

## **Herps across England: investigating the scale of reptile and amphibian trade**

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# Herps across England: investigating the scale of the reptile and amphibian trade



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Fig. 1: Blue poison dart frog (National Aquarium, ND)

## INTRODUCTION

- Herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians) have become increasingly accessible to pet owners in recent years, and herps are often found in general pet stores and online<sup>1</sup>.
- There is limited knowledge of the full range of species traded and how many individuals are sold<sup>2</sup>.
- Concerns have been raised about whether these animals can thrive in captivity due to specialist needs<sup>3</sup>.
- Previous research in 2014 by the Blue Cross and Born Free Foundation (The *One Click Away* Report) initially highlighted potential issues but had a limited sample size<sup>4</sup>.

## AIMS

Quantify species variety and individual numbers of herpetofauna sold across England in pet shops (both physical and online) and online classified adverts over a three year period.

## METHODS

- Visits made to 159 physical pet shops across 45 mainland English counties during 2017.
- Visits made to four online pet shops during 2017.
- Every week- sampled all herpetofauna adverts posted within last 7 days on four popular online classified sites (Preloved, Gumtree, Pets4Homes, Free Ads).
- Analysed factors such as species, numbers, location, and reason for sale

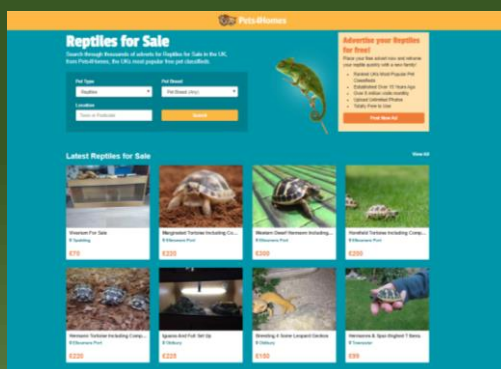


Fig. 2: example of classified website (Pets4Homes, 2020)



Fig. 3: green tree python (Manokwari, N.D)

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

### Species diversity:

- Pet shop (physical and online) visits in 2017: **168 reptile** and **72 amphibian** species
- Classified adverts during Aug 2017 (n= 2551), 2018 (n= 2665) and 2019 (n= 1295): **a further 263 reptile** and **50 amphibian** species
- **Total: 431 different reptile** and **122 different amphibian** species

### Trade hot spots

- Classified website data (Fig. 4a- d) from Aug 2017, Aug 2018, and Aug 2019 per 100,000 of the population of England, trade 'hot spots' (by Local Authority)

- **Torbay**
- **Plymouth**
- **Gosport**
- **Norwich**
- **Stoke-on-Trent**
- **Fenland**
- **Rushmoor**

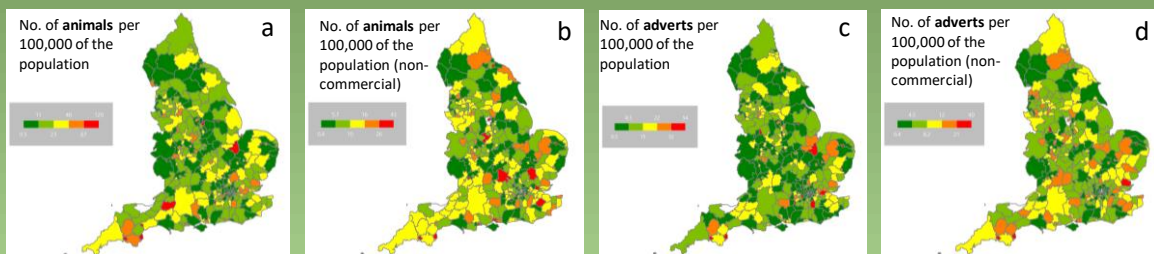


Fig. 4a-d: trade hot spots of herpetofauna by Local Authority

**Top 10 reasons stated for relinquishment** (excluding commercial sellers) from classified website data during Aug 2017, Aug 2018, and Aug 2019 show 'lack of time' and 'home move' are common factors.

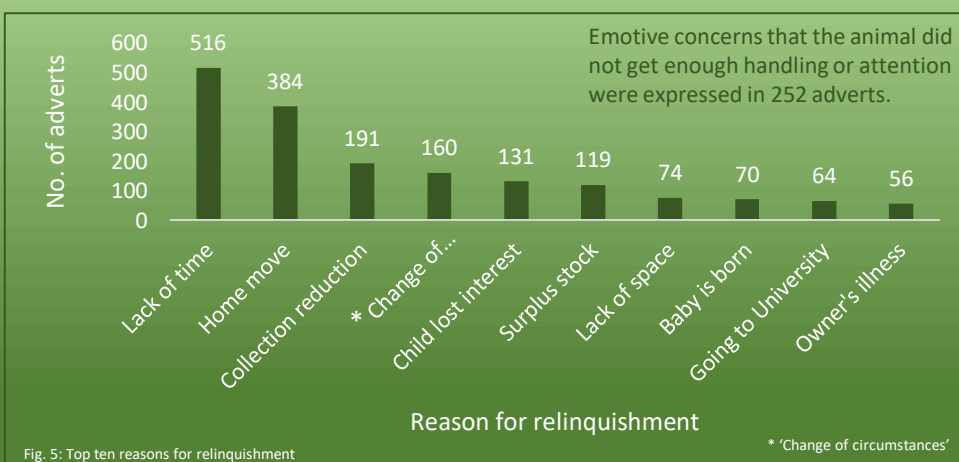


Fig. 5: Top ten reasons for relinquishment

## CONCLUSIONS

- Large range of species for sale, all with individual specialist needs.
- South Devon appears to be a trade hot spot regardless of how data is analysed.
- 'Lack of time' the biggest reason for relinquishment, indicating more education is needed on time commitments required for pet herpetofauna.
- Findings could help inform welfare organisations as to where and how their efforts on education and rescue could be targeted.

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