

Hunt for Great Crested Newt

POND Wardens have proved their worth by joining a hunt for the Great Crested Newt.

The wardens, trained through a community scheme run by Southern Water and BTCV, were among more than 100 volunteers who took part in a trial survey of the Great Crested Newt in Kent, Sussex and Hampshire.

The Pond Wardens were trained by conservation charity Froglife to carry out surveys of ponds and record their findings.

The survey was a partnership with the Environment Agency to locate and monitor this rapidly declining species. The results will now be used to develop a National Amphibian and Reptile recording



Newt catch: Pond wardens Ali Morse and Robert Doolan

scheme, which is being developed by national voluntary bodies in association with the National Biodiversity Network.

The Great Crested Newt is a declining species in Europe and an endangered species in the UK.

Mike Barker, Southern Water's Environment Team Manager, said: "It was a great opportunity for pond wardens to use their knowledge and to be part of such an important project."

More than 350 wardens have now been trained through the scheme.

New courses will start in the spring. To find out more contact Diana Smith, of BTCV, on 01243 814481.

Squirrels flying on

WHILE Great Crested Newts are protected under the European Habitats Directive, spare a thought for managers in Finland, where the Flying Squirrel, *pterosomys volans*, is top of the list of endangered species, and under European law neither their nests or resting spots can be moved.

Mike Barker, Head of the Environmental Team at Southern Water, who met a Finnish environmentalist at a conference said: "After hearing about the flying squirrels, I think we can count ourselves lucky that we only have land-based animals to look out for!"

The squirrels, only found in Finland, Russia and Siberia, cause many a headache for Eastern European construction projects.



Divers' base: The Henry P Lading in the Solent

Pictures: George Godden

DIVING TO RESTORE ISLAND'S SUPPLIES

WORK to restore Isle of Wight water supplies led a group of staff to the Danish barge Henry P Lading.

The barge is at the hub of a project to mend a Cross-Solent pipeline, which is believed to have been damaged by a ship's anchor.

The pipeline is one of two which run under the Solent and supply the Island with up to five million litres of water a day from the mainland.

This is around a quarter of the total demand during the summer months.

The group, led by Island Manager Steve Burridge and Project Manager Paul Hilson, was given a unique opportunity to see for themselves how the Danish crew were repairing the vital pipe.

The trickiest task the engineers had was to join the old pipe to the new, ensuring there were no leaks.

Only a 600 metre section of the four-kilometre pipe, which runs from Lepe, in Hampshire, to Gurnard, on the Island, was being replaced following the damage.

The old pipeline appeared to be in good condition, considering it had been in use for 23 years in the harsh marine environment.

The 12-strong group included David Nye, Water Team Manager, and Chief Hydrogeologist Mike Packman. They discovered Henry P Lading started life in 1930 as an oil tanker working for Esso, but 30 years ago was adapted to lay submarine pipes and cables.

Determination

This included removing the section with the vessel's engine, so these days two tugboats move it to its jobs around the world.

Once in position these tugs help patrol the area around the 1,500-tonne mothership, keeping inquisitive yachts away.

Five divers, equipped with hot-water wetsuits, air tanks and a recompression chamber were among the crew, to carry out the work.

The professionalism and speed with which the work was progressing, up to 28 metres below the surface, impressed Team Manager Nick Croston.

He said: "These guys can lay pipelines at a rate of two kilometres a day. While they don't need that sort of speed for this repair job, their efficiency and high standards are helping to ensure residents and visitors to the Island will have a reliable supply of water in time for the summer season. Once the contractors have finished pressure-testing the joints between the old and new pipe, we will sterilise the pipe so it is suitable for carrying



Main man: Island Manager Steve Burridge examines the new connecting joint fitted to the Cross Solent main which is being repaired to protect water supplies to the Island from the mainland



On board: Project team take a close look at the repair operation

drinking water. One of the last things the contractors will do is lift the damaged section of pipeline on the barge and return it to Denmark for recycling so we don't litter the seabed."

Steve Burridge said: "Following the recent heavy rainfall Island water supplies are back to the average for the time of year, which is a huge relief. However, the excellent work

repairing the main will also help safeguard supplies to the Island."

For Project Delivery's Fred Caws the visit to the barge was somewhat nostalgic. He said: "It was good to meet up again with the Installation Manager Claus Andres, whom I met 24 years ago when the crew of Henry P Lading was first laying the two pipelines. He was only a trainee then."