Natural England Technical Information Note TIN102

Reptile mitigation guidelines

England's six native species of reptile all have legal protection. They sometimes occur on land subject to development threats. If development proceeds there may be adverse consequences for the reptiles, as well as breaches of the legislation. Mitigation can reduce and compensate for development impacts, and can minimise the risks of committing an offence. Recent evidence shows that in many cases, carefully planned and implemented mitigation can offset the negative impacts of development. This note draws together existing guidance, recent research findings and field observations to produce a single set of standards for good practice in reptile mitigation. It has been prepared for ecological consultants and will be useful to developers, Natural England staff, local planning authorities and volunteers.

Background

All of our reptile species have suffered declines, to varying extents across the country. For the widespread species, most populations of which occur outside protected sites, development without adequate mitigation continues to be a significant reason for this decline.

Natural England urges developers and their ecological advisers to use mitigation not only to meet legal requirements, but also to assist in conserving these frequently neglected animals.

All reptile species are now on the national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority list, and local authorities and other public bodies have a legal duty to take their conservation into account.

Scope

This guidance covers the six native species of terrestrial reptiles in England:

- slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*;
- common lizard *Lacerta (Zootoca) vivipara*;
- sand lizard *L. agilis*;
- grass snake *Natrix natrix*;
- adder *Vipera berus*; and
- smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*.

Common lizard

In terms of status, these species may be divided into two groups:

The "rare species"

- sand lizard; and
- smooth snake.

The "widespread species"

- slow-worm;
- common lizard;
- grass snake; and
- adder.

Despite the term "widespread" some species are highly depleted locally and "widespread" does not mean ubiquitous or common.

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