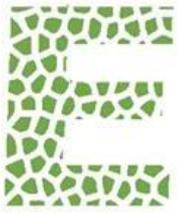
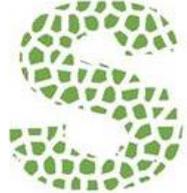


Newsletter











Chairman's Foreword:

Where to start. My herping was well under way by the age 6. I was known for my love of all animals. But at the age of 6 I was called out of class by the head and asked if I could identify some snakes. The nature study teacher (what they were called in the old days before biology) was out with the older kids and there was a snake in the hall! 5 teachers, the head teacher and a very little me all assembled in the hallway searching for the snake. Something moved under the radiator, like a flash I was on my stomach looking. The head teacher screamed at me not to touch it because it was probably an adder! Without a second thought I shot my hand out and grabbed it. "Just a slow worm" I said calmly while turning it over. "It's a female" I told them. I was a hero to all of the teachers, but the Head was still dubious. "This is a lizard" I said, "look it's got eye lids and the scales and the shape is all wrong."

By the age of 8 I had my first terrapins. They were tiny red ears, the size of a 10p coin. They came with a small bowl and a plastic palm tree. Tiny & Tarzan I named them. Tarzan was the biggest in the pet shop and yes, Tiny was the smallest. There was no UV heat in the tank and in fact I was told they didn't need it! I found that by putting a table lamp next to them they would eat and bask. After about 4 months I somehow convinced mum & dad that I needed a Spanish terrapin. Welcome home Fred. I kept Fred in a shallow sink, about 8 inches deep, dug into the ground. I constructed a small wooden fence around it to give him a land area. Tiny stopped feeding about 10 months after I got him. I took a trip to the pet shop and the owner said I had done well to have them so long as most only live 3 months. We then went to the Vet. He said the only thing to do was give him a salty water bath twice a day. With the knowledge I have today it is now clear that their soft shells and lack of energy were due to a metabolic bone disease caused by a lack of UV.

For my 11th birthday, my big brother turned up with 4 European wall lizards. Mum & Dad were not best pleased. John, Paul, George & Ringo lasted about a year. Again I was advised to just use a normal incandescent lamp. After this sad event I thought I would stick with my Spanish terrapins and local reptile and amphibian species. Even before the presence of the wall lizards I had already bred 3 species of newt, 2 species of lizard, the common frog and the common toad.

My long suffering wife Linda only has herself to blame, she said if I married her I could have what I like (of the animal type). This lasted about 2 hours of married life! Dancing at the reception I said "we are off to London tomorrow", to which she replied "why?" "To get a crocodile" was my reply, you're not having one off them! I have to say, I did not want one but just wanted to try.

E.S.R.A.S. Shows

Paradise Park 10th & 11th of May

Our first event of the year was a 2 day show at Paradise Park in Newhaven. We were situated in the foyer, so people could see us as they entered and as they went out!

Both days went really well and it was really nice to see E.S.R.A.S. members coming along to say hi and to support us, also to get an idea as to how the shows are run and what they entail.

The merchandise stall was setup for the first time and was really well received, in fact it seemed to be a record for E.S.R.A.S. sales so far!

Hangleton Primary School 17th of May

We were given a classroom with a big outdoor area so there was enough room to get John out into the sunshine. Dave brought along his new glass tank to show the Garter Snakes as they would be in the wild, the children loved watching them swim.

A great time was had by all and it was a lovely sunny day.

Wild About Mid Sussex 7th of June

The day didn't hold much promise as it started off pouring with rain and the event was in a big marquee in the middle of a park, by mid-morning the sun came out and so did the people.

The E.S.R.A.S. stand seemed to be swamped with people, we were told afterwards that 3000 people attended. We also had a few people sign up for memberships. E.S.R.A.S. also received a wonderful email from a parent thanking us for a lovely time.

Eastbrook Primary 14th of June

We were allocated the entire hall and took full advantage of all the space, with Daren in full Shaquille O'Neal mode!! Rebecca came to visit, she runs an online reptile magazine called Digitilian which is worth taking a look at as there is some interesting articles.

Again we were thanked by 2 little girls who shook mine and Dave's hands. It is small things like that that make it all worthwhile.

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone that gives their time to help out at these events, your support is invaluable to keeping E.S.R.A.S. events going.

Merchandise Update:

E.S.R.A.S. currently sells Key rings, Badges, Plastic Snakes and Wristbands on a small stall at events, it all seems to be selling really well and the kids love the plastic snakes. **Quiz Sheets:**

Andy's Quiz Sheets are a **HIT**, the children enjoy doing the puzzles and drawing reptiles. We have had some fantastic pictures handed in and the top five from each show are put on the E.S.R.A.S. website to be viewed throughout the year.

Photographer:

Ady has volunteered to take photos at the events he is able to get to, so a big thank you to him for giving up his time. After each event the photos are put up on our website and the E.S.R.A.S. Facebook page. Feel free to have a look, as some of the photos are truly lovely.

- Lisa

BOB THE BUILDING SITE GECKO:

A long journey to a new home

It was a warm evening somewhere in India, when Bob the Gecko decided he would go on a hunt for his evening meal. After a while he came across a piece of wood with a hole in it, and he climbed through to see what he could find. There was a pile of large pieces of cut stone, which looked like a good place to go hunting so he spent the evening and early hours of the morning chasing crickets and other insects to eat. As the sun came up Bob decided that it might be safer to stay hidden in the stones, rather than go back to where he would normally hide up in the day time.

What Bob didn't realise was the hole in the piece of wood he had crawled through was actually a wooden crate, and the stones he had been hunting in had been cut from a local quarry destined for the building trade in England. Sometime later that day Bob felt himself being lifted up into the air. What he didn't realise is, the crate was being loaded onto a lorry, as the lorry set off on its bumpy journey, Bob hid himself away in a tight crevice between the stones. When the lorry arrived at the docks, Bob once again felt himself being lifted up into the air, as the crane took the crate from the back of the lorry to the ship.

A scared Bob stayed hidden between the stones for many days, until the ship arrived in England. Once again Bob was lifted from the ship to a lorry. Then after another bumpy ride the crate containing the stones and Bob was delivered to a local building site in England. Bob remained hidden amongst the stones, until the day a young man working on the building site was asked to unpack the crate containing the large pieces of cut stone.

After unpacking a few pieces, to the young man's surprise there was Bob. After a little bit of a chase, the young man managed to catch Bob and put him into his sandwich box for safe keeping. At the end of the day, the young man took Bob home and looked after him for the next year. Unfortunately, for whatever reason he could no longer give Bob a home, so Bob was passed onto a work colleague and given a temporary home.

Whilst my family and I were doing an event with ESRAS at Paradise Park, a friend of ours came to this event with his family, his son-in-law told us about Bob and asked if we could help to re-home him. Bob was then taken to my friend Des's house, where he spent the night. Some photos were taken of Bob and posted on the ESRAS members Facebook page, asking for help to identify what type of Gecko Bob was and whether anyone could help to re-home him.

A discussion took place between Dave, Dougal and Steve (all members of ESRAS), as to what type of Gecko Bob may be. Moorish/Mediterranean and Brooks were discussed but no definitive answer was reached. Steve (Mini Mon) offered to give Bob a permanent home. So my family and I took Bob to Steve's home where he will now see out the rest of his life with Steve's collection of lizards. So Bob the Building Site Gecko's long journey to a new home had finally come to an end. I hope you'll agree he is one lucky little Gecko!

- Andy Teague

REPTILES IN MY HOUSE

Hi, my name is Skye and we have eight reptiles in my house. They are all Corn snakes, four girls and four boys. Their names are: Navajo, Cherokee, Shoshone, Peaches, Cheyenne, Dakota, Apache and Comanche. My Dad has named his after Indian tribes, so I guess you can tell which is mine. Peaches is my baby girl and she is four years old, coming up to five in October. We have also kept Peaches shed skin so we can see how much she has grown in four and half years. I got Peaches for my birthday when I was seven years old.

Navajo is a Tessera, which is a brown colour and has yellow stripes along his back. Cherokee is a Butter Motley and is a yellow colour. Shoshone is a Caramel Motley Stripe and is a range of different colour greens and I call her a 'bogey' colour. Peaches is an Amenalistic, which is an orange and red colour. Cheyenne is a Bloodred and, as you can guess from the name, she is a red colour. Dakota is an Anery Aztec which is a black and grey colour. Apache is a Bubble Gum Snow and is a white colour with a hint of pink. Comanche is a Carolina and is a brown colour.

Snakes can bite, as my Dad knows since he has been bitten three times, twice by a Corn snake and once by a King snake we had. The reason why my Dad got bitten by our old King snake is because he smelt like our Corn snakes, and the reason Dad got bitten by the Corn snakes was because he took their mouse away because he thought they had finished eating. We feed our snakes mice every other Monday. Sometimes we get our snakes out and sometimes we don't.

In April we bred our snakes, Peaches went with Dakota and Cheyenne went with Apache, and we only bred them because they are the oldest male and females we have. When they had mated Cheyenne laid her sixteen eggs after 31 days. Peaches laid her eggs after 34 days, and she laid twenty seven eggs. Dad has now put the eggs into the incubator and they will be in there for between forty five to ninety days until they hatch. We will then have lots of little baby Corn snakes. This will be so cool and I can't wait to see this, and the colours of the different baby Corn snakes that we may get.

- Skye Teague

Dave's Top 10 Show Questions:

1. Is it poisonous?
2. Can it eat me?
3. Sorry, is it poisonous?
4. Will it bite me?
5. If it bites me will I die?
6. That's poisonous, isn't it?
7. But aren't all snakes poisonous?
8. Why won't it bite me?
9. When they are that colour they're poisonous, aren't they?
10. Is it poisonous?

Upcoming Events:

Harbour Primary & Nursery School

4th of July at 15:00 –17:30

Oakdown House Open Day

5th of July at 12:30 –15:00

Glebe Primary School

12th of July at 11am - 4pm

Peacehaven Heights Primary School Summer Fair

18th of July at 15:15pm–17:15pm from rubs.

Progress on the promoting ESRAS on Social Media and in person

Since launching our **NEW E.S.R.A.S. Facebook page** at the AGM we have accumulated 112 likes to date, which I think in 3 months is actually very good. I would like request that all members who have access to Facebook like and share the page at least once a month if they can to get us out there. The Admin team regularly promote the page throughout Facebook to raise awareness of the club and what we do.

The Website is updated regularly with photos of the events, the winners of the drawing competition and any news about events etc... The Twitter page is going slowly but surely, it just needs time and exposure although we are now up to the dizzying heights of 12 followers, so I will ask if everyone with Twitter can like the page **@ESRAS_UK** and retweet the posts that I put up.

The new email address has attracted attention as well, with questions coming through about sightings of snakes in gardens and shed skins with people wanting to know about what sort of snake they are. The best email we have got so far is this one.

“To esras.uk@gmail.com

I visited St. John's Park, burgess hill today, the event you held was absolutely fantastic!

The staff of esras were friendly, very welcoming, and more than happy to chat and answer questions. All of you were brilliant!!!

My daughter, Tabitha was asking questions about every reptile you had and you were all happy to chat to her, she was very grateful for being able to hold so many of the snakes, which she loves !! I myself, found holding some very therapeutic, even (big) John!

Please pass this on to all volunteers and staff at esras we think you were all fabulous, keep up the good work!

Charlie and Tabitha”

When I received this Email I posted it on the E.S.R.A.S. member's only forum because I thought everyone needed to see it, as it was such a fantastic gesture for someone to take the time to send this to us and really does go to show that we do make a difference to people when we put on these shows and displays.

At the Eastbrook Primary show we had the pleasure of meeting a very enthusiastic lady called Rebecca, who runs her own online reptile magazine called Digitilian (located at www.digitilian.co.uk). It is free to subscribe to and we may feature in a later issue of it which is fantastic, hopefully we can help each other out.

We have had great success with the distribution of our Laminated Flyers and even some Event lists being put up in pet shops and Vets, I would like to say a great thank you to Ann and Andy for their relentless efforts on this front. If anyone can think of a shop, vets or any establishment that would be willing to display one of our Laminated Flyers or Event lists, please let someone know and we can get one there or give you one to hand in. I will ask again that if ANYONE has any ideas for anything to do with the website, twitter, the Facebook page or anything about getting us out there please do not hesitate to come forward.

- Lee

My 1st FBH Conference and Doncaster Show

The Conference:

So at the ungodly hour of 4:25am on Saturday the 21st of June 2014, I was standing outside my front door waiting for Dave to arrive so we could start our journey to Doncaster for the FBH Conference and Doncaster Reptile Expo, so after picking up Daren we were on our way.

Arriving at 9:30am we booked into our hotel and set off for the conference, it was great meeting lots of people from the other clubs and societies especially the guys from PRAS

The conference started with introductions and what was going to happen that day and the list of talks had me very interested.

The 1st speaker was from ZSL and was talking about Reptile Viruses and the ways in which they affect the animals we have how they can be diagnosed and how we can prevent the spread of them within our collections. He also went through how our hobby as a whole really does not do enough to help ourselves when it comes to this sort of thing.

The Major points he raised were:

- Lack of Communication between hobbyists
- Unexpected death not being Investigated
- Cynical views of Veterinary Medicine
- Lack of or poor Quarantine
- Poor Bio Security
- Poor or non-existent Record keeping

He also had some great facts about Snake Mites:

- Life Cycle is 13-19 days average but can be up to 40 days
- Females lay 1-24 eggs at a time with up to 80 on her lifetime
- At 30°C a female can travel 20cm per min, which equals 12m per hour
- Very difficult to eradicate safely

With regards to unexpected deaths not being investigated he had some points on Post Mortems:

- Dead animals must be chilled down as quickly as possible without freezing as this destroys all useful tissue
- Make sure the animal wasn't near heat source when died as this destroys plenty of evidence
- Samples can be fixed and sent at a later date

There was a great talk on Frogs with plenty of amazing photos showing their amazing life cycles.

We heard from an amazing guy called Staale from Norway who lives in Sweden as a Reptile Refugee because of the politics in his native Norway.

We were introduced to the Terrascaping World Championship which is designing naturalistic living environments for our animals, and the FBH is now going to enter a team into maybe next year's championship. Might be headed by our very own **Daren 'handmethatglueandbranch'** Trafford.

We had an amazingly eye opening talk from Rob Quest from the Animal Reception Centre at Heathrow. Talking and showing through some truly horrific photographs about what he and his department have to deal with on a daily basis with all animals that pass through their building. From smuggling to badly shipped animals. To the stories of the animals that live there and the ones they have been able to either rehome or reunite with their owners.

Near to the end of the day we had a discussion about Reptile Rehoming via the FBH and with the help of the clubs which is to be decided on how to go forward.

Throughout the day we were provided with great food and drink. I felt that I had learned so much and actually participated in something quite meaningful and helpful to our hobby.

The Expo

Bright and Early the next morning at around 8:30 we headed over for breakfast and to find out where our table was situated. We set up our table with our little selling shop and our snakes and leaflets about us and waited for everyone to come in.

I was able throughout the day to have a look around at everything there, now I have been to Kempton Park which was my 1st Reptile Expo which I found to be truly awe inspiring, but this one made that one seem tiny in comparison with so many people selling and displaying what they had from the latest equipment and housing to all the animals, from Corn Snakes to Reticulated Pythons, Beardies to Monitors and all the Insects, Spiders and Scorpions you could want to look at. It was like being a small child in a pick and mix, with everyone being very helpful and informative about what they had.

Back to our table and we had great interest in our stall with many questions about the snakes on display and even people asking how much they were which we had to explain they were not for sale. Throughout the day we had people wanting to hold either One, Two or the Rhino Rats that Daren had brought along, so we had some space in front of us and were glad to oblige which had many people with huge smiles on their faces.

The day was very, very busy with lots of people in attendance all looking for their next purchase. The end of the day came and we packed up and set off home after a great conference and an amazing expo, I really cannot wait to go again and would recommend it to everyone to do at least once.

- Lee

Journey into the 'Digitilian' age

Ever since I can remember I have loved animals, and reptiles in particular have always fascinated me. Though I never realised how interesting, enjoyable and downright addictive they were until I had a reptile of my own. When I moved into my very own flat, the first thing I did before my curtains were even attached to the wall was go in search of a pet Royal Python. She was, and still is, so cool and captivating that I found myself obsessed with all things reptile. I began watching videos, reading countless information and boring everyone around me to tears by somehow managing to bring them up in every conversation.

It was then I realised I had discovered a passion within myself and wanted to be able to experience this feeling of excitement every day, but how? I didn't want to just turn my home in to a cold blooded zoo, (although that is slowly happening and is a great deal of fun!) I also wanted to share my passion with others. I wanted to surround myself with like-minded people, learn from who I could as well as pass on what I know to others and if I could make just one other person feel the joy I do from these creatures or even help someone realise that snakes, lizards etc. aren't to be feared, then what could be better than that? So, I started racking my brain for how I could achieve such a task.

Then it hit me. What I didn't mention before is one of my other interests is web design and so I thought why not put the two together and create an online herpetology magazine! Just 3 months of incubation later; after working and saving hard 'Digitilian' was hatched out! The first issue went live in May and will continue to be published on the 1st of every month.

It is easy to navigate, fully interactive, packed with facts and fun. Plus it's 100% free and can be read at www.digitilian.co.uk - The magazine strives for the best and covers many aspects, including reptile and amphibian keeping & care, species information, highlighting conservation and interesting stories all aimed to educate and entertain, as well as much more! I'm still in the very early stages of this adventure, though I have already been fortunate to have met some great people and interact with the most beautiful animals. I'm humbled that the magazine has received such brilliant support from many so far, including Brian Barczyk of BHB reptiles. Digitilian has exciting things lined up for the future and I look forward to waking up every day to the new adventures it will be taking me on as it continues to grow. Who knows where this journey will take me..? I can't wait to find out!

- Rebecca from Digitilian

Reptile Therapy

Following an article by newspapers such as the Evening Standard, the spotlight was directed at animal therapist, Louise Helsdown. After hearing about how she helps the NHS fight mental illnesses such as depression through the handling of snakes, as well as many other animals, we contacted her and together, we decided to conduct an interview via email about some of the reptile aspects of her work. Here is the interview.

1. Please would you tell me a little about yourself and your work?

I am a consultant occupational therapist qualified in Animal Assisted Interventions and Equine Guided Learning. I have worked in a variety of settings since I qualified 15 years ago. My main background is in mental health and development disorders. I currently manage supported living services for those with mental health diagnoses and autism. I work in Hertfordshire as well as my own practice where I work all over the south of England.

2. What made you start to provide animal therapy and when did you start taking an interest in herpetology?

I started to provide animal assisted interventions in 2005. It started with Keira the dog, who I rescued as a 4 month old puppy. Like many of my patients, she had had a bad start to life. I have a selection of animals myself including Keira, 2 cats, 2 rabbits, 6 chickens, a horse and Angel the corn snake. Most of which I had rescued. Angel the corn snake was found by my partner under the stairs of a university house. After my training in Animal Assisted Interventions, it became clear that with the right planning any animal can be used to help therapy.

3. Why did you choose to use reptiles, rather than simply continuing with cats, dogs or horses?

People like different animals. Not everyone wants to walk a dog or stroke a bunny. Also animals provide and meet different needs, some animals provide comfort, fun, laughter and a routine for some people. You need to match the person to the animal and not assume that everyone will respond to the same one.

4. Do you get better results with reptiles than with other animals?

Not particularly. However the snake definitely generates the most interest and interaction!

5. How effective would you say animal therapy is in the long run?

I think animals have a huge impact on the wellbeing of the patients. It gives pleasure, provides routine, gives responsibility, makes people smile and gives confidence. I will never forget the first time Angel came to work and was handled by a patient with severe self-harm scars. The snake wrapped himself around her arms and really didn't care about the scars. She felt so accepted. Also for those patients who feel 'stuck' and never achieve anything - for them to hold a snake gives an enormous sense of achievement.

They keep photos on their bedroom walls to remind them that they can work on worried or that new things (like holding a snake) are possible.

6. What is your favourite part of the animal therapy process?

I feel so humbled by the effect that animals have on the patients (and staff). The animals are non-judgemental and don't care what you look like or what your problems are. The patients love that safe interaction with an animal.

7. Do you think this would be useful in other areas of counselling?

I have worked with animals in a variety of settings. It is really important to think about the animal. Animal welfare is a top priority. Animals can feel stressed by human worries. The animals must have regular breaks and with the snake temperature control is very important. As long as people want to work with animals and can consent to animal assisted interventions, they can be used in most settings.

8. Have you inspired any of your patients in to owning reptiles of their own after seeing your work?

I think a lot of the patients would like to own animals once they live in their own homes or are out of hospital. We cannot allow animals to permanently live in hospitals or supported living as we need to keep their physical and emotional welfare safe. Visiting animals are fine as we can protect them from stress, and escalating situations. A stressed animal is potentially a dangerous animal that could lash out and bite/scratch people. The animals need as much care as the clients.

9. Does it make you feel annoyed that the newspaper article picks up only on the reptile side of your work, rather than mentioning all of the other animals you use as well?

A little. All of the animals are vitally important. I know the snake is interesting but comments like "curing depression with snakes" is misleading. The animals are working in partnership with the therapist to help the patient in their recovery.

It was very interesting to hear about her work and the uses of animals in therapy. Louise is a very lovely woman and is very eager to continue to talk about her work, so look out for future articles about her surgery. For links to her website, search for <http://www.thetherapyconsultant.co.uk/> on google. To read the Evening Standard article, search for "NHS recruits snakes to treat depression" under the date of the 12th of June, 2009.

Many thanks to Louise for answering all of our questions, we wish you more success stories to be shared with us in the future.

- Beth