Special habitats of the New Forest

The New Forest is home to the most extensive area of lowland heath remaining in Europe. Lowland heathland is a vital habitat for reptiles, providing warm basking areas, cover and protection, and an abundant food supply. This special habitat also provides ideal conditions for our reptiles to breed and hibernate.
Over the last 2050 years, lowland heathland has quickly disappeared from our landscape. Lost to forestry, farming, infrastructure and material extraction, lowland heath has become fragmented and isolated, increasing the pressures acting on the valuable reptile populations.

Help to conserve our native reptiles and amphibians by reporting your sightings to the Record Pool. Your records are very important as they directly support and inform the conservation and management of these animals.

www.recordpool.org.uk

amphibian and reptile conservation

The New Forest

The New Forest is a vital area for our native reptiles. The variety of habitats found within the New Forest and the surrounding areas provides the ideal habitats where all six species can be found. The Forest offers the mature vegetation, sunny areas with cover, and south-facing ridges, on which these reptiles depend. The New Forest is a stronghold for two of our rarest reptiles, the sand lizard and the smooth snake. These reptiles require a unique combination of habitats and specialised habitats to hunt, bask and breed.
Reptiles are coldblooded animals, so look for them basking in sunny spots or warming up on fallen logs during spring to early autumn.

Over half of the New Forest is designated for its international nature importance and as such has been given several conservation designations.

About Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation is a national wildlife charity committed to conserving our native amphibians and reptiles and saving the fragile habitats on which they depend. Our vision for the future sees amphibians and reptiles thriving in their natural habitats, and a society committed to the conservation of all of our native species.

To find out more about how you can get involved in reptile and amphibian conservation, please visit our website. You can support us by volunteering or by becoming an ARC member!

www.arc-trust.org

© Amphibian and Reptile Conservation

SPECIES SURVIVAL FUND

Funded by UK Government Heritage Fund

amphibian and reptile conservation

Reptiles of the New Forest

Home to all six of our native reptiles

amphibian and reptile conservation

Reptiles of the New Forest

Adders

Adders are the UK's only venomous snake, and can be easily identified by the dark, striking zig-zag pattern along their back and stockier appearance. They can be found throughout open areas of the New Forest, mainly in heathland, open woodland and rough grassland. Adders feed on small mammals and ground-nesting birds.

Grass snake

Grass snakes are the UK's longest snake and can be easily identified by the pale collar around their neck and their grey-green body. They are fairly common in The Forest and can be found around ponds, pools, meadows and grasslands of the New Forest feeding on fish and amphibians.

Slow-worm

Often mistaken for snakes, slow-worms are grey-brown legless lizards that use a range of habitats. They prefer covered, sheltered areas such as compost and grass heaps, and rarely bask in the open and can most commonly be found in woodland, heathland and grassland with scrub. Slow-worms feed on slow moving prey such as slugs and snails.

Common lizard

Common lizards are small, agile, brown-tan lizards with pale dorso- lateral lines and darker brown sides. These lizards are our most commonly seen reptile and will quickly dart into cover when disturbed. They can be seen on heathland, grassland and open woodland glades basking in open areas, feeding predominantly on spiders and insects.

Sand lizard

Our rarest native lizard can be easily identified by the prominent 'eye spots', darker brown markings with light centres, set against a brown or grey background. The males have striking green flanks, which are particularly bright during the breeding season in late April and May. Sand lizards are a European Protected Species that can be found on The Forest's sandy heathlands feeding on insects, including bees.

Smooth snake

Britain's rarest reptile, the smooth snake is a small, slim grey/brownish snake with a black heart shaped mark on the top of the head. This European Protected Species is restricted to the heathlands in the forest, preferring areas of deep mature heather on south-facing slopes. Smooth snakes feed mainly on other reptiles such as common lizards and slow-worms.

amphibian and reptile conservation