

## COULD YOU PICK UP A LITTLE TOAD?

Migration to the annual springtime mating party held in Manor Farm pond, Ascott under Wychwood, can be a dangerous journey for single-minded toads. They move as dusk falls, and when the weather is moist and warm.



They have a powerful instinct at times of danger, and stand motionless hoping that they look like rocks. So when cars or Cotswold-line trains approach they wait, and may get squashed, wastefully covering the ground with body, red blood, eggs and slime, a truly gruesome and pitiful fate.

But this is how you could help. Scooped by your gloved hand into a bucket, they may softly chirrup as they are carried across the road, and are then released to crawl slowly into the safer undergrowth and the welcoming water. They don't jump or evade capture! We are part of a national endeavour to try to halt the decline of amphibians, and our registered site at Ascott has provided useful though sad statistics, showing a falling population over the past four years.

Clad in our yellow fluorescent protective vests, and with traffic warning signs and torch beams, we have bucketed hundreds across the roads, and been rewarded each mid-summer by the sight of the tiny 'toadpoles'.

If you could commit one named evening a week to join the rota of devoted rescuers, you will be very welcome indeed, and will learn a lot about these mysterious khaki creatures, presently so much at extra risk from traffic, nitrates and climate change. Springtime for toads may come at any time from early February to mid-April, but you will only be needed if the dusk-time temperature is high enough and then only for one or a few hours of that evening.

Please telephone John Gripper on 830278 or Joan Lilly on 831464 for more information, and to join the rota for February 2000.

