

Introduction

There are 4 species of reptile that are widespread in England: Common Lizard, Slow Worm, Grass Snake and Adder. The other two British species, the Sand Lizard and Smooth Snake have special habitat requirements that limit their range to specific sand dune or heathland sites and are not found in Yorkshire.

All species require suitable sites for hibernation during the winter months and habitat for foraging and basking from Spring through to Autumn. Requirements vary from species to species, however all reptiles generally prefer a mosaic of long grass or heathland with scrub or woodland.

Our objectives for Reptiles are:

To determine the status and distribution of reptiles in the Scarborough area.
To protect sites that support good populations of reptiles.
To improve the general public's understanding of reptiles.

Reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Schedule 5). This makes it illegal to intentionally kill or injure any animal.

Status and Distribution

Although reptiles are still reasonably widespread, over the last few decades all species are thought to have suffered a decline in numbers. Adders and Common Lizards are commonly sighted within the North York Moors National Park, however records of reptiles for the Scarborough BAP area are few and there have been no known recent sightings of Grass Snake. Slow Worms are thought to occur on the coastal slope.



Adder: (Photograph by Jimmy Wilson)

Threats

There are many threats to the status of reptiles in Britain. Some of them are obvious whilst others not so readily identified. Loss and fragmentation of habitat is a continued threat, as reptiles have poor dispersal abilities over unsuitable habitat. Loss of linear features, such as hedgerows, which act as corridors between areas occupied by reptiles, increases the likelihood of local extinctions because re-colonisation is inhibited.

Persecution can still pose a threat at sites where reptiles (particularly snakes) come into contact with humans.

The process of natural succession causes trees and shrubs to grow on areas of open habitat such as heathland and grassland, shading out basking areas. This occurs naturally, however it can also be as a result of inappropriate management. Management that is intensive poses a direct threat. Mechanical flailing and mowing can especially threaten Slow Worms and gravid (pregnant) snakes.

Current Action

No current actions.

What you can do to help:

Report all sightings of Reptiles to the NEYEDC.

Reptiles



Slow Worm: (Photograph by James Mortimer)

Links to Habitat Action Plans and Guidance Notes.

Priority habitats associated with Reptiles:

Woodland, Ancient and Species Rich Hedgerows, Neutral Grassland, Calcareous Grassland, Acid Grassland, Coastal Cliff Mosaics

Action Plans have been prepared for those in bold.