

Reptile Surveys
Land at School Close, Bampton, Devon
November 2023

A report by

Emily Andrew BSc (Hons) MSc

Report details

Site name: Land at School Close, Bampton, Devon
Site address: School Close, Bampton, Mid Devon, EX16 9NN
Grid reference: SS 9545 2216
Report date: 28th November 2023
Report author: Emily Andrew BSc (Hons) MSc

Report no: WOR 4240

Declaration of compliance

BS 42020:2013

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity, Code of practice for planning and development.

Code of Professional Conduct

The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Validity of survey data and report

The findings of this report are valid for 12 months from the date of survey. If work has not commenced within this period an updated survey by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.

Non-technical summary

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete reptile surveys on 0.45 hectares of land at School Close, Bampton, Devon. A small residential development is proposed for the site. The aim of this survey was to ascertain whether the four common reptile species, Grass Snake, Adder, Slow Worm and Common Lizard, are present within this site.

Sixteen artificial reptile refugia, comprising 50cm x 50cm squares of bitumen roofing felt, were placed at the site in early 13th July 2023 and inspected on seven occasions between 24th July and 8th September 2023, whilst adjacent areas were searched for basking or feeding reptiles.

During the six surveys, Slow Worm were recorded.

Capture and translocation of reptiles is recommended prior to the start of works at this site. An outline of an appropriate method is given within this report.

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1. Introduction

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete reptile surveys on land at School Close, Bampton, Devon.

Five residential units are proposed for the site.

1.1. Site location

The site is in the centre of the small town of Bampton, 8.4km north of Tiverton in a rural area of north Devon.

1.2. Survey aims

The aim of this survey is to ascertain whether the four common reptile species, Grass Snake, Adder, Slow Worm and Common Lizard, are present within this site.

The survey will allow an assessment of the importance of this site for reptiles based on a set of criteria from Froglife, the UK reptile and amphibian conservation organisation.

Where appropriate, the survey will provide the information required to determine the appropriate level of mitigation required to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation and relevant planning policy.

2. Methodology

2.1. Habitat assessment

An initial walk over assessment was completed for the site on 30th November 2022. Habitats present were noted and assessed for their value to resting, foraging or hibernating reptiles.

2.2. Refugia survey

16 artificial reptile refugia comprising 50cm x 50cm squares of bitumen roofing felt were placed at the site on 13th July 2023.

After a week settling period, these refugia were inspected on six separate occasions for concealed reptiles, either in the morning or late afternoon/early evening, whilst adjacent areas were searched for basking or feeding reptiles. If reptiles were found, their age class was estimated and adults were sexed.

This methodology is in accordance with Gent and Gibson (2003) and Froglife (1999).

2.3. Survey constraints

All areas of the site were readily accessible.

Weather conditions during the survey period were suitable for reptile activity (Table 1) and there are no significant constraints to the results or conclusion of this report. It is likely that these results reflect the population status of reptiles at this site.

3. Results

3.1. Habitat assessment

The Site comprises 4 residential buildings with associated garden areas including areas of bramble scrub to the west. There are scattered trees to the east and the site is bounded by hedgerows to the south east and the north west.

The margins of this site provide potential for reptiles particularly to the east and south west, whilst the lack of damp habitats make it unlikely that Grass Snake are present and its small size and habitat types would suggest that Adder are also absent.

3.2. Refugia survey

Details of the seven reptile refugia surveys are included in Table 1 and shown on Map 1.


During the seven surveys of the 16 reptile refugia at this site Slow Worm were recorded 133 times comprising 11 males and 42 females, 71 juveniles and 9 unknown adult slow worms.

No Grass Snake or Adder were encountered during these surveys.





Table 1. Summary records for each survey visit in 2023

Date	Start	Temp (deg C)	Weather conditions	Male Slow Worm	Female Slow Worm	Juvenile Slow Worm	Unknown adult Slow Worm
24/07/2023	20:40	14	80% cloud, dry	0	3	1	0
25/07/2023	20:40	14	clear, calm, dry	0	3	0	0
27/07/2023	17:25	18	100% cloud, light N wind, dry	3	14	15	1
19/08/2023	20:00	17	10% cloud, calm, dry	3	15	28	0
21/08/2023	08:30	15	100% cloud, light S wind, dry	2	6	15	0
23/08/2023	20:00	17	30% cloud, calm dry	5	7	18	0
08/09/2023	16:00	19	60% cloud, calm, dry	0	0	9	8

Legend

 Survey area

Total number of Slow worms

-  1 - 2
-  2 - 6
-  6 - 14
-  14 - 18



Title: Map 1. Reptile surveys

Project: School Close, Bampton,
Devon

Checked by: CDH Version: 01
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4. Evaluation of the site for reptiles

4.1. Slow Worm

Grassland habitats within the site provide a habitat capable of supporting Slow Worm. Slow Worm are present within the site, with the presence of juveniles indicating breeding.

4.2. Common Lizard

Hedgerows enclosing the site offer habitat for Common Lizard, however none were recorded here in association with the reptile refugia.

4.3. Adder

Habitats within the site lack sufficient extent for Adder, and none were recorded during the survey.

4.4. Grass Snake

Grass Snakes are typically found in damp habitats, where they prey on fish and amphibians, although they can sometimes be found in dry grassland.

Habitats within the site have little potential for Grass Snake, and none were recorded during the survey.

4.5. Reptile community

The reptile community at this site has been assessed against criteria produced by Froglife, the UK herpetofauna conservation organisation, to determine its importance (Froglife, 1999).

To allow the assessment, the highest count for adults of each species recorded on a single survey day, and within the prescribed density of 5-10 refugia per hectare, is taken to score the population of each species found at the site (Table 2).

Table 2: Key Reptile Sites Survey Assessment

Species	Low population Score 1	Good population Score 2	Exceptional population Score 3
Adder	<5	5-10	>10
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Slow Worm	<5	5-20	>20

To qualify as a Key Reptile Site, this site must meet at least one of the criteria listed below.

List of criteria by which a site may qualify as a Key Reptile Site (Froglife 1999)

- the site supports three or more reptile species
- the site supports two snake species
- the site supports an exceptional population of one species of reptile (see Table 2)

- the site supports an assemblage of species scoring at least 4 in terms of the population number (see Table 1) – this requires a specified minimum survey effort for scoring
- the site does not satisfy items 1 – 4 but is of particular regional importance due to presence of a local rarity.

The density of reptile refugia in the area of land at School Close was approximately 36 per hectare, well in excess of the prescribed density to score the population of each species found at the site.

The maximum number of adult Slow Worm was 18 animals on a single visit. Adjusting the results for the high number of tiles, the site is assessed as supporting a 'Good' population of Slow Worm and does not qualify as a Key Reptile Site.

5. Reptiles and the Law

All native reptiles are protected to some degree under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) whilst our two rarest species, the Sand Lizard and Smooth Snake are given full protection under the Act and also identified as European Protected Species.

The four common species (Slow Worm, Adder, Grass Snake and Common (Viviparous) Lizard) are protected from deliberate killing, injury and trade.

The two rare species, Sand Lizard and Smooth Snake, are given more protection that includes protection from capture and deliberate or reckless killing, injury or disturbance. Their breeding or resting places are also protected from obstruction or damage, even if it were accidental.

All six native reptiles are listed as species “of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.

6. Recommendations

Survey results suggest that the site supports a Good population of Slow Worm, with a maximum of 18 Slow Worm being found on any one survey visit.

Site clearance has the potential to kill or injure individual animals. This would likely be an offence under wildlife legislation.

Loss of habitat to the proposed development would likely have an adverse effect on the ability of reptiles to survive at this site.

Given that suitable retained habitat is to be managed for amenity value, it is recommended that capture and translocation of reptiles out of the development site is carried out prior to the start of works.

A formal receptor site will be required, and prior to translocation it may be necessary to determine if slow worm present within the receptor. Habitat enhancement may be required to ensure carrying capacity is sufficient for the number of animals being translocated.

The receptor site should ideally be within 10km of the development site. This will ensure that these animals are not moved large distances, thereby reducing the risks of stress and disease transmission.

The translocation will be undertaken by fully trained and experienced ecologists. Temporary exclusion fencing is recommended for the western and south-eastern site boundaries, to ensure Slow Worm from adjacent semi-natural habitats cannot re-colonise the development site during the translocation period.

Artificial refugia will be placed across the development site to provide capture points at a density of 500 refugia per hectare.

Regular visits to site will be made in suitable weather conditions to remove and relocate all individuals found at the refugia. Records of numbers, location, gender/maturity will be kept. Site visits will continue until there are no reptiles found on five consecutive visits, or the ecologist is satisfied that clearance has been achieved.

Following completion of the capture programme any areas that are to be cleared prior to construction (including grassland), should be cleared under the direct supervision of a suitably experienced ecologist.

All reptiles are to be caught and moved to the receptor area.

References

Froglife, (1999). Reptile survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife, Halesworth.

Gent, T., and Gibson, S. (eds). 2003. *Herpetofauna Worker's Manual*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.