

# Newsletter



## Chairman's Foreword:

### Don't believe your Dad (he could be kidding)!

My daughter Natalie was playing with friends in the garden while Linda, my long suffering wife, was gardening when one of them, looking at one of the tortoises said "what do they eat?" We had box tortoises and spur thighed. She said that the spur thighed tortoises eat greens and fruit, but the boxes will eat worms, insects and carrion. "What's carrion?" "Dead animals" was the reply.

Her friends are now enthralled, so Natalie explains that the leopard tortoises in Africa have been known to hunt in packs and some jump from trees onto the wildebeest's back, and pull them to the ground, with the others attacking from the ground! "And that's why they are called Leopard tortoises", she explained.

Lin, with her hand over her mouth to stop the laughter, asked Natalie where she had heard this from, for the reply of "Daddy told me!"

### What Emma wanted at about 3 years old:

When your kids are very young, you say "What do you want for your birthday? You can have anything!"

This is what my wife Linda said to my oldest daughter Emma one year.

"I want a rat mummy" (Lin loves all animals but not mice, or her biggest hate, RATS). In a mild panic she said "You know Mummy does not like rats", to be told "I won't put it near you Mummy!"

Now desperate, Lin said "But they bite!"

"But mummy I don't want a live one, I want one like daddy's so when I finish playing with it I will put it back in the freezer!"

## E.S.R.A.S. Shows

### Raystede Centre for Animal Welfare 29th June 2014 - By Lisa

We were given a really lovely room with a small kitchen so we were able to make tea which is always helpful!

We had a lot of members turn out to help and even put on a snake parade with some of the more interesting and the larger of the snakes we had that day in the main arena.

We also had some people interested in the club and have since become members.

### Stemfest – The Big Bang 1st July 2014

#### The Tale of a Reptile show virgin - By Mick

Having never been to a show before, I really didn't know what to expect. The day started very early getting the Bearded Dragons rub ready with a few creature comforts for their epic adventure. As it goes it was a lovely drive up with sunshine and very little traffic.

I arrived at 6:30am in the morning (early!) and met up with the rest of the group to start setting up. Brian got his priorities sorted by going and negotiating a discount for the day with the tea wagon and burger van, nice one son. I did try and help with the setting up but to be honest I had no idea what was going on as everyone else knew what the setup was but I pitched in where I could. I just ran around looking busy and I think I got away with it until this confession, (oops). With everything set up and working in the nick of time it was very quickly 9:00 and the gates opened to a flood of school kids and their handlers. Nobody told me there was going to be 5000+ of the little darlings so it was a bit of a shock to the system.

Soon the ESRAS shed was busy with the kids want to hold the dragons and have their friends take a picture with them, a lot of kids will have photos with some big bald bloke photo bombing their finest moment. I do like to keep myself amused. The dragons did very well in such a busy environment and being passed around all day. Lots of the kids were telling me about their pets and it was good to hear so many kept reptiles, Lots of interest and questions about the beardies and the kids took great delight in making their teachers hold the lizards and snakes which was great fun to watch their reactions i.e. trying not to freak out in front of the pupils. So after a long and relentless day and with aching feet we cleared up packed everything away and headed off home having had a fantastic day.

#### A Stemfest Story - By Lisa

I have done quite a few ESRAS shows but this was a real eye opener. The day started off at 6am and was really overcast, when we got to the showground and were shown an empty barn my heart sank but everyone rolled up their sleeves and the work began, Tables put up and organised, Viv's were cleaned and Reptiles temporarily re-homed. I wasn't long before the barn was transformed, tea was then drunk to celebrate.

At 9am the 1st school came to visit and the day began, by 1pm it felt like all 5000+ children were in the barn with us. I have never been to such a busy show, by 4pm it was all over. I have never been so tired after a show (I am sure all the other members there that day felt the same) other than that it was so much fun and I cannot wait to do it all again next year.

### **Harbour Primary School - By Lee**

On the Friday the 4th of July we had a show at Harbour Primary School in Newhaven for their Summer Fair.

Dave, Daren, Julie, Beth and I were in attendance and we were put in the library, which was nice and open if a little exposed. The afternoon went very well with children and adults alike enjoying themselves, taking photos and many having their 1st experience with snakes/lizards so overcoming long held fears.

It was a lovely couple of hours with great weather outside ensuring a steady crowd of people coming to see us and enjoy the animals, the experience as a whole and a great time was had by all if some were a little reticent at first.

### **Oakdown House 5th July 2014 - By Skye**

On the 5th of July we visited Oakdown House which is a residential home and supported living accommodation for people with Learning disabilities at Burwash Common.

I attended their family open day with Dave, Dan, Ann and Andrew (my mum and dad). We were situated in the main building in a classroom.

On arrival we began to set up and some of the residents were so interested in what we had for them to look at, that they came in early. The residents were very excited, but gentle with the animals and many of them really enjoyed holding the snakes and lizards.

The look on their faces was amazing. Such joy. For some of them just looking was enough. Some of the residents stayed with us for a long time and kept coming back to see the animals. They brought their families with them, and all got involved and had hands on experiences. They loved it.

The staff were really nice and helpful. At the end of the day we were thanked for all our work and making this experience for the residents an enjoyable one. They had received good feedback from everyone who attended throughout the day.

### **The Glebe School 12th July 2014 - By Lisa**

We were given a classroom with a fenced off garden which turned out to be ideal as it was such a lovely day we could take some of the reptiles outside. Dan took his female granite Burmese python around the fete to attract more people and the DJ regularly announced we were there as well.

The Idea of an ESRAS Fun Day was born at this show.

### **Peacehaven Heights School 18th July 2014 - By Lisa**

We set up in a large classroom with an open area outside enclosed by bushes. The reptiles were paraded around the fete and another nice DJ announced the classroom that we were in. The day went really well and we were quite busy with all the families that came to visit us, many returning with their friends. The teachers were very keen to look at the animals and encouraged their students to combat their fears, despite some teachers being a little reluctant to touch them at first.

**Mrs Nursery Childcare 30<sup>th</sup> August 2014 - By Lisa**

This was a small show in a back garden to help advertise a childcare nursery. The show was attended by Beth, Dan Lee and Lisa. We had a really good time and met some lovely families who seemed to enjoy holding and talking about the reptiles there that day.

Afterwards we got 2 lovely emails from the client.

*"Hi Lee*

*Thanks so much, everyone commented on how fab you all were, you made the party what it was today*

*Thanks so much, I will be SO recommending you!*

*Sally"*

And

*"Hi Dave*

*I just wanted to say how unbelievable Lee and everyone were today, they went above and beyond and were a total pleasure to have. They are a fantastic representation of ESRAS and I just wanted to pass on how utterly brilliant it was having them.*

*Thanks so much, they were a huge part in the party going so well*

*Kindest regards Sally."*

**Middle Street School 16<sup>th</sup> August 2014 - By Lisa**

Last year we did a show at Middle Street School for their Summer Fair and we were asked back this year to do an educational talk about the animals that inhabit the rainforest. Dave, Daren, Lee and Lisa attended with Dave doing most of the talking – *obviously!*

The talk was for 2 classes and we took over the hall. The children's reactions went from "Euurghhh" at the bugs to "WOW!" for the snakes.

We received a lovely email afterward thanking us for coming.

*"Dear Lee, Dave and the ESRAS team,*

*Please pass on my sincere gratitude for the excellent talk and display today. Your enthusiasm was fantastic and it was the best show of reptiles and other creepy crawlies that I have ever seen. The children really enjoyed themselves and it is something they will remember forever.*

*Thank you so very much,*

*Liam"*

**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 ESRAS events going.**

## **ESRAS Family Fun day**

August 24th 2014 was the ESRAS family fun day. This was the first time we have organised something like this and the hope was that members and their family/friends would meet at Stanmer Park in Brighton for a picnic and fun and games.

It was a chance for members to meet and get to know each other more, away from the normal monthly meetings. Unfortunately not many members were able to attend, but as it was open to friends and family the turnout was still good and we had a brilliant day.

We played many games, including football and rounders, which was always a favourite of mine. We also played a few classic school games, including the three legged race; egg and spoon race and the sack race which was hilarious. All of the pics can be seen on Facebook.

We will definitely try and organise this event next year, and I hope that we get a better response as it was a very enjoyable day.

## **ESRAS Merchandise Update - By Lisa**

### **Goodies**

ESRAS currently sell keyrings, badges, plastic snakes and wristbands at the events that we do.

This was a big financial risk at the beginning of the year as we were not sure how well or even if it would work, I am pleased and honoured to announce we are now in profit.

Due to this success we are now looking into other ways to expand on this with new revenue streams and products to sell.

This was the 1st year that we have sold at Kempton Park Reptile Expo and the wristbands went down really well as they did at the HIS Doncaster Reptile Expo in June of this year.

### **ESRAS Shirts**

ESRAS T-Shirts are available in a range of sizes at the BARGAIN price of £5. Please note Shirts are a requirement for displaying and helping at shows.

## **Greetings Card's Update - by Ann & Skye**

We have sold 25 of the greetings cards so far, at £2 per card. We have a range of designs including snakes, lizards, spiders, amphibians and scorpions. We can also do card designs to order if we do not have a particular design, which can be images of personal reptiles if we are supplied with a suitable image.

We are also looking at designing a range of Christmas cards too.

Please contact Ann or Skye for more details.

## **E.S.R.A.S. Online: An Update**

Hi everyone, thought I would update you on how the website, Facebook Page, e-mail and all other things web and I.T. are doing.

### **Website**

In recent weeks I have been checking on the progress of the website viewing figures and since the 'new look' has gone up, we have seen an 150% increase in viewership with figures before the 'launch' averaging 32 visits per day (from differing I.P. addresses) with a high of 62 in one day, and since the 'launch', averaging 45 visits per day (from differing I.P. addresses) with a high of 86 in one day.

The most popular pages apart from the home page are the Gallery, the Events and Join pages. Also the Newsletter, having 268 views since its creation back in April, which is amazing when you consider that these views will probably be from non-members viewing it.

We also have viewers from all over the Globe!

### **Facebook**

The Facebook page has steadily been gaining new likes since its launch and since our last 'share event', we have gained 43 new likes taking us from 143 to 186 likes on the page. I am hoping to break 200 very soon. The reach of the posts on the page is very good, with up to 319 people being reached from 1 single post.

We also receive quite a few messages via the new page on a whole host of subjects.

### **E.S.R.A.S. E-mail**

The E.S.R.A.S. e-mail account is also performing remarkably well with many messages being received on a multitude of subjects from membership enquiries, re-homing requests and advice requests ranging from 'what snake is this in my garden?' through to husbandry advice, which vets are good to use and booking requests.

So as you can see the online presence of E.S.R.A.S. is going from strength to strength. As always, any thoughts or ideas you have will be greatly welcomed.

### **The Future**

At the moment I am working on a few projects for the future of ESRAS to help us become bigger, better and to try to involve and educate more and more people with these amazing animals.

And to finish this month's newsletter, here's a special piece written by one of our newest members about his dream reptile, the very friendly Bearded Dragon. Be sure to tell him what a fantastic job he has done, as he is one of the first to write us a personal piece!

## **RANGO**

The 19th of August will be a day I never forget. For that is the day I got my dream pet.

It all started when my mum packed me off to my grandparents. While I was out of the house my mum, aunt and uncle got to work with my birthday surprise. While I was away all three of them set up a vivarium and Rango (my bearded dragon) in my room.

When I came back I was asked not to go in my room. Why? I thought.

The next thing I know I'm blindfolded and walked to my room. When I saw him in his vivarium I was speechless and flabbergasted!

Since then we have made friends and I now enjoy seeing his face every morning. He makes me smile and loves pinning me to the floor (as you can see). I look forward to bringing him to the meetings and having lots of fun together!

By Jack O'Neill (aged 10) and Rango (aged 3)

