



Editorial

The last year has brought with it many upheavals, surprises, and disappointments, and I think it is fair to say that many feel the future to be particularly uncertain and, in some cases, worrying. The referendum result indicating our leaving of the EU brings with it many questions for ecologists and scientists regarding the future of environmental and other legislation which will have an impact on reptiles and amphibians (and those working with them) in this country. Furthermore, there is concern among many that the future for the global environment. This is all likely to be discussed, formally and informally at the upcoming **Herpetofauna Workers Meeting 2017**. We are also very pleased to announce the **BHS AGM** in March 2017 being held in Kent

Sometimes the scale of challenges and changes facing the planet, and the organisms we share it with, can seem overwhelming. Sometimes it can feel as though there is little that can be done. However, perhaps that is the key. If each of us does a little to help, then together small actions make for big differences.

You may also notice that the layout has been changed. This is because I keep being sent such great photos, that I thought the full-page layout did them more justice!

Important: OWING TO COST IMPLICATIONS, A DECISION WILL SOON BE MADE REGARDING A MOVE TO ONLINE ONLY MEMBERSHIP. PLEASE GET IN TOUCH IF YOU HAVE VIEWS REGARDING THIS, BUT YOUR VIEWS ARE LIKELY TO BE SOUGHT MORE FORMALLY SHORTLY.



The British
Herpetological
Society

70th Annual General Meeting Saturday 18th March 2017

Wildwood Education Centre
Herne Common, Herne Bay
Kent, CT6 7LQ



The British
Herpetological
Society



AGENDA

- 12.00 Registration, refreshments (provided)
- 12.30 Introductions (Chair: Chris Gleed-Owen)
- 12.35 **Rick Hodges (Krag):**
Getting to know adders personally: case studies on
adder behaviour.
- 13:05 **AGM Business Meeting**, including: Approval of 2016
AGM Minutes, Matters Arising, Chairman's Report,
Treasurer's Report, Council for 2017-18, 2017 Subscription fees
AOB
- 13:40 Break for Lunch
- 14.40 **Helena Turner (DICE):**
Losing Skinks in the Bermuda triangle
- 15:15 Refreshments (provided)
Photographic Competition judging
- 16:30 Close



DICE
University of Kent

How to Get There

Come by public transport, get in half price! We want you to cut your environmental impact and travel by bus. Wildwood are offering 50% off standard tickets to those who come to Wildwood by bus or train. A valid ticket for the day of travel will be required.

Wildwood is on the bus route between Canterbury and Herne Bay, either the number **4** or the number **6** depending on the direction of travel. Ask the bus driver for the Wildwood stop. If you have a bus pass, ask your driver for a travel ticket as proof of travel.

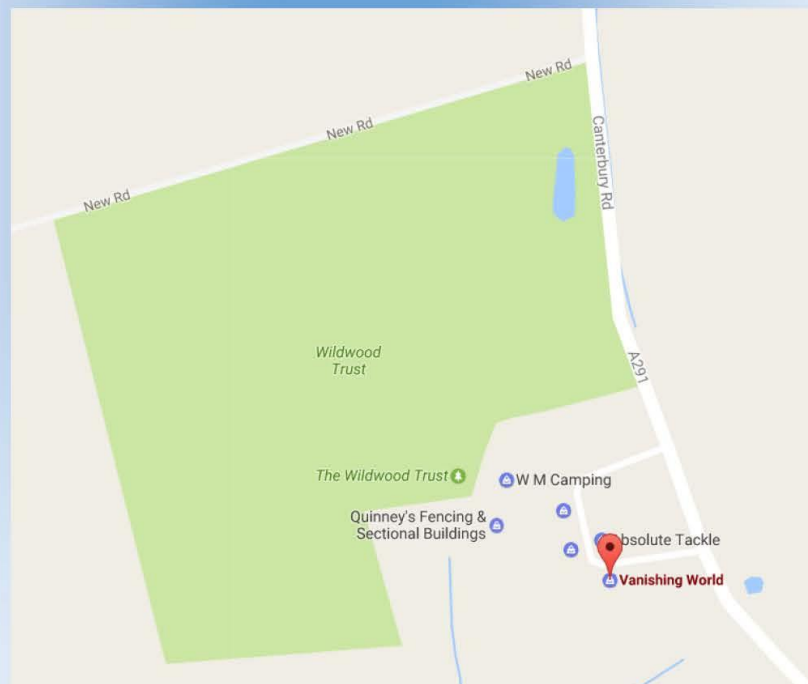
Wildwood has ample parking, and is on the bus route between Canterbury and Herne Bay, on the A291. Route 6 from Canterbury, Route 4 from Herne Bay. Ask your bus driver for the Wildwood stop, and see, [special offers](#) on the Wildwood Education Centre website.

Please note that Satellite Navigation can sometimes misdirect: On the A291 look out for the Wildwood sign with the Wolf at the Wealden Forest Business Park, between Herne Common and Broad Oak. Follow signs to the entrance.

The park opens at 10:00, if members want to arrive early then they should have time to have a look round before the meeting. The entrance fee is £11.45 for adults and £8.45 for children, if we have 10 or more Richard Griffiths may be able to arrange a group rate.

Alternatively, members may want to visit Vanishing World, the largest aquatics and reptile shop in Kent. This is in the same complex as Wildwood.

Last entry to the park 4pm park closes at 5pm





2017 BHS



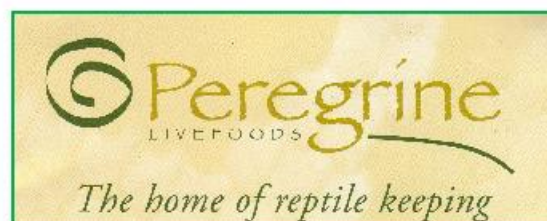
PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

**This annual competition is now sponsored by
Peregrine Livefoods who have generously
donated prizes of £125.00, £75.00 & £50.00
for the top 3 winners.**

**You can choose your own prize to the value stated
from Lucky Reptile, Zoo Med or ProRep!**

**Send your (herp only) photos, max 3 prints
A4 or smaller to Kim Le Breuilly by 12th
March or hand them to her at the AGM if you
are attending.**

Kim Le Breuilly, Chairwoman
BHS Education Committee,
9 Anvil Close, Streatham, London, SW16 6YA



Conservation

Herpetofauna Workers' Meeting 2017

Saturday, 11 Feb 2017 09:30 – Sunday, 12 Feb 2017 17:00

Location: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Wollaton Street, Nottingham, NG1 5RH

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) and Amphibian and Reptile Groups of UK (ARG UK), are delighted to be able to announce the 2017 Herpetofauna Workers' Meeting, which is to be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, in central Nottingham on 11-12 February 2017.

Running annually for over 27 years, this popular two-day event occupies the centre stage of the herpetological calendar. Once again, we can offer a full and varied programme of presentations and workshops, with plenty of opportunities to network with the speakers and other delegates. The meeting attracts a diverse audience representing: conservation organisations, ecological consultants, statutory bodies, land managers, academic institutions and students, and enthusiastic volunteers.

In 2017, the meeting will cover a range of topics including: the importance of the new Chytrid species, *B.sal*, for our native amphibians; showcasing a range of novel approaches to reptile mitigation; restoring overgrown farmland ponds; updates from the national statutory agencies; conservation priorities for adders; using SUDS to help toads; the RAVON approach to monitoring for widespread species in the Netherlands; integrated approaches to GCN monitoring, including the use of genetic techniques to understand population dynamics; Aesculapian snakes; and some interesting examples of how citizen science can support amphibian and reptile conservation, from Cornwall and Scotland.

We are also pleased to announce a strong workshop programme, and topics will include: eDNA surveys for great crested newts; developing a new national widespread species recording scheme; practical tips for restoring overgrown ponds; EPS licensing updates; and developing guidelines for guided public reptile walks. Something for everyone

Further details can be found at:

<http://www.arguk.org/get-involved/events/6-herpetofauna-workers-meeting-2017>

<http://www.arc-trust.org/Event/HWM2017>



**Congratulations to
Benjamin Horton, the
winner of the BHS Young
Herpetologists
Chameleon Identification
Competition**

The Education Committee commends Benjamin, age 15 from Sheffield for his efforts in identifying a selection of Chameleon photographs and answering questions on this species.

His prize is a voucher of his choice for £25.00.

If any BHS member would like to view a copy of the competition, please email: education@thebhs.org

Captive Keeping

Please let us know if you have an interesting or entertaining story to tell us about your captive keeping experiences. The animals involved do not need to be the most unusual and you do not need to be a professional, just passionate. Here, **Ann Seabright** gives an account of the demise of a long-lived (and much loved) snake.

Synopsis on the death of a Corn snake aged 25.

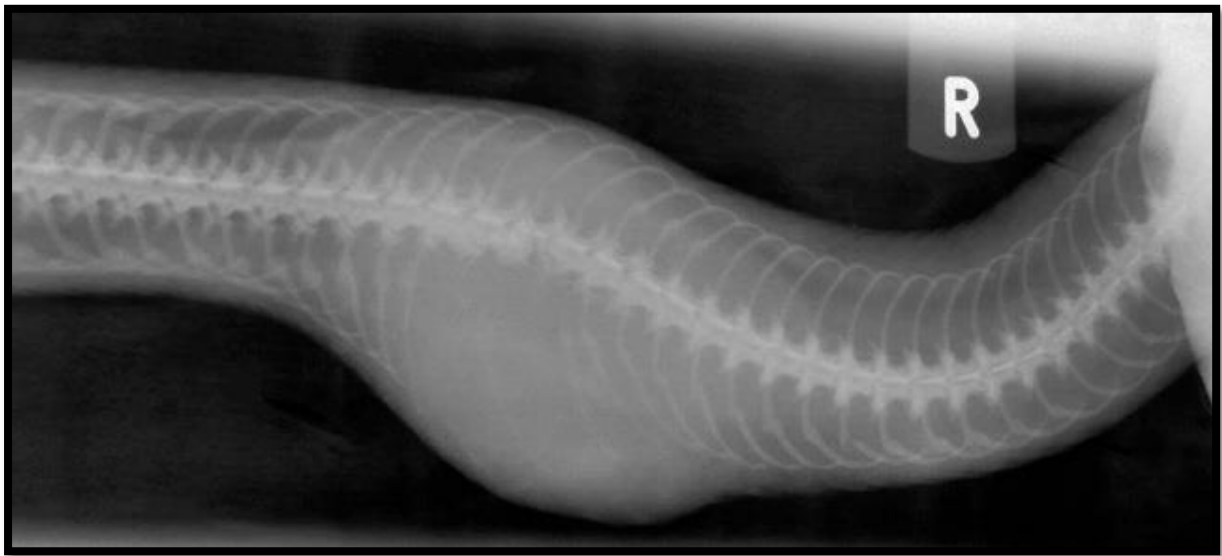
My Corn snake (*Pantherophis guttatus*) had to be put to sleep on 1.12.15 at the age of 25 and I am writing these few notes as a record of his eventual demise at an exceptionally old age. The snake was purchased at a captive-breeding meeting of the BHS on 31.8.91 when he was approximately one year of age. Most of his life he was housed in a terrarium 80x50x50 cm in an east-facing window, roofed with hardboard and heated by a small under-floor 'spider-mat', turned off in warm weather.

Although the snake developed several soft fatty lumps, these had been biopsied in 1998 and were found to be benign. His length was 160 cm and his optimum weight was 1.5 kg. On the 30.7.15 the snake started to refuse food and on 2.8.15, I discovered a hard lump about halfway down his body.



This did not seem to affect his movement or energy when I took him out for exercise every few days. He continued to refuse food, including pinkies, though he continued to drink, and the last slough was on 1.9.15. His weight dwindled to 1.2 kg.

On 21.10.15 I took him to the local vet who x-rayed and biopsied the lump. The result was chondrosarcoma – bone cancer in the spine and ribs. The vet suggested I try to feed him with mouse brain but he refused this also.



For the next month, his movement did not seem to be affected by the cancer as he continued to move well when taken out, though drank only when the water was presented to him in a very shallow dish.

In November, it was usual for him to become dormant for a month or two, so I left him in his cage. He was offered water every day. He continued to move on and off the heated area as he preferred until veterinary euthanasia on 1.12.15.

Herpetofauna of the Australian Wet tropics

Please send any articles you think would be of interest to the BHS membership. They can be summaries of trips you have been on, accounts of your local herpetology or activities of your local group. It doesn't have to be academic or complex, just passionate, and pictures always help!

Here, **Cindy Manelaws** gives us an insight ...

G'day, my name is Cindy Maneylaws and I'm a reptile and amphibian enthusiast that has been lucky enough to follow a career as a reptile zookeeper and wildlife ranger; jobs that led me to where I currently live, in the Wet Tropics of Far North Queensland in Australia. For any herpetological enthusiast, the Wet Tropics is the perfect place to live.

The Wet Tropics is a remnant strip of World Heritage listed tropical rainforest, encompassing almost 9,000 square kilometres in northern Australia, between Townsville and Cooktown. It stretches 450km long and includes the highest peaks in QLD, up to around 1,600m. It is a biological wonderland that is inhabited by at least 113 reptile species, 24 of which are endemic, and 51 amphibian species, 27 of which are endemic. The high diversity of species to be found ranges from common pythons and tree snakes, to cryptic geckos and critically endangered frogs. Although too many species include them all, I've included some of the highlights.

One amazing gecko is the Chameleon Gecko (*Carphodactylus laevis*). This is a medium sized, up to 20cm, laterally compressed gecko that is completely confined to Wet Tropics habitat. It is the only species in its Genus and is a relict species from the Pleistocene era, thought to have survived since Jurassic times. They are fast moving and live in the leaf litter and the lower parts of trees and can be active on warm and cool nights. An original tail is black or dark brown with stark white rings, which can make them easier to spot by torchlight as they are mostly a drab brown otherwise and very well camouflaged. Like all Geckos they can discard their tails as a defensive mechanism and an original discarded tail has the uncanny trick of emitting a squeaking noise which sounds a bit like a baby rodent. This is thought to assist in distracting a predator to go along with the nerve twitching movements. A regenerated tail will be plain brown, sometimes with a whitish tip.



Chameleon Gecko - *Carphodactylus laevis*



Australian gecko - *Carphodactylus laevis*

Another remarkable species is the Northern Leaf-tailed Gecko (*Saltuarius cornutus*). These are an incredibly well camouflaged animal and they are often spotted due to their red eye shine reflecting down from tree trunks way up near the canopy. If you are lucky you might encounter one lower down on a tree or crawling across a road on a warm night. They are one of Australia's largest geckos and reach 23cm. They are dorsally compressed and their skin is covered in spikey tubercles and colouring that mimics bark and moss, making them the masters of disguise. Although relatively common they are another endemic species and are a very impressive find.



Northern Leaf-tailed Gecko - *Saltuarius cornutus*

Boyd's Forest Dragons (*Hypsilurus boydii*) evolved some 15 to 20 million years ago, and are another endemic species. They are impressive looking dragons with a prominent nuchal crest and a dewlap edged with spines. Males are larger than females, reaching 54cm, have larger heads and often have more prominent colouration. They prefer cooler temperatures to most dragon lizards and their body temperature usually matches that of their immediate surroundings. During the day, they are usually seen on tree trunks in dappled sunlight and at night they sleep vertically on the sides of trees or even propped up in the ground.



Boyd's Forest Dragons
Hypsilurus boydii

Snakes

Common snake encounters include Scrub Pythons (*Simalia/Morelia kinghorni*), Spotted Pythons (*Antaresia maculosa*), Carpet Pythons (*Morelia spilota*), and Water Pythons (*Liasis mackloti*).

All pythons are nonvenomous, although a bite from an adult python can cause a bit of tissue damage and is best avoided. Scrub pythons are Australia's largest snake reaching over 5.5m in length and are patterned with yellow and black or tan with a distinct iridescence.



Water python - *Liasis mackloti*

Brown Tree Snakes (*Boiga irregularis*) are one of the most commonly seen snakes at night. They are considered harmless although they are a mildly venomous Colubrid, so a bite from a large snake or a bite on a small child should be monitored for signs of adverse reaction or allergy. The venom is targeted for lizard and frog prey and they are a nocturnal species that belongs to the genus known as “cat eyed snakes”, as evidenced by their large bulging eyes with elliptical pupils and giving them a bit of a “cute” appearance.

Venomous species include the Northern Death Adder (*Acanthophis praelongus*), Red-bellied Black Snake (*Pseudechis porphyriacus*), Coastal Taipans (*Oxyuranus scutellatus*), and Eastern Small-eyed Snakes (*Cryptophis nigrescens*).



Common Tree snake - *Dendrelaphis punctulatus*



Northern Death adder - *Acanthophis praelongus*

Slatey Grey Snakes (*Stegonotus cucullatus*) are a common, nonvenomous Colubrid that look very similar to Eastern Small-eyed Snakes. Although not as toxic as other Australian Elapids, there has been one fatality recorded from an eastern small-eyed snake, so a bite must be taken seriously. Both snakes can reach over a metre in length and are a uniform shiny black or grey colour of varying shades. Slatey grey snakes will usually have a white or cream belly and a pale upper lip (they also emit a pungent musky odour if they feel threatened). Small-eyed snakes in the Tropics tend to have a pinkish belly, a black upper lip, and slightly smaller eyes hence the name.

Crocodiles

Another reptile worth mentioning is the estuarine crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*). These crocodiles are known to inhabit clear forest streams, more commonly along the lowland coastal edges. It is therefore important to be careful around watercourses in these areas and to not assume that there will be no crocodiles just because it is clear and fresh water. Quite sizeable crocs have been known to inhabit very small streams.

Frogs

The frog life in the Wet Tropics is world class. Some of the more common frog species are Dainty Tree Frogs (*Litoria gracilenta*), Desert Tree Frogs (*Litoria rubella*), Green Tree Frogs (*Litoria caerulea*), Roth's Tree Frog (*Litoria rothii*), Northern Stony Creek Frogs (*Litoria jungguy*), Orange-thighed Frog (*Litoria xanthomera*) and White-lipped Tree Frogs (*Litoria infrarenata*)

The mist frog complex are all either listed as endangered or critically endangered under state, federal and international legislation. These are the Common Mist Frog (*Litoria rheocola*), Waterfall Frog (*Litoria nannotis*), Armoured Mist Frog (*Litoria lorica*), and Australian Lacelid Frog (*Litoria/Nyctimystes dayi*). Mountain Mist Frogs (*Litoria nyakalensis*) are similar to Common Mist Frogs however none have been seen since 1990, despite extensive searches, and they are in all likelihood extinct. The Armoured Mist Frog wasn't seen for 20 years but was rediscovered in 2008 in one small population. In 2013 a translocation project was undertaken and they now successfully exist at two known locations.

The Lacelid has recently been reassigned to the genus *Litoria*, and is still relatively secure in lowland populations. It can be seen in fairly good numbers at some locations however they have disappeared from many of their higher altitude population sites. All the mist frogs inhabit fast flowing streams and cascades, and populations of all species have decreased dramatically in recent decades for a presumed variety of reasons, but the role Chytrid fungus appears to have played a dramatic role. It is a privilege to see any of the mist frogs, which can be spied perching on rocks amongst the rapids of streams at night.



Kuranda Tree frog - *Litoria myola*



Australasian Tree frogs - *Litoria jungguy*



Day's big eyed tree frog - *Litoria dayi*



Waterfall frog - *Litoria nannotis*

Serrated Tree Frog or Green-eyed Tree Frogs (*Litoria serrata*) are another highlight species. They are perfectly camouflaged to their surroundings with mottled colouring and fringed limbs. They are morphologically identical to the Kuranda Tree Frog (*Litoria myola*) which can only be differentiated by call or gene sequencing. They do occasionally hybridise, however evidence of hybrids surviving the tadpole stage hasn't yet been found. The Kuranda Tree Frog is an extremely localised species and considered critically endangered, known from only 12 sites around the Kuranda and Barron River area.



Green Eyed Tree frog - *Litoria serrata*



White lipped Tree frog - *Litoria infrafrenata*

Over half of the frog species in the Wet Tropics are Microhylid frogs. *Cophixalus* and *Austrochaperina* species are very tiny, reaching a maximum 30mm and are consequently difficult to spot. Tinker frog species were known to inhabit the Wet Tropics, like the Sharp-snouted Day Frog (*Taudactylus acutirostris*) and Tinkling Frog

(*Taudactylus rheophilis*). Both are considered critically endangered or extinct under various legislations, and despite extensive surveys, the Tinkling Frog hasn't been seen since 2000 and the Day Frog since the early 1990's. There is hope that they may still persist in tiny populations in remote locations but this is increasingly unlikely as time goes by.



Robust frog - *Austrochaperina robusta*

Cane Toads (*Rhinella marina*) are unfortunately found in their thousands sometimes and on occasion there is nothing much else to be found. It makes me wonder what would have been around instead had the toad not been introduced. Anything smaller than the toads gets swiftly gobbled up and sometimes this is a considerable size as toads in the forest areas can get huge, reaching sometimes up to 1.8kg! Most animals preying upon toads succumb to poisoning from the toxins secreted by the parotid glands behind their ears. An exception to this is the Common Keelback, or Freshwater Snake (*Tropidonophis mairii*) see picture. Common Keelbacks are a relatively recent immigrant from Asia and have retained some of the Genus' ability to withstand certain poisons and is therefore able to prey regularly on Cane toads without a fatal outcome.



Cane toad - *Rhinella marina*

Anybody visiting the Wet Tropics should aim to come in the wet season, between October and April. This is traditionally when the climate is warm and wet and the rainforest becomes teeming with wildlife. It is well worth a visit!

Council Business 2016

Summary of minutes. Council Meeting November 5th 2016.

Ingenta and Open Access – The BHS will be terminating its contract with Ingenta, and has found alternative means of hosting online content. There is a move across the scientific community to have “open access” materials, but this is not a decision that will be taken lightly or soon.

Gullypot Ladders – The design developed by BHS secretary Trevor Rose is proving popular and successful. There is some discussion regarding the commercial production of these but the BHS is proceeding under advisement.

Natterjack – Articles from members always appreciated and needed!

Herp Journal and Herp Bulletin – The online publishing of these to be hosted by Aye-Aye designs (who also manage the website).

Treasurer – The BHS needs a new Treasurer as we are saying farewell to Michael who can no longer undertake the role. If you, or someone you know, would like to get involved with this role (which has a stipend) please get in touch prior to voting at the AGM.

Bequest – The BHS is grateful to Beth Haslewood who recently passed away. She left the BHS £2000 for the purchase of land for conservation purposes.

NatterJack Issue 213 Layout and editing by Kim le Breuilly

Next edition

Please keep articles coming! What will Spring 2017 look like for the reptiles and amphibians in your part of the world?

Coming up:

The Herpetology of Gibraltar – Francis Cosquiere

Care of Rescued Terrapins – Dave Willis

Summary of Herpetofauna Workers Meeting 2017