

Author: Tabitha Roach Osborne

Name of project or group: Redmires Toad Patrol



Introduction

We are a local wildlife enthusiast group who patrol the road at Redmires during the six weeks of toad migration during the spring.



What actions did you or your group want to take and why?

We wanted not only to contribute to the important national citizen science effort by monitoring the toad population in Sheffield, but also to raise awareness and educate others about toads and other amphibian species (frogs and newts too!) We wanted to help others understand how to remedy the damage humans are inflicting on amphibians and subsequently important ecosystems. The physical helping of the toads cross the road is a key element, but there's more potential for positive influence in what we do.



What resources or support did you need/use?

Personally, to get the patrol up and running, I really just did some research and ran with it. I feel really passionately about protecting and restoring wildlife so it wasn't a tough decision. It is a lot of work but it's an incredibly rewarding experience doing the patrols, as well as seeing the community that is created as a result of people coming together for a common purpose. Once you start getting volunteers involved who are just as enthusiastic as you are, you bounce off each other's energy.

We have some really key passionate volunteers who have been integral this year. Finding that core group of individuals who know what they're doing, and are able to support/educate volunteers in your absence makes a huge difference.

We definitely couldn't have had such a successful season this year without Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust as they have been very supportive and have facilitated us in getting our patrol signs made by Amey as well as sourcing volunteers which is excellent.

How did you empower or involve others?

The patrols are an easy and accessible way for people to get involved and take a tangible action to make a difference both to an individual species and the wider ecosystem. I started social media groups and put the call out for volunteers which was very successful. The Toad Patrol doesn't discriminate, and we want everyone to be included - volunteers have been great at engaging with people and interest/ further sign-up of volunteers has happened organically. We have a good relationship with the local council and wildlife trust, which also helps facilitate the patrol.

How many people are taking part in this project?

We have around 50 volunteers registered this year



How did it make you feel?

Hopeful! It's so lovely to meet so many like-minded people, and to be able to put our passion and energy to good use.

What changes have there been as a result of your actions?

We have already begun improving the health of a species that has been in decline for the last 30 years - we've successfully reduced the mortality rate at Redmires, where I'd previously seen hundreds of deaths. We have seen huge numbers of amphibians saved! The toad patrol has overall saved around 4,000 toads over three years. We have already tripled the number of newts saved with our efforts. We have engaged large numbers of people in the general public, thus spread awareness, and many of these people have gone on to get involved or spread the word.



Have you had any memorable nature encounters while doing this?

Aside from the above, being based within a SSSI, our patrols are a great opportunity to spot other wildlife such as some Curlews, Lapwings, Tawny Owls, Barn Owls, Water Voles, Rabbits, badgers and foxes.

What's next?

No big plans! We're very happy returning every year to help the wildlife and promote our cause. Hopefully with a healthier population than the previous year.

