

# Look out for toads on the roads!

The Lothian Amphibian and Reptile Group (LARG), which is a 15 year-old volunteer conservation organization in Edinburgh, coordinated by the secretary Gary Hovell and other members, have set up the Lothian Toad Watch group. This group helps toads cross roads after their hibernation period each year in the early spring, and reach their breeding ponds safely.

The migration period takes place on warm wet evenings between late February and April, and it is at this time of the year that all the volunteers come together and help the toads. Volunteers are expected to wear high-visibility jackets for their own safety, as well as sporting torches and buckets. During this time the group meets up for 2 hours each night for a maximum of 2 weeks and this with utter dedication.

Gary Hovell said: -“Although the organisation has grown in terms of volunteers over the past few years, there are still many locations in Edinburgh and the Lothian’s which are not covered every year and therefore more volunteers are needed. According to the figures over the past 4 years it is shown that if a large number of toads are saved one year, then the following year there is an increase in population of toads in that location by around 30%”. A grand total of 3000 toads were rescued this April by 15 volunteers and the group is avidly looking for more volunteers to help out with the coming toad watch in 2014.

The amount of Toads saved is very important as toads can live between 10-12 years in the wild and don’t start breeding until their 4th spring, so without this help many local populations of toad species would soon be gone. A network of roads through forests and marshy areas cuts off many of the toads breeding ponds, as during their migration period thousands of them

cross the roads at the same time.

Patrolling the breeding ponds and marsh, damp woodlands helps monitor the locations and populations of the toads around that particular area.

These toad patrols also enable us to find out which areas are most affected by the traffic, hence resulting in the highest toad mortality. The fact that toads will return to the same breeding ponds for many generations, helps with keep track with the affected areas and therefore volunteers can target these areas during the migration period.

The group launched its [Facebook](#) campaign "[Lothian Toad Watch](#)" on the 12th of February this year and has, after a successful start in these months, been on the move to recruiting more volunteers for the "toad watch" in 2014. If you're interested in helping out please contact the team at [LARG](#) at [lothianarg@outlook.com](mailto:lothianarg@outlook.com)

Contact links: