

Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group
SARG Strategy Paper



SARG Strategy 2012



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Surrey Amphibian and Reptile Group - Strategic Framework 2012

Our Vision: Through the excellence of our conservation activities, to be recognised as the leading regional herpetological conservation group in the United Kingdom, and to use this position to support the advancement of herpetological conservation nationally.

Our Mission: To support the conservation of wild, native amphibian and reptile species with an emphasis on the county of Surrey, through:

Data generation through survey and monitoring

Supporting habitat management

Educating the public

Scientific and academic research

Providing value to our membership

Our Values:

Trusted

Working in partnership

Inclusive

Innovative

Demonstrably effective



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Strategy:

- Improving conservation effectiveness
- Improving the professionalism of the group

Strategic Actions 2012:

Refining the reptile survey programme	Establishing the amphibian survey programme	Raising membership activity	Improving our support to partners	Developing conservation assessments
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Integrated Group Plans:

Reptiles Plan	Amphibians Plan	Members & Volunteers Plan	Partners Plan	Research Plan
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SARG Strategy 2012

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Surrey amphibian and reptile group is a non-profit-making wildlife conservation organisation, based in the United Kingdom's county of Surrey. SARG focuses on the care and preservation of wild, native reptiles and amphibians.
- 1.2. SARG was established in 1987 by people with an interest in Surrey's herpetology. Surrey is very fortunate in being home to all of the UK's native species of reptiles and amphibians (except for the Northern-clade pool frog), including European protected species such as the Smooth Snake and Great Crested Newt. We want to see these creatures thrive in the County.
- 1.3. We are a mixture of hobbyists, scientists, and conservationists; amateurs and professionals, committed to sharing knowledge and understanding of these much-misunderstood and endangered animals.
- 1.4. We are affiliated to, although independent from, the Surrey Wildlife Trust, and form part of the national ARG-UK network. We work voluntarily to prevent habitat destruction and resist damaging planning applications. We give advice to residents and organisations, work with schools and educational bodies, and help with numerous "toad-crossing" sites throughout Surrey.

2. Geographic scope

- 2.1. SARG area of operations will be the vice county of Surrey and the current political boundary of Surrey. We shall support activities beyond these boundaries only where there is close consultation and agreement with the relevant ARG.

3. Our Values

- 3.1. **Trusted** – By remaining independent and impartial, and providing evidence-based advice, SARG will maintain its position as a trusted conservation partner.
- 3.2. **Working in Partnership** - Strategic partnership is essential to SARG activates in order to identify gaps and overlaps in conservation effort to enable us to maximise efficiency of the use of scarce and valuable resources (money and people). Our priority partners for 2012 will be:
1. The Public
 2. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
 3. Natural England
 4. Surrey Wildlife Trust and BRIC
 5. The National Trust
 6. Surrey Borough Councils
 7. Surrey Fire & Rescue Service
 8. Kent, Sussex, Berkshire and Hampshire ARGs
- 3.3. **Inclusive** – SARG will strive to avoid any form of *clique culture*, where any member may become a committee member by following due process, and may become actively involved in any of our activities, provided legal requirements (such as licensing) are observed.
- 3.4. **Innovative** – We will continue to push the herpetological conservation envelope through the innovative use of information technology, analysis, processes and engagement with our partners.
- 3.5. **Demonstrably effective** – Wherever possible, SARG will develop effectiveness metrics, and publish our success against these measures.

4. Strategic Actions

4.1. Refining the reptile survey process

- To increase the number of active reptile surveyors, with a goal of achieving 60 active surveyors for the 2012 season.
- To build on our past success with the Rare Reptile Course with an improved syllabus for 2012. Moving towards a 2-year course for 2013.
- To establish a formal volunteers training day early in the 2012 season. (Possibly to replace the reptile NARRS training).
- To increase the number of long-term reptile survey sites within Surrey, and to help neighbouring ARGs to set up additional sites beyond the Surrey borders.

4.2. Establishing the amphibian survey programme

- The two key priorities for 2012 amphibian survey are to build upon our success with monitoring the Natterjack toad population at Frensham, and to establish and test the formal amphibian survey and recording process.
- To review the SARG key ponds database to ensure that we have identified and have survey permissions for at least one pond supporting widespread species and one pond supporting GCN in each Surrey borough.
- To create a SARG guide or handbook for toad crossing wardens and volunteers.
- To review the registered and reported toad crossing sites across Surrey, and to assign priorities against each.

4.3. Raising membership activity

- Hold a workshop to identify ways to add value to SARG members and to increase the activity of the membership. We shall implement the workshop recommendations.
- The SARG Facebook page is an effective means of engaging a section of the membership, and may help recruitment. Development and activity on the SARG Facebook page will be encouraged and developed.
- We shall support the SARG Volunteers officer through the development of a series of IT tools.

4.4. Improving the support to our partners

4.4.1. Land managers

- Supporting land managers with their management plans through the improved provision of data such as species distributions, sensitive areas and trend information.
- Advising Land managers how they can improve their site for reptiles and amphibians.
- Leading or assisting volunteer habitat management tasks. In general, SARG will support the various land management partners in their task schedules. Particular priority will be given to ARC tasks, in support of European protected species within Surrey. Additionally we will champion the habitat management of the Beambrook ponds, due to their unique historic context.

4.4.2. The public

- We shall review the SARG website with a view to how it may be improved to provide the best engagement with the public. This will include a drive to increase web traffic to the site, measured by means of its Alexa traffic ranking (6,234,101 in Jan 2012).
- We shall devise a means of measuring the effectiveness of our public education activities.
- We shall continue to support public events, providing they fall within the availability windows as defined by the SARG generic schedule. Priority will be given to supporting partner organisations as this provides additional strategic benefits.
- Develop a SARG guide for the creation and management of a garden wildlife pond.

4.4.3. Amphibian and reptile conservation

- We shall support ARC by continuing to be the *de facto* survey arm of ARC within the western Weald; monitoring known European Protected Species sites, and surveying priority reintroduction sites.
- We shall support ARC with research objectives such as conservation status assessment.

4.4.4. Surrey fire and rescue service

- We shall support SF&RS by attendance at their annual wildfire awareness day.
- We shall support SF&RS by supporting the South East England Wildfire Group and to pass the recommendations of this group to land managers as part of our land manager advice.

4.4.5. Amphibian and reptile groups

- We shall support ARGs by promulgation of SARG best practice through a series of guides and through advice provided in person.
- We shall make the SARG survey toolset available to neighbouring ARGs to provide the IT infrastructure that will help them to encourage local activity.

5. Chair's additional strategic objectives

- 5.1. SARG shall establish an online equipment inventory and audit system to better track key equipment items and to manage equipment requirements.
- 5.2. Develop system to record membership activity in order to establish a 2012 baseline.
- 5.3. SARG shall lead and continue to develop national and regional conservation initiatives such as the *Adder Project* and the *Wall Lizard Project*.
- 5.4. To produce a series of guides describing our processes and to build in *lessons learned* processes.