

Chris Newman

Born in 1959, he has been an animal keeper from an early age, acquiring his first snake at the age of five. He developed a particular interest in venomous creatures and acquired his first venomous snakes, Mojave rattlesnakes, aged ten. He has subsequently kept over 250 species of reptiles and amphibians and has bred over 80 species, some for the first time in captivity. One of the notable achievements was breeding day geckos (*Phelsuma*) in 1972. He has also kept numerous other non-reptilian species - invertebrates, fish, birds and mammals. He currently specialises in “exotic” mammals, notably porcupines and possums, both of which frequently breed – probably the only regular breeding programme of these species in the UK.

Chris is profoundly dyslexic and left school in 1976 uneducated and unable to read or write. Due to lack of formal education employment in academia was not forthcoming so on leaving school Chris supported himself with various occupations, mostly associated with his other interest in plants (horticulture). A spell at a zoo, Cotswold Wild Life Park, convinced him that a zoological career was not for him. In the 1980's Chris spent some ten years working (unpaid) in collaboration with Dr Bernard Whaler at the Queen Elizabeth Collage (University of London) developing more effective and human methods of extracting venom from animals. He was the first to develop a technique to extract venom from live black widow spiders, as shown on the BBC programme Tomorrow's World & developed and refined methods of extracting toxins from snakes, spiders, scorpions, centipedes and fish.

Chris was the publisher of the Reptilian magazine, the UK's first specialist reptile & amphibian publication, from 1991 to 2003. He is currently the chairman of the Federation of British Herpetologists and the Federation of Companion Animal Societies. He is consultant to the Reptile and Exotic Pet Trade Association & advisor to the Pet Care Trust and National Association of Private Animals Keepers on herpetological (reptile & amphibian) issues, as well as a consultant to the fresh produce (fruit) industry on arachnological and herpetological pests. He has also acted in an advisory capacity for Customs and Excise, the police and Local Authorities. He has had numerous articles and papers published, both in journals and magazines, as well as authoring several books on the subject of reptiles.

His current work includes working to improve animal welfare and defending the rights for people to keep animals in captivity. Chris is a passionate advocate that both humans and animals benefit from animal husbandry and the keeping of animals as companions. He has always spoken out against the animal rights lobby, which is increasingly influential politically, sometimes at considerable personal risk. Pet keepers are now the regular target for animal rights activists and many so-called welfare groups are actively involved in anti-pet-keeping strategies.

Chris is directly involved with many governmental Working Groups and legislative reviews, such as the Dangerous Wild Animals Act, CITES, Non-native Species. He has been working extensively with the Animal welfare Act since its inception. Chris also works on a voluntary basis manning a 24 hr helpline for animal keepers. This encompasses a whole range of services and offers support and advice about a wide range of issues, from helping keepers who have problems with animal licencing, Local Authorities, RSPCA etc, to providing legal and emotional support.

Today Chris lives with his partner, Jan, and four children (boys) in Southampton. He and the family maintain a large collection of reptiles, amphibians, fish, invertebrates and mammals. The

benefits of animal keeping are apparent with the boys, all of whom have learning difficulties, particularly with the youngest child who suffers from ADHD and Autism.

In addition to their interest in animals, the family are dedicated amateur paleontologists, and have assembled one of the largest privately owned collections of non-cephalopod mollusca (dead old snails) in the UK. The family have discovered many species new to the UK and continually break new ground in the quest to further knowledge of UK Eocene fauna. Chris's particular interests are in the taxonomic lineage of the genus *Campanile*, which includes the largest ever gastropod (snail), the now extinct *Campanile giganteum*.

Current Positions

- Chair – Federation of British Herpetologists (since 2001)
- Chair – Federation of Companion Animal Societies (since 2004)
- Associate member – Associated Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (since 2003)
- Member – Sustainable Users Network (since 2000)
- Member – Pet Care Trust, Livestock Advisory Panel (since 2000)
- Member – Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (since 2001)
- Member – SSPCA Advisory Panel on Animal Health & Welfare (since 2006)
- Member – Animal Network for Wales (since 2007)
- Advisor – National Association of Private Animal Keepers (since 2001)
- Consultant – Reptile & Exotic Pet Trade Association (since 2005)

Current Governmental Working Groups

- Member – DEFRA Working Group on Non-Native Species
- Member – DEFRA Working Group on CITES Article 8.2
- Member – EIG Working Group on Companion Animals

Previous Governmental Working Groups

- Chair - DEFRA Working Group on Pet Fairs (2003/2004)
- Member – DEFRA Working Group on Pet Vending (2003/2004)
- Member – DEFRA Working Group on Definition of Welfare (2004)

Recent Presentation

- Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime - (2004)
- Hampshire Police Wildlife Crime Conference - (2004)
- Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime - (2005)
- Greater London Authority Conference on Animal Welfare – (2005)
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Animal Welfare Conference – (2005)
- EU Wildlife Trade Enforcement Co-ordination Workshop – (2005)
- Police and Customs Wildlife Enforcement Officers Conference - (2005)
- Essex Animal Welfare Forum – (2005)
- Hampshire Police Wildlife Crime Conference - (2005)
- Police and Customs Wildlife Enforcement Officers Conference - (2005)
- Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime - (2006)
- Veterinary Association for Arbitration & Jurisprudence - (2006)
- Ornamental & Aquatic Trade Association - (2006)
- Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime - (2007)