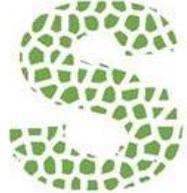
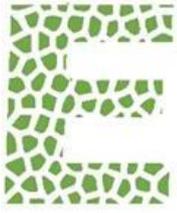


Newsletter

Chairman's Report 2015



Once again, what a great year for our club! We used our 10 new vivarium's from Germany for the 1st time at the Brighton Bright Sparks weekend. They looked absolutely stunning. Although they were expensive (£1800) they are light and easy to clean and therefore I definitely feel that the benefits far outweigh the cost. During the course of the weekend we were seen by approximately 3000 people all of which had a great day out!

Our biggest STEM fest show to date was at the South of England Show Ground. 5000+ school children in 6.5 hours... Wow. Very hard work but we all enjoyed every minute. Next year is succeeding this year with over 7000 booked in, the largest number to date. Any help would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested please let me know. I think these types of shows are the best way of getting the general public interested in the amazing animals that we love so much and to see that reptiles are different than the press/antis say.

Once again the antis have been giving more misinformation. Here we have the Judicial Review coming up on the 4th of June which could have implications for not just reptile and amphibian shows, but all vertebrate shows. Kempton Park has already been cancelled. While across in the USA they have the Lacey Act, now Retics can't be imported into the country or across State lines. More people are killed by vending machines in the USA in one year than constricting snakes worldwide in ten years! So people the lesson here is: DON'T KEEP A PET VENDING MACHINE!

Don't forget to sign "Hands off our Hobby". The Scottish Government is looking at a total ban on exotic pets, it could spread so please help us and the FBH to show how many of us there are. This must be stopped before it can start!

This year we are hoping to run one or two mini buses to Cotswold Wildlife Park and Crocodiles of the World on day one, with a night stop at a hotel and then on to Bristol Zoo. It will be a very reasonable price, so keep an ear open for that.

This Newsletter is now one year old, well done Beth and a thank you to Lisa, and all her helpers, for the running of the shop. It has been very successful; all stock is paid for so this year could see a very big return. I would also like to give a big thank you to all of our committee, who have worked extremely hard in making this year a successful and enjoyable one for all.

Please don't forget to vote at our AGM, as with this vote you could keep your good looking Chairman. Lastly if anyone would like to help out with any of the upcoming shows or with the newsletter please let us know, every little helps!

Treasurer's Report

2014/2015 has been another very good year; we have purchased some new vivs which look great and we used for the first time at the Stem Fest in hove back in Feb.

Income from shows was down this year, mainly due to losing two of last year's biggest shows but we are doing lots more little shows to try and level this out. On the plus side, membership was way up on last year and has probably been our best year yet. We have also been selling merchandise at our shows which has been a massive boost to our income.

So to finish I would like to remind everyone that your annual membership is now due so please take a membership form and see our secretary with your payment.

Thank you.

Daren Trafford: Treasurer.

Secretary Report

Year to date, April 2014 - March 2015 we have seen an increase in members to the society this year. The Society has 82 members, with 40 membership forms having been completed. It's really nice to see new members being drawn into the society with one of our members being as far away as Wales.

We have been publicising our society at every event, have put up flyers in pet shops, veterinary practices, animal feed outlets, so the public know we are out there. Of course our new 'jazzed up' website has also attracted new members.

We have participated in a range of events, from school fetes, tea parties, and a residential care home. With really good days at Bright Sparks science festival and Paradise Park, both two day events. Once again this year we went to Stemfest with over 5500 kids at this event, we were one of, if not the most popular attraction there. It was busy, busy, busy. Each and every one has been enjoyable, with great feedback and compliments. The fun games and quiz sheets have been a hit and the children have enjoyed completing them. The top five or so winners have been placed onto our website for them to see.

It's so nice to see new members getting involved and helping out at these events, helping to educate people about our animals. So if you haven't got involved yet, but want to, then talk to any of the committee members and they will be happy to talk to you about what we do and what's involved. We understand that this is not doable for all members due to outside commitments, but your support in other ways is very much appreciated. We now have our own photographer Ady, that comes along to the events and takes photographs, which Lee puts up onto our website for all to see, showing what we do at these events.

We started to sell merchandise this year, ranging from key rings, badges, plastic snakes, wristbands, greeting cards and some jewellery. These have been a great success and have helped to raise monies for the society.

We have held a few social events throughout the year, starting with our Summer BBQ last August, which was a great success. Thanks to Lee for cooking at the BBQ. Following this we had a family fun day in August at Stanmer Park, the weather on our side, 'hot', with food, fun and games. We had traditional games, egg and spoon, three legged race, sack racing, throwing the eggs, rounders and football. A good time had by all who attended and a nice tan. To end the year we had our Xmas Party, with food, drink, music, raffle and a quiz. Thanks to Andy the quiz master for putting the quiz together. Thanks to Daren for cooking all the food for the evening. Everyone seemed to have a great time.

Let's hope the New Year is as much as a success as the last one!

Ann Teague, Secretary

AGM Web and I.T. Report

Hello everyone, Lee here your friendly neighbourhood Web and I.T. guy with the end of year report on all things internetty.

WEBSITE

We started this year in April '14 with an upgrade to our existing website with a change of look and expanded content with up to date information from regular refreshing of the site and dates, photos from shows etc...

With a few new features, including the drawing competition winners going up after each show, the addition of some new educational pages and the revised contact us page and maps, we have started off OK.

Around July '14 I put forward that I wanted to completely change our website and start from scratch, this was agreed and work began on the new esras.co.uk alongside some new I.T. projects. By the middle of October I had finished the new site with it now containing more than double the pages of the old site and more than triple the content as well, with a shiny new look and easier navigation. This included more interactivity like downloads and the education section, and also making it easier for people to get in contact with us in a variety of ways.

The new site was launched on 13th of November and was an instant success pulling in more than 1000 views in its 1st week.

Our visitor numbers have gone from strength to strength. Over the year starting in April '14 it was around 30-40 per day on average before the revamp, rising to 60-70 per day after the revamp and now we have an average of 90-110 a day with all parts of the site attracting visitors. Our highest visits per day at the moment is 255 which is fantastic.

FACEBOOK: The Group

With the Facebook group going secret at the start of this year I feel it was a good idea to have a place where only paying members had access to and can take advantage of any offers exclusive

to members, which I know some of you have taken advantage of and I feel this is the way to continue.

Although I would like to see a little more interaction on the group as I feel members are not taking full advantage of this resource that is available to them.

Events

When it comes to the Listing of Events and Shows on the group If members can attend and help out I would like it if people could put down that they are going or email myself esras.uk@gmail.com or Ann.ann.teague@hotmail.co.uk to let us know you will be attending so we know who to expect and can let you know of any changes that may take place in the days running up to or on the day of the Event.

This year we have had many 1st time show attendees which has been Awesome and we would like to have many more turn up and help if it is something they would like to do to come along and help.

It does not matter how knowledgeable you think you are or are not about something we all had to start somewhere, since I did my 1st show I have learnt so much about so many animals I do not personally have but now I can talk about them with confidence when asked. It truly is a heart-warming and exhilarating experience at the shows and displays we do when being able to educate and inspire people and help others face their fears for the 1st time so why not come along and help out it is always a laugh.

The Page

We launched the ESRAS Facebook page at the beginning of the year and we have grown nicely I think we are now up to 268 likes and we receive message about rehomes plus requests for advice and messages about how people enjoyed a show etc..

We are also able to let the general public know about where we will be and what we are doing and get out information about what is happening in the hobby etc...

THE I.T. SIDE

This year has been a busy year for the I.T. side of my role starting off with the refreshing of the hand-outs we have plus out Logo and Header as the year went on, but the biggest task I have undertaken this year was the creation of the new Information Sheets which are aligned to the websites Education section that happened in parallel with the new site and were used for the 1st time at BrightSparks '15 as part of Bright Science Festival on the 14th and 15th of February this year.

This coming year I hope to completely redesign all of the hand-outs in line with our new Membership Form and hope to also rework the Information Board we take with us to shows updating it to reflect ESRAS as it currently is.

Editor's Report

So, this issue is our one year AGM anniversary newsletter and what a great year it's been! I have really enjoyed making this and I hope you enjoy seeing the end product as much as I do. We've had lots of pieces written for this over the past few months; about our shows, a few pieces about some very lovely animals, a picture of Dave looking his best (apparently) and a wonderful story about Bob the Building Site gecko, to name but a few.

With over 650 downloads and counting, I'm feeling rather proud at what I've made with the continued support and suggestions, as without your pieces and advice our newsletter would not be what it is today. However, I would like to point out that all pieces are welcome and I'm hoping for quite a few more before our next AGM.

That's aimed at all of you members that have escaped from writing for me yet 😊

- Beth

Committee Representative Report

My role as member's rep is to relay to the committee any issues, grievances, or ideas that society members have. There has only really been two issues raised. Firstly to restructure our Wednesday monthly meetings, which we have now started to do. We now sit down at a point in the evening to discuss Society business, rather than just socialising in little groups, this brings everyone together and involves every member.

Secondly, was to have either a guest speaker or someone within the society discussing how they got into keeping reptiles. The Committee felt that people may not feel comfortable talking in front of the group and the same people would end up doing the talks each time. As for outside speakers it was felt that due to how far they would have to travel to get to us it was not a realistic option. But we haven't ruled out guest speakers all together. Other than this our members seem quite happy with how things are being run.

I also designed the activity sheet for the children to do at events. This has gone down quite well. We average at least fifteen entries at each event, but this does depend on the event, and how much space we have within the room provided to set up an activities table. The age range of the children taking part has been from as young as three, all the way up to sixteen. At the end of the event I choose the best five to go on our website trying to cover a range of ages.

At this moment in time I am looking into redesigning the activity sheet, as the drawing side seems more popular. I may split the drawing section and activity section into two, giving the children a choice of what they want to do.

At our Christmas meeting for the last two years I have put together the quiz, which always seems to go down well, and adds to a fun evening.

Andrew Teague - Society Rep

2015 – What lays ahead for the reptile hobby?

This year is going to be a defining year, first and foremost we will see the publication of the list of species to be banned from private ownership under the Invasive Alien Species Regulations, although the List will not come into force until 2016 (probably latter) we will find out this year what species are going to be banned. This is a defining moment in history as never before has the UK banned the private ownership of any animal, this will be a very sad day. The number of species affected is likely to very small, nevertheless it will mark the beginning of another struggle as there will be the inevitably push from the 'antis' have more and more species added.

2014 saw more reptiles and amphibians kept in the UK than ever before also more pet shops licenced to sell reptiles than ever before and this growth is set to continue and 2015. Although business has been tough the industry is still growth, bucking the trend of many other sectors. Growth was strongest in the frozen food sector (rodents) with an increase of about 11% and livefoods by about 7%. Imports of reptile continue to decline and final figures will not be available until the end of March but it is set to be a record low. This has been the trend for a number of years and reflects the growth in captive breeding in the UK.

2015 will finally see the answer are reptile Breeders Meeting legal or not, this is a battle that has been raging for more than 20 years and will finally be answered this year by the High Court. Originally expected to have been addressed in the latter part of 2014, but the antis have been trying very hard to disrupt the process. Now the case is on the warning list so a date is expected shortly and it will be nice to have this issue out of the way once and for all.

Of course 2015 also sees the election of a new government, this is always an interesting time. What else is in store who knows, other the IAR Regs legislatively wise there is not much in England, but Scotland & Wales have muted about various issues but little detail and are unlikely to implement anything ahead of the election. Little is likely to happen in 2015, but 2016 could be an interesting/disconcerting year depending who gets elected, let's hope the Greens don't get anywhere?

As always the threats are likely to emanate from the EU, and the biggest danger outside of the aforementioned IAR Regs is the push for implementation of a Positive List. Keepers in Member States such as Belgium and the Netherlands are very much at the forefront of this insidious push by the antis to restrict and exterminate species from captivity – nothing positive about a Positive List..!!

A belated happy New Year to everyone and I hope it is a prosperous time for everyone, well not everyone... I hope the anti's have a really, really bad year...!!

The Judicial Review

The date for the Judicial Review being taken by the Federation of British Herpetologists against Arun District Council to clarify the legality of Breeders Meetings is to take place on the 4th of June 2015 at the Royal Courts of Justice in London. It is expected to last one day, with the significant delay due to the intervention of a third party, the APA.

HANDS OFF OUR HOBBY

This year sees the launch of the Hands Off Our Hobby campaign to try to protect our hobby from the Anti's and the EU/Our Government from introducing things like positive lists or negative lists which will prohibit and restrict the species of animals which we can keep.

WHY REPTILE-LOVERS SHOULD BE WORRIED

Join us as we ask politicians across the UK to safeguard the reptile and amphibian keeping hobby for the future. Sign our petition on www.change.org asking law-makers to recognise that keeping exotic and/or wild-caught animals is not a 'bad' thing and is just as acceptable as having a dog, cat, rabbit or guinea pig as a pet. We want UK politicians to protect our ability to enjoy our hobby in the foreseeable future by promising to oppose any future ban on exotic and wild caught species that would adversely affect us.

And why not go further? This is an issue that affects everyone who keeps animals, even species such as gerbils and ornamental fish are threatened, so ask your family, friends, neighbours, workmates or even the person next to you in the bus queue, to sign our **Hands Off My Hobby petition**. We need our politicians to realise that reptile and amphibian-keeping is a popular hobby enjoyed by a great many of their voters, so we all need to take a stand against the vocal minority that oppose our interests.

Thank you for your support.

Animal rights' groups want to prevent people from keeping animals which they term as 'exotic' or 'wild' pets and reptiles & amphibians are one of their primary targets. Many of their campaigns focus on introducing bans on the importation and sale of wild-caught and exotic species, but they are also seeking to convince people that keeping any of these kinds of pets is wrong, even if they are bred in captivity or undergone domestication. If these groups succeed with their aims then it would spell the end of the reptile and amphibian keeping hobby and the livelihoods the industry sustains.

Exotic animals include anything not native to this country and if the animal rights lobby succeed in their aim of banning such species our hobby would be exterminated. If there are no animals there's no trade or hobby, as livestock accounts for only a small percentage of sales for the industry. Without animals there's no need for vivarium's, equipment, food, medicines, plants or any other sundries so the pet industry would suffer a huge blow, damaging the economy by loss of jobs and falling government revenue as the industry is worth some £300 million pounds annually.

Another threat is the proposed introduction of white lists in order to drastically restrict the type of animals which may be kept as pets. This is often presented as a conservation measure or a tool to protect native species but is actually just a means to restrict the animals we can keep in order to weaken the pro-pet lobby.

THINK WE'RE GOING OVER THE TOP?

We need politicians to start to understand that keeping exotic or wild-caught species, including reptiles and amphibians, as pets is a perfectly laudable practice and the people who keep them are no different to any other pet keepers. In the run-up to the 2015 General Election, we want politicians to realise that keeping reptiles and amphibians brings a lot of pleasure to people, as well as bringing social, economic and health benefits to the UK and beyond. We want politicians to wake up to the fact this is an issue that is important to their voters - and that means you! If we don't all start to shout 'Hands Off Our Hobby' to politicians NOW

these animal rights campaign groups could be successful in their quest for future bans or restrictions that could mean the end of your hobby or livelihood.

To give you some idea of what we are up against, below are some examples of what animal rights campaign groups have to say about exotic pet-keeping. Some of these groups use the definition of 'wild animals' based on the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 which effectively means that almost all of the animals we keep are considered 'wild animals'.

Born free foundation	Born Free opposes the keeping of wild or exotic animals as pets, challenges the exotic pet industry and trade, and campaigns for national and international legislation to reduce and where possible end this practice.
Eurogroup for animals	Our goal [with the European Exotic Pet Campaign] is to reduce the number of exotic animals being kept as pets & increase the welfare of those exotic animals being kept as pets.
OneKind	OneKind urges all UK governments to work together to develop a positive list system to regulate the keeping of exotic species in Scotland, England, Wales & Northern Ireland. The legislation should facilitate a reduction in the numbers & types of non-domesticated birds, mammals, fish & reptiles in private keeping.
Animal protection agency	The Animal Protection Agency is the UK organisation committed to ceasing the trade in wildlife for pets.
Emergent Disease foundation	In the medium-to-long terms, complete bans on trading wild animals as pets must be implemented. In the short-to-medium terms the widespread introduction of positive lists would allow for only extensively and scientifically pre-checked species to be approved for trade.
ENDCAP	Whilst ENDCAP is opposed in principal to the import & keeping of wild animals as pets, in the short to medium term, ENDCAP calls on Member States [of the EU] to limit which animal species can be imported & kept as pets by adopting a positive (white) list of animal species, and ensuring a ban on the importation of wild-caught animals.
Captive animals' protection society	Exotic animals are not pets.
RSPCA	The RSPCA are opposed to the trade in wild-caught animals and products derived from them. The RSPCA are opposed to the trade in captive-bred wild animals and products derived from them, where there are grounds for believing that suffering may in practice be caused as a result of breeding, holding, transportation or use of the animal.

We have a petition which can be accessed via the HandsOffOurHobby Facebook page or the Website www.handsoffourhobby.wordpress.com so please go and sign the petition and let as many people know who keep any kind of exotic pet including fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians to go along and sign it too as it affects them too, this is a very serious problem that will result in the possible loss or breakdown of our hobby/industry.

I would also urge you to contact you MP/PPC/MEP about this so that they know how many VOTERS have an opinion on this and how strong the support and feeling is behind this.



Merchandise Report

I would like to start off by saying a very BIG thank you to the Committee for giving the go ahead on the selling of ESRAS branded merchandise. To Lee, Beth, Ann, Andy and Skye for helping me make 300 badges, to Martine for her suggestion of using Snakeskin (we went with keyrings instead of bookmarks), to all the members who have helped sell in the shop at shows and lastly to EVERYONE who has bought something and helped support ESRAS.

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH

Wow what a year! I do not think any of us expected the shop to do as well as it has.

I remember the 1st show we sold at was Paradise Park last May and Daren asking how well had we done. My reply was "I think we need more stock as over the weekend we had sold more than £120 over the 2 days." That success has carried on to many more shows.

We ordered more stock that week in anticipation of our next show and over the year we have expanded into Jewellery.

The Merchandise has now paid for itself and we are into a very healthy profit, with everything being sold from now on being pure profit. Fingers crossed this year will be the same if not better.

- Lisa

Arachnophobia

As anyone who has ever seen me at an E.S.R.A.S show knows, I hate spiders with a passion. The way spiders move unnerves me, so naturally when you add speed and a tendency to jump out from corners at me you can understand why I tend to avoid them. They make me want to freeze up and run away at the same time.

However, two and a half years ago I hated snakes. I thought that snakes were exactly the way the films described; cold, slimy and prone to attack. I avoided them like the plague because they scared me, and when my stepdad brought a royal python into our house I was terrified it was going to escape and bite me. It may not have been completely calm when we first got him, but eventually I realised how with care and patience he had calmed down to become a rather friendly and loving pet.

I started to get more curious about the royal and eventually I was holding him, then corn snakes and boas.

We heard about E.S.R.A.S online and went to see a show they put on, where the girl who was scared of snakes had John dumped on her by our dear chairman who then proceeded to disappear. Five minutes later, when my knees were buckling he finally took pity on me and took him back. I have to thank Dave for that, because although I had realised snakes weren't as bad as they seemed, I was still slightly scared and through him leaving me with John he took away the last of my fear.

Now, this is a piece about spiders so you might be curious as to why snakes have come into it. Well, just like with the snakes I began to grow curious about them and eventually I decided to get one of my own to help me with my fear. Before that I had handled two different tarantulas and learnt a little about them, so I knew enough to realise I wanted something slightly slower and smaller than most. I ended up dragging Dave around the South East Arachnid Show and eventually under his guidance, I decided to buy Lola the Chilean Rose. Having her in my room was hard and I'm not going to say I don't get paranoid about her locks more often than not, but I'm getting used to having her around. I may not have held her yet but we're getting there slowly and I really hope to bring her along to a show soon.

I'm not over my fear, not by a long shot, but by being able to see her and understand her behaviour I know I can get there, in time.

- Beth

