

NARRS REPTILE SURVEY – 2009 PROTOCOLS SUMMARY

Aim of the survey – To measure occupancy rates for the widespread reptile species across the UK, and measure trends in their conservation status over time. Participants are allocated a randomly-selected 1km grid square where they visit suitable habitat three times to survey for reptiles. The survey collects information about the habitat, any reptiles detected, and other variables affecting the future prospects of reptiles in the area. See also the identification, habitat and survey guides for further help.

Grid square allocation – A square will be allocated randomly within 5km of each surveyor's postcode. If this is totally sea, beach or estuary, select the *nearest* square on land instead. All squares are eligible as long as some accessible reptile habitat exists, however little. If not, try the next square north (and work clockwise if necessary). Write your grid square on the form. New squares will be issued to surveyors each year (though it is OK to survey the same square if you want to) with the aim of obtaining information on as many squares as possible within the "NARRS cycle" (6 years).

Where to survey – You need to identify the areas of habitat most likely to support reptiles. The aim is to detect all reptile species present in the square, so your target areas must be representative. Use an OS Landranger/Outdoor Leisure map or internet (e.g. www.streetmap.co.uk) to locate your square, and then inspect the habitat using aerial photos (www.maps.google.co.uk) or by visiting on foot. Select representative habitat that can be walked in 2-3 hrs and devise a survey route. If no accessible habitat exists, seek the next square north and move clockwise if necessary until you find habitat to survey.

Access permission – Identify the landowner/tenant(s) and ask permission to survey visually and with refugia if appropriate. Simple verbal permission can often be achieved after knocking doors locally. See the advice sheet and show the NARRS letter if it helps. Also ask the landowner about access points, livestock, and known reptiles. If access is denied, seek the next square north (and then clockwise) until you find habitat to survey. Tell us on your survey form if you had to select an alternative square.

Refugia – Where appropriate, permitted and safe, you may lay artificial refugia for later checking on your survey visits. Choose numbers and materials that are practical for you. Corrugated iron is most effective at attracting reptiles overall, but roofing felt or bitumen-based roofing sheets are also effective and easier to cut and carry. Make sure refugia are well hidden from public view, livestock and pressed close to the ground in deep vegetation. Ideally leave in place for a few weeks before visiting.

Survey visits – March-June is preferred as reptiles are more detectable in spring, but you can survey on suitable days throughout the summer and autumn. Try and make three or more survey visits following your survey route, searching visually for reptiles, and checking any artificial or pre-existing refugia along the way. Keep a good record of dates, times, survey conditions and reptiles encountered. Choose days, times of day, and weather conditions that combine to give a good chance of finding basking reptiles. Each visit should last no more than 3 hours. You can make as many visits as you like.

Health & safety – Take care on rough terrain, lift and replace refugia carefully, and be careful where adders might be present. Refer to our risk assessment and lone working advice before you go into the field.

Licensing – Where sand lizards or smooth snakes might be present, you will need a licence accreditation letter from the HCT allowing you to survey. These are issued after training events. Always carry the letter with you, or bring your own licence if you have one.

NARRS www.narrs.org.uk is coordinated by *The Herpetological Conservation Trust*.