

1985 WECG Annual Report

AMPHIBIANS AND MAMMALS AT THE EYES

AMPHIBIANS

Since the first article on amphibians in last year's Report there have been several important events in the life of the pond excavated on No. 3 bed. Unfortunately it has proved impossible to keep water in the pond in the summer months when, despite heavy rain last year, the water table obviously falls below the pond bottom. In addition it has proved very difficult to eradicate the reed grass sufficiently to allow other plants to colonise the area.

On the credit side, however, there are some happy events to report. Both Crested and Smooth Newts bred last year, using the polythene-lined ditches that have been dug near the pond. There are now four of these ditches; each 6' x 2' x 1½' deep. An interesting point is that the newts bred in separate ditches, although in other situations they breed in the same pond without much conflict. I was able to confirm that one ditch held 25 juvenile Smooth Newts, and another two juvenile Crested Newts. As young newts are delicate I did not search too vigorously, but I feel sure there were more young Crested Newts in their ditch.

I should like to thank everyone who brought in bucketfuls of frog spawn. You will be pleased to know that the area was inundated with tadpoles, most of which turned into froglets, able to mature in a safe environment. If anyone can obtain toad spawn this spring I should be most grateful, but please remember that no spawn or young or adult amphibians may be collected unless their site is endangered.

In the long term it is unlikely that the pond on No. 3 bed will survive in its present form, and it is hoped that a new one, or possibly two, will be dug nearer the water. This should ensure that there is always water in the pond even in summer, and if so the animals will be transferred from the old pond to this more suitable environment.

March 1986 David Edwards