



## THE ECOLOGY EXPERTS

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## Reptile Surveys

All six British reptile species are protected by legislation; common lizard, slow-worm, grass snake, adder, sand lizard and smooth snake; making it an offence to kill, injure, take or trade any of these animals. The latter two species are designated as European Protected Species, extending their level of protection to increase their habitats and breeding grounds.

### Why are Reptile surveys required?

Reptile surveys must be completed if a development has the potential to impact habitat that would be of value for any reptile species; whether this be heathland, tussocky grassland, railway corridors, roadside verges or any other habitat of high value for reptiles. This is established during the [Preliminary Ecological Appraisal \(PEA\)](#).

## **What does a Reptile survey involve?**

To determine the presence/ likely absence of reptiles on a site, a reptile survey scheme is conducted. This involves the distribution of artificial survey tiles (felt mats and/ or corrugated metal sheet) across the survey area, followed by at least seven survey visits to record the reptiles present (survey effort can increase if surveying for rarer species). The reptiles are attracted to the tiles, which heat up and provide suitable sites to bask on or underneath. Surveys can be conducted between March and October, although optimal months are April to May and September.

## **Great crested newts nearby – the next steps**

Should survey effort reveal that a population of reptiles is present on site and will be impacted by a development, the course of action required varies by the species encountered. If the development will impact upon sand lizards or smooth snakes, or habitats used by these species, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence will be required. An EPS licence application is usually prepared by an ecologist and includes a Method Statement, which demonstrates how the proposed works will be conducted to avoid harm to reptiles (mitigation – often requires a capture and translocation programme). The EPS licence will also summarise any compensation measures that are required in order to maintain the current habitat value for reptiles long-term. Our team has completed several EPS licences and are well experienced in licensing requirements. Please feel free to get in contact to discuss further, we are happy to provide free advice and guidance.

An EPSL is not required if a development will impact upon common lizards, slow-worms, grass snakes or adders, however these species are still protected from intentional or reckless killing and injury. A method statement for stages of the development accompanied by ecological supervision during activities that hold a risk is often required. For moderate to large population densities of reptiles, translocation schemes may be required to protect and sustain the localised reptile population.

The team at Naturally Wild hold survey licences for all UK reptile species, allowing us to carry out full reptile surveys, capture and translocation. We have a proven track record of devising and implementing successful mitigation and compensation strategies.

## **Useful Links**

- [Reptiles: surveys and mitigation for development projects. Natural England](#)