

## Reptile Habitat Management Handbook

Paul Edgar, Jim Foster and John Baker (2010). Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth. ISBN 978-0-9566717-0-7.

This handbook is the first attempt to bring together habitat management advice for all native UK reptiles. The half dozen species here have experienced population declines, and are now all Biodiversity Action Plan priorities. The handbook is aimed at site managers, and those who advise on management. It gives advice for a range of settings, from dedicated nature reserves to farmland and includes a useful appendix of Environmental Stewardship options.

Our native reptiles include two rarities, the sand lizard and smooth snake, both of which have very specific habitat requirements – lowland heath and, in the case of the sand lizard, coastal dune. The handbook advises on the specific management measures needed for the precious few sites supporting these species. The other four reptiles, viviparous lizard, slow-worm, grass snake and adder, are widespread, occurring in a range of habitats that provide a combination of open areas and cover. These species have a patchy distribution within their ranges, but nevertheless are likely to occur in many habitats managed for nature conservation.

The authors stress the importance of considering reptiles in site management plans. Experience has shown that simply ‘taking care of the habitat’ does not always favour reptiles, and some management approaches can actually be harmful to them. The handbook reviews habitat management practices and makes recommendations as to how they can be applied, or modified, to benefit reptiles.

Species-focused management is sometimes dismissed as impractical, as differing species may have conflicting requirements. To address this, a section has been included on resolving perceived conflicting wildlife interests. Fortunately, reptile habitat requirements (primarily, warm habitat mosaics of vegetation cover and open areas) benefit a range of other species, especially invertebrates, and so management for reptiles is generally compatible with managing for wider biodiversity.

This publication benefits from over twenty years of Amphibian and Reptile Conservation’s experience of managing habitat for rare reptiles. It also draws on the collective experience of the UK herpetofauna conservation community, including Amphibian and Reptile Groups, site managers and dedicated individuals.

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Copies of the handbook are available from Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, 655A Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 4AP, 01202 391319 (£3.00 to cover postage and handling, bulk orders to be negotiated [enquiries@arc-trust.org](mailto:enquiries@arc-trust.org)).

The handbook is also available to download in PDF format at: [www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org). ARC and Natural England will be sending copies to the main habitat management organisations in October, and a series of training courses is being organised for winter to promote the handbook’s main messages.

