

# Foreword to articles on IR Research

Otto Kinne\*

Nordbunte 23, 21385 Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany

*This foreword applies to the following four articles*

Since 1989 Inter-Research has been financially supporting and conducting research on the ecology and population dynamics of highly endangered local species. Our aim is to give back to nature a small fraction of wet grassland in Oldendorf/Luhe (Germany) that had suffered a near-lethal blow from human impact over decades, to re-introduce species which had originally inhabited that land and to support endangered ones.

The dimensions of our efforts are modest. Our 'Ökologisches Versuchsgebiet' or 'Inter-Research Land' presently occupies a total area of 5.5 hectare. Our staff, who does all the field and laboratory work, consists of 3 individuals working part time on the project: Otto Kinne, Jens Kunert and Waldemar Zimmermann.

We have constructed 2 small field laboratories, built a variety of pools, ponds and ditches serving as reproduction areas, and provided summer and overwintering habitats.

Our efforts have resulted in the successful re-introduction and building up of a small, viable field

population of the fire-bellied toad *Bombina bombina* (total population strength estimated at ca. 80 individuals). We continue to breed the toad in the laboratory and to release juveniles into IR land, thus supporting the natural reproductive capacity of the field population.

Similarly, we have re-introduced and built up a population of the warty newt *Triturus cristatus*. The total field population has already attained a quasi-natural age structure. It consists of an estimated 160 individuals. We continue laboratory breeding and raising, and make yearly additions to the field population by setting out larvae and/or juveniles.

The less endangered smooth newt *Triturus vulgaris* is, at least since 1997, fully 'self-sustaining'. In 1999 its local population numbered about 1300 individuals of different ages.

'Inter-Research Land' supports several other amphibians, reptiles, rare butterflies and birds, as well as several highly endangered plants, such as *Stratiotes aloides*.