouring up' and it is believed they mate in the morning. 'Daphne', one of the females, was also noted to have been shaking the branch and gaping. By 2020, the vermiculite mix was altered to a 'winter' drier mix which consisted of a ratio of 0.5:1 and replicating temperatures appropriate for that time of year. They again moved into the Summer period raising temperatures and replacing evaporated water. In June 2022, the first egg hatched and there were still 8 incubating whilst Josh was in attendance with us. They monitor the egg condition and heartbeats. Josh provided more information on the conditions the juveniles were kept in and provided additional news from the zoo.

They had successfully hatched two Komodo dragons so hopefully the public will be able to see them soon. The

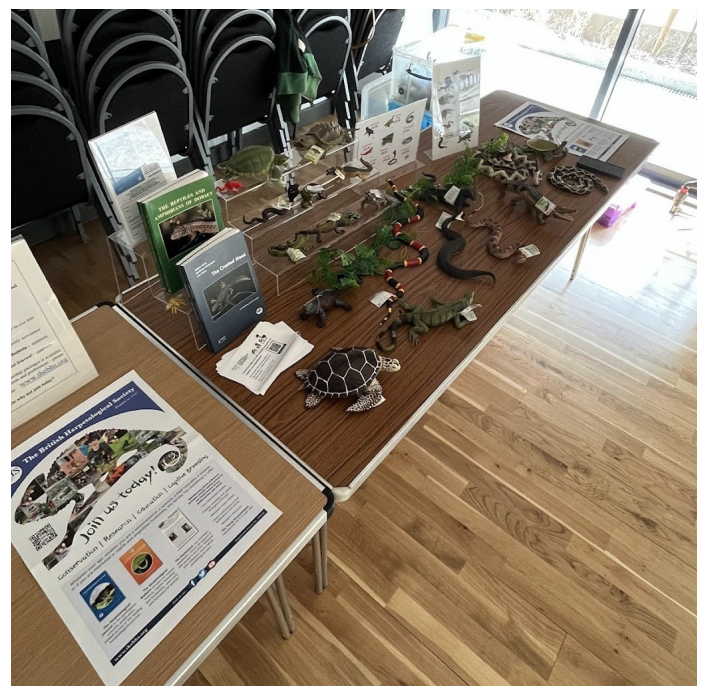


Bermuda skinks were successfully released back into the wild on the 24th May 2022. They have hatched *Zonosaurus laticaudatus*, *Plestiodon longirostris* and *Lactera agilis*. Alongside, *Anolis graham*, *Eutropis multifasciata* and *Lamprolepis smaragdina*. They have also imported new genetic stock of *Calotriton arnoldi* and successfully bred *Mantella aurantiaca* (nearly 800) and *Hetrixalus alboguttatus*, *Phymoides asper*, *Boana pictura* and *Calotriton arnoldi*.

Tony Wigley joined us from 'Responsible Reptile Keeping' and wanted to share the message they are spreading. They want to be able to represent the herpetological community of captive keepers and share information to balance the debate. There can be misinformation spread about captive keeping and the aim is to ensure that the whole story is communicated. The captive keeping community has worked hard to move forward their understanding of welfare of captive animals. Research into UV lighting and heating provision has moved forward leaps and bounds over the last decade.

We also had some wonderful representation on stalls selling books, Tell Hicks prints, dry goods, t-shirts and toys. Student posters were also presented on the day giving another opportunity for students to showcase their work. And not to forget the photo competition with three favourites chosen for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place prizes. Well done to Thomas Marriott (1st place), Danny White (2nd place) and Sam Hardy (3rd place).

Thank you for all of those who attended the meeting. We are so pleased to have appointed new members to the council. So welcome to Vinnie Goodall, Alexia Heston, Maria Filippou and Catherine Whatley!



# Student Grant Scheme enters its 20<sup>th</sup> year

*Dr Chris Gleed-Owen, BHS Research Committee Chair*

I joined BHS Council as Research Committee Chair in 2002, and started the Student Grant Scheme in 2004. The SGS is now entering its 20<sup>th</sup> year, so this is a good time to review what it has achieved over that period, and perhaps ponder where it will go in the future.

Initially, the SGS was a fairly modest affair. We had an annual budget of £1000, and we (the Research Committee) accepted applications on an ongoing basis. We awarded five grants between £75 and £300 in the first year, all to UK students, although three of them we conducting fieldwork abroad.

For the first 10 years, we didn't advertise much, and most our applicants came from the UK. Portugal did quite well, and we also made a few awards to South Africa and Madagascar. We realised that grants to countries in the developing world had a higher impact, and that perhaps we ought to shift our focus a little.

We gradually changed our rules, and tightened our remit to favour projects studying species of conservation concern. We also added a positive bias towards countries where research funding went a long way, and was harder to obtain. Whilst we still occasionally funded blue-skies

modest budget.

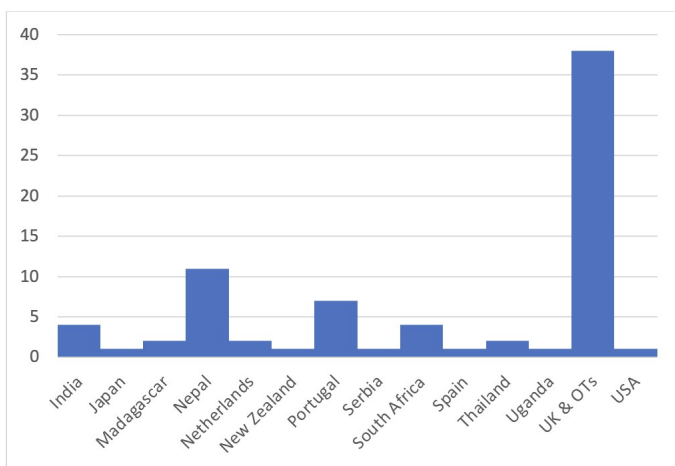
We now have two deadlines per year, on 1<sup>st</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> December. The annual budget has increased, but is still only £1500, allowing around five awards of £300 per year. We are always over-subscribed, and sadly have to turn down some good applications every year. Occasionally we have a top-up from a corporate sponsor, and that is something we are looking at increasing. For each company or person who can afford a donation of a few hundred pounds, we are able to support an additional student.

In recent years, Nepal has done quite well (11 successful applicants), but we really have had a global impact on students and early-career herpetologists. We have awarded SGS grants to students in 14 countries: India, Japan, Madagascar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Uganda, UK, and USA. The UK and Overseas Territories was the biggest beneficiary nevertheless, with 38 out of 77 grants, 49% of the total.

The fieldwork locations were truly global, however, in a total of 27 countries: Belize, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Gabon, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Italy, Jamaica, Madagascar, Malta, Mauritius, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Uganda, UK and Overseas Territories, and USA. And that is not including museum collections of global origin.

Between 2004 and 2022 (19 years), we have awarded a total of 77 grants totalling £21,645. The size of the awards ranged from £75 to max £700, with a mean of £285, and a median and mode of £300 (59%).

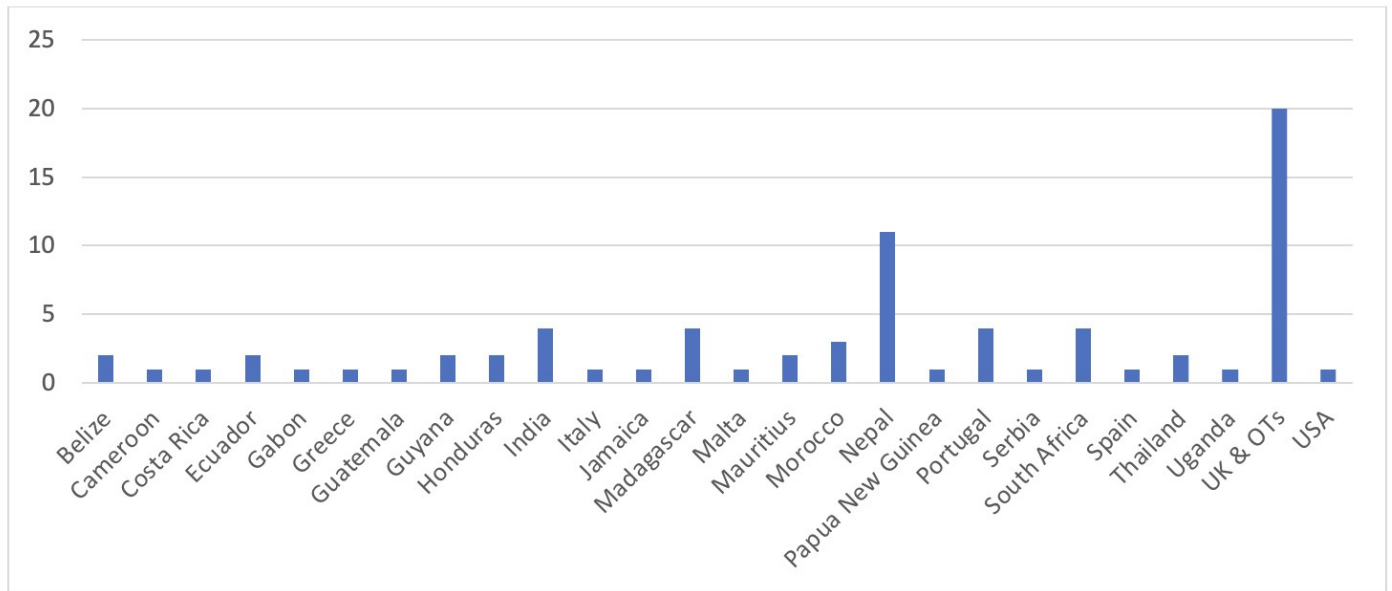
Here is a roll call of the 75 successful SGS grantees so far: Aabha Pokharel, Agata Staniewicz, Alexandros Marginan-dro Chechia, Amanda Duffus, Amanda Noviss, Amber Mathie, André Lourenço, Anthony von Plettenberg Laing, Asmit Subba, Bijaya Dhami, Brett Lewis, Bryony Jenner, Calista Bebbington, Cariad Roberts, Catriona Hendry, Curt Barnes, Daniela Rosado, Dany



Grants per country of residence

research without conservation applications, the focus definitely shifted towards maximising the impact of our





### Grants per country of research

Vencatasamy, Darryn Nash, Diana Ferreira, Divya Bhattarai, Ellie Dobbs, Emma Sherratt, Esther Matthew, Georgina Reynolds, Ginah Tsiorisoa Andrianasolo, Helena Turner, Isabel Damas Moreira, James Watuwa, Jean Ruhan Verster, Joan Gimenez, Joana Rodrigues Lopes dos Santos, Joey Markx, John Baker, Joseph Oakley, Kate Marshall, Kelly Coupland, Leida Dos Santos, Liam Templeton, Lindsay Marston, Madhura Amdekar, Mamata Thapa, Max Jones, Max Tercel, Miary Raselimanana, Michelle Brown, Neda Bogdanovic, Neil D'Cruze, Nitesh Bhattarai, Noeli Ramamonjisoa, Owen Wright, Pattarapon Promnun, Pawan Pareek, Pramananda Rajbanshi, Pusapati Chandana, Rachel Haynes, Rebecca Chastain, Rémi Martin, Rob Ward, Sagar Parajuli, Sam Shonleben, Samuel Peta, Sarah Scott, Saraswati Paudel, Saurav Lamichhane, Shashwat Sirsi, Simon Maddock, Srijana Timilsina, Steve Green, Sumedha Korgaonkar, Thijs van den Burg, Thomas Doherty-Bone, Tiago Pinto, Verónica Gomes, William Thomas.

You will probably recognise some names in that list. Quite a few of them have gone on successful careers in herpetology. We have had two repeat grantees (Darryn Nash, Thomas Doherty-Bone); hence we have awarded 77 grants to 75 applicants.

The amphibian and reptile species which have benefited from research conducted under the SGS range from the UK's threatened common toad (*Bufo bufo*) to the globally critically-endangered gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*).

The types of research have varied from the diet of Telfair's skink (*Leiolopisma telfairii*) on Round Island, Mauritius, to the genetics of the mountain chicken frog (*Leptodactylus fallax*) in Dominica and Montserrat.

We have always asked that successful applicants acknowledge the BHS in any dissertation or publications, and that they should send us a copy for our library. Sadly, if there's one failing of the SGS, it's that only 23% of students have done so.

Thank you to all my colleagues on the Research Committee, past and present. There are currently five of us: Dr Jenny Daltry, Dr Chris Gleed-Owen, Professor Richard Griffiths, Dr Robert Jehle, and Dr Wolfgang Wüster. Past Research Committee colleagues since 2004 are: Dr John Baker, Professor Trevor Beebee, Dave Bird, Dr Todd Lewis, the late Dr Peter Stafford, Rebecca Urwin, Dr John Wilkinson.

As we enter the SGS' 20<sup>th</sup> year, we look forward to a diverse batch of applications from around the globe, and we consider where the scheme might be in another 20 years. If we can find the additional funds, we would like to offer larger grants to deserving projects. We are also mindful that small grants go a long way in kickstarting the career of herpetologists in less-wealthy countries.





## **BHS post positions still available!**

We happily appointed new trustees at our AGM this year but are still looking for the following positions to be filled. We actively fund research and conservation projects along with organising multiple annual events and meetings including, the ever popular, Drayton Manor event. But – all this is achieved only through the efforts and commitment of the Trustees who sit on our Council and who are all volunteers.

**The following posts are currently vacant:**

- ⇒ **Secretary**
- ⇒ **Treasurer**
- ⇒ **Finance Officer**

If you would like to be involved in the running and direction of the Society, PLEASE do contact either Trevor Rose [secretary@thebhs.org](mailto:secretary@thebhs.org) or Mark Hollowell [chair@thebhs.org](mailto:chair@thebhs.org) to arrange an informal chat about the different roles or just how you might be able to get involved. Some basic information about the different Council posts can be found in the 'Our Officers' section of the website here [Our Officers | British Herpetological Society \(thebhs.org\)](#) but Trevor or Mark will happily talk about them in a bit more detail with you – and nothing's cast in stone as regards scope and focus of the posts.

**As with any organisation, the Society is constantly evolving and developing. It would be great to hear from you!**

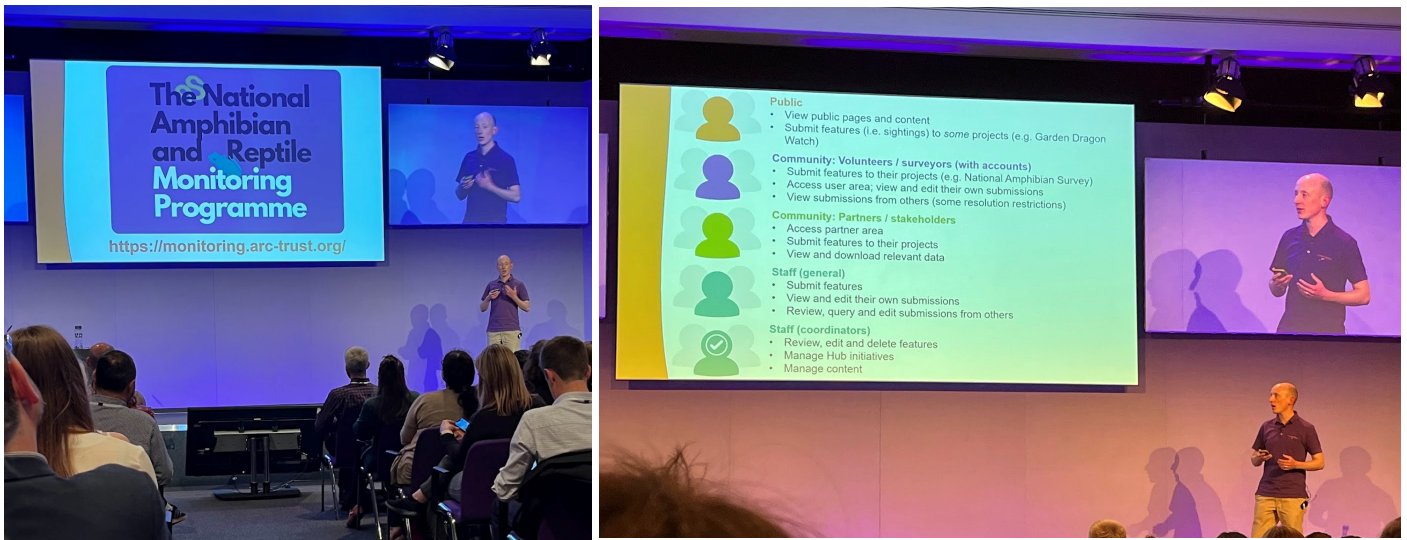
# Drayton Manor Event 2023

For those who were unable to join us on the Drayton Manor event, here is a collage of the amazing conference and for those who did, you can relive the great two days we had from amazing speakers around the globe!

Well done to the organising team. They work hard throughout the year and don't stop working on this event so well done to you all for putting on an important conference filled with student research showcases, live research, science and fun.







# ESRI GIS Conference 2023: Mapping a way to conserve

Written by Suzie Simpson

ESRI held their annual conference at the QE2 centre in London on the 16th May 2023. The conference provides an opportunity for surveyors and GIS mapping users to network and share information on their work using this software. ArcMap was a primary programme used to carry out mapping and is used by biologists, field researchers, planning and development organisations as well as town councils. They can be used for various reasons and at the conference we heard from a representative at Dominos pizza, that they use the GIS mapping to look at delivery times. The primary concern is getting pizzas to clients quickly and effectively. The system allows them to figure out where their shops should be based as to how long it takes to deliver pizzas in the surrounding area. They have increased efficiency using this method greatly. But this is just one application of GIS mapping and I'm sure you want to read more about herpetological applications.

Dr Rob Ward was presenting on the National Amphibian and Reptile Monitoring Programme that they are implementing. This a portfolio of surveys and project data to help inform on the conservation of reptiles and amphibians. This programme aids in the long term monitoring of species and generates data to aid in species status assessments and help to inform land managers, government bodies and the general public on frogs, toads, newts, lizards and snakes in the UK. People can sign up to take part as a surveyor and there doesn't need to be any experience

to join. ArcGIS Survey123 is the tool used to aid surveyors in uploading information and log observations. There are instructional videos online to aid in the downloading of this mapping app. You can then sign into the account once you have been provided login details from ARC. There are various levels of surveying from beginner to more advanced such as protected species which need licences to undertake. Training is provided by the ARC team and there are accessible resources online to aid in the process. You can find out more on how to take part at: <http://monitoring.arc-trust.org>.

The event also had stall holders from various technological companies and this was clearly popular with delegates as they were able to try out new technology and ask lots of questions of the representatives. There weren't products to browse as such on tables but several applications were on devices and PC's to look at and try out.

The hosts were excellent and I would attend another event here as it was very welcoming and the food provided was varied, high quality and used both environmentally friendly and sustainable products throughout. Only downside were the multiple floors that you had to climb but this was honestly the only issue racing from talk to talk on different floors with not much time in between. Otherwise, a great conference with so many applications of GIS that it's overwhelmingly immense. Quite an eye opener!

# Save the date!

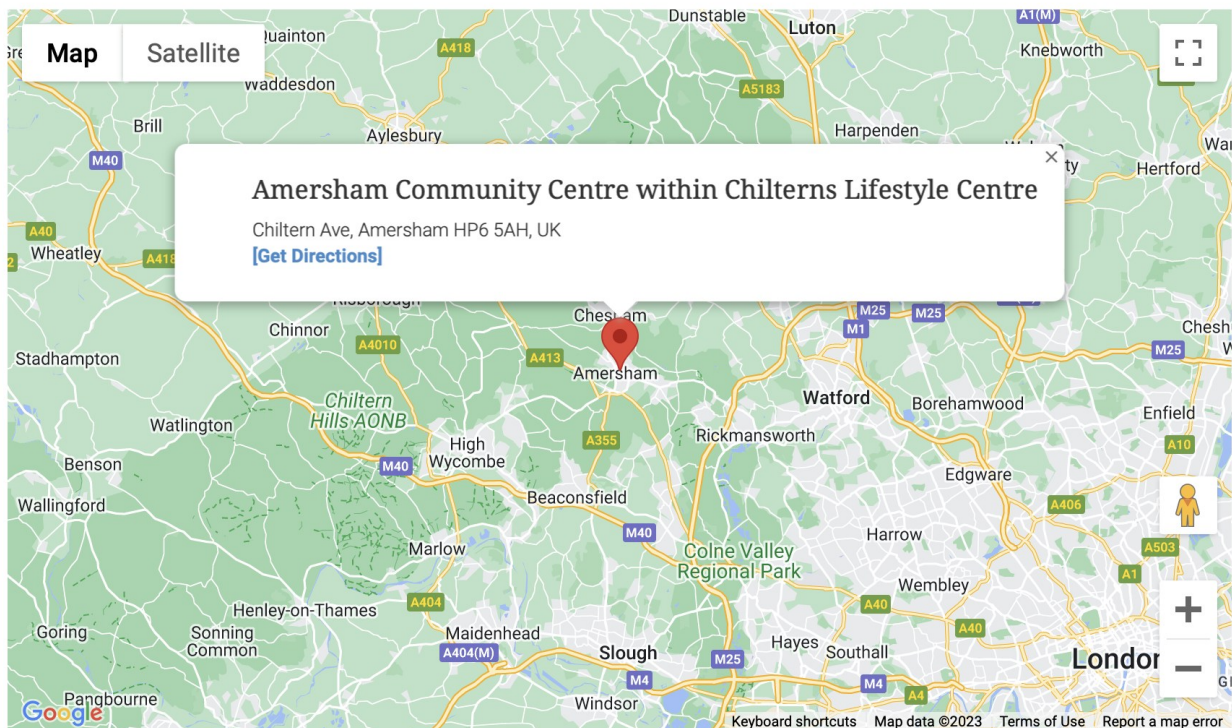
## **BHS and Thames & Chiltern Herpetological Group Joint Meeting Sunday 8th October 2023 1pm—5pm**

**Come join us to hear from great speakers!**

The Autumn 2023 meeting is being held at Amersham and will be a great event for all ages with an interest in herpetology. Talks from key speakers, table sales of dry good, books, prints and more plus student research posters.

If you would like to submit a student research poster or have any queries, please contact [webmaster@thebhs.org](mailto:webmaster@thebhs.org).

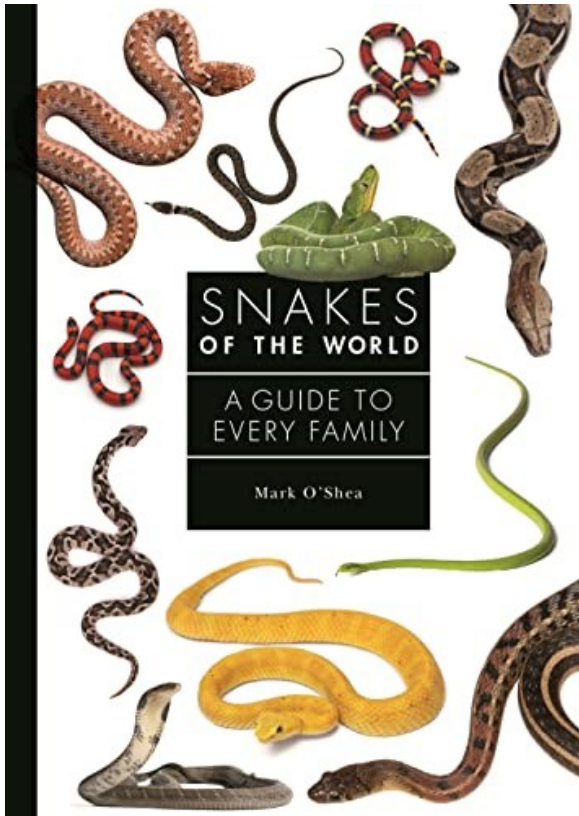
**Head to our website for further details: [www.thebhs.org](http://www.thebhs.org)**



# BOOK REVIEW

## Snakes of the World: A Guide to Every Family

Author: Mark O'Shea



- ⇒ **Over 200 colour photographs included**
- ⇒ **Species profiles with a distribution map**
- ⇒ **Part of a wider book collection**

This is another glossy, colourful addition to the 'A Guide to Every Family' collection. This is the sixth addition and joins books focusing on turtles, lizards, bees, seaweed and spiders.

To start, the front cover is eye catching and gives the impression that the visuals inside will be colourful. This is certainly a great size for the coffee table and for anyone interested to pick up and browse with interest. The first section covers topics including: Evolution and origins of

snakes, taxonomy of snakes, internal anatomy, dentition, snake skin and scales, sense organs, extreme conditions, locomotion, diet, defence, conservation and reproduction. Each of these sections gives lots of information on the topic which is concise and illustrated clearly with diagrams.

The species profiles to follow are sectioned as follows: Scolecophidia (Superfamily Typhlopoidea), Alethinophidia (Clade Amerophidia), Alethinophidia (Clade Afrophidia: Clade Henophidia) and Alethinophidia (Clade Afrophidia: Clade Caenophidia). Each species profile is labelled clearly with a short concise description of the animal and accompanied by at least two aesthetically pleasing photos showing markings and coloration. A distribution map is embedded in the text for each profile showing where they are found, some more focused in on islands and countries than others. Alongside the map are short descriptives of life history traits such as diet, reproduction, size, activity and habitat types. This builds on the general information provided in the introductory section and hones in on that specific species.

Altogether, a beautiful, portable sized, informative book that provides lots of information on snakes and not only pleasing for specialist hobbyists but general captive keepers and people just interested in learning more about snakes. I would consider this a fair price for what you are purchasing.

**Publishers: Princeton University Press**

**Publication date: 7th March 2023**

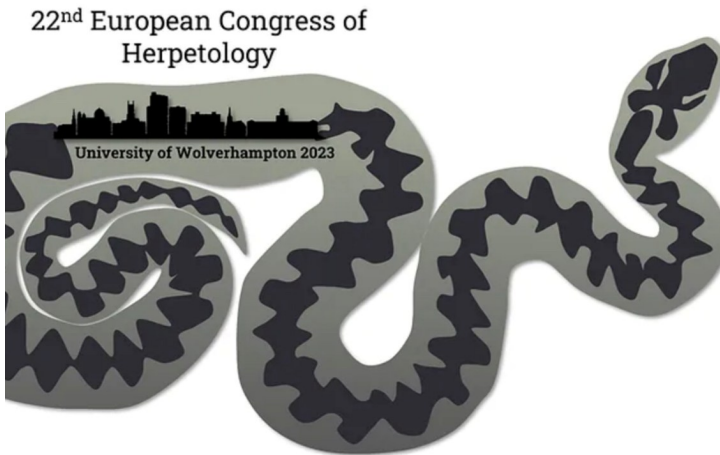
**Format: Hard cover, 240 pages**

**Size: 245 x 175mm**

**ISBN: 9780691240664**

**Price: £20.61**

**Reviewer: Suzie Simpson**



The 22nd European Congress of Herpetology will take place at the University of Wolverhampton at the Springfield Campus, UK.

## 4th–8th September 2023

The last time congress, organised by the SEH, was in the UK was in 1989. This was the 1st World Congress of Herpetology co-hosted in Canterbury, Kent. This will be a 5 day event with lectures, plenaries, workshops and poster sessions. An opportunity to network and discuss relevant topics with the European herpetological community.

### **DON'T MISS OUT!**

BHS Members get discounted tickets!

(SEH Members) Early bird £260, Regular £345

(Non-SEH members) Early bird £300, Regular £380

**You can purchase day tickets if you don't want to attend the whole event.**

You can book your tickets and register now at <https://www.sehcongress23.com/>

For further details on membership and joining the Societas Europaea Herpetologica head to:

<https://www.seh-herpetology.org/seh-congress>



# 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

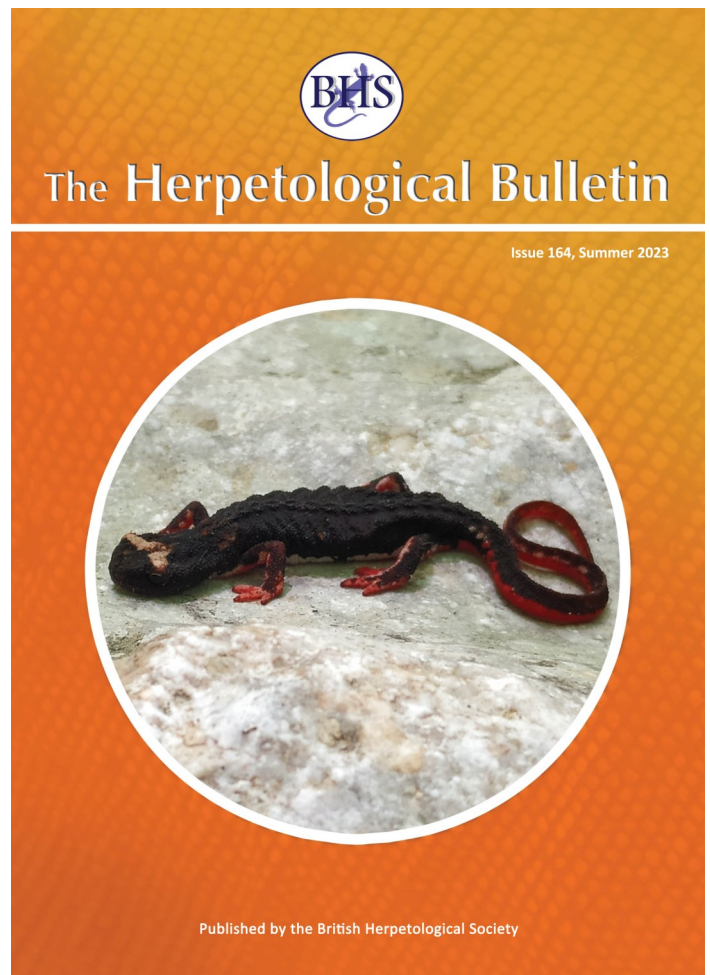


Website: [www.turtletally.co.uk](http://www.turtletally.co.uk)

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



# 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)

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

<https://thebhs.org/>

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

**Twitter:** [@britishherpsoc](https://twitter.com/britishherpsoc)