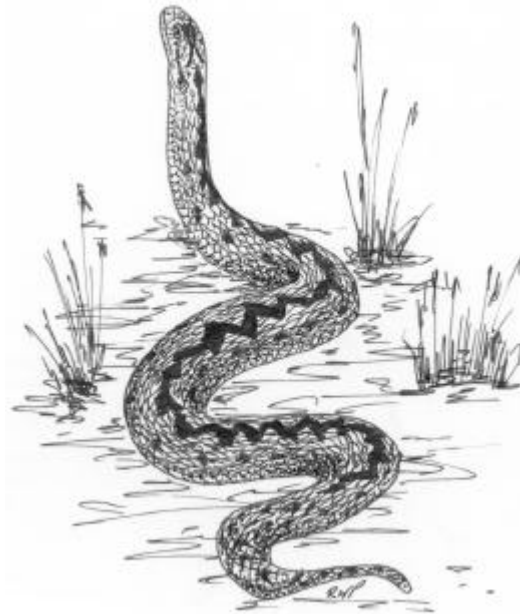


ADDER VIPER BERUS SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

Although there is no UK SAP for the adder, it is a UK species of conservation concern³⁹, and along with the three other reptile species found in the county borough, it plays a vital part in the area's ecology. Furthermore, the educational value of these species cannot be underestimated. Many natural history walks are enlivened by a glimpse of something 'exotic', and countless budding naturalists develop their interest through encounters with wild reptiles. The wider concept of environmental education can often be made more attractive by approaching from a reptilian direction.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority (P) or species of conservation concern (S) (1998)	S
EC Habitats Directive	-
Conservation Regs 1994	-
Berne Convention (1982)	-
Bonn Convention (1979)	-
CI TES (1975)	-
WCA (1981)	Sch. 5, 9



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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

The adder is the most widely distributed of the European snakes, mainly due to its varied diet and tolerance of cold conditions. It is found throughout mainland UK, on habitats ranging from sand dunes, woodland margins and wetlands, to upland heaths.

Adders require adequate basking and hibernation sites, and are often found in areas of sparse vegetation where they may utilise the burrows of small rodents. It hibernates communally, deeper in the ground than other British reptiles, and emerges earlier in the spring. Basking areas are near to hibernation sites and must be free of shading vegetation. They slough soon after emerging, the cast skins indicating their presence. Adders are the easiest of British snakes to record often basking in very visible sites, and requiring only a light tread and slow approach. They prefer humid, moist conditions, with muggy days after rainfall being most profitable for survey work. Adders often bask communally, males and females being easily distinguished by colour differences. The adder basks at a lower temperature than other British reptiles (8°C to 16°C). Within Wales there are significant colonies associated with the coastal sand dune systems and open heathland of the west.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

The adder is well distributed throughout in the county borough, often associated with commons and forestry plantations characteristic of the area. However, there is a lack of accurate data, although there seems to be a general decline in reptiles in the county borough. No systematic survey has been undertaken of adder populations.

2.3 Links with Habitats

The adder's ability to colonise most habitats means that this action plan should be considered in conjunction with those for the majority of terrestrial habitats, in particular:

- *Planted Coniferous Woodlands*
- **Wildlife Corridors**
- *Common Land*
- *Heathland*

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of habitat due to development.
- Loss of suitable basking sites due to natural succession (may be a consequence of management changes on common land).
- Loss of suitable basking sites due to intentional afforestation.
- Direct persecution by humans.

4. CURRENT ACTION

Although there are various initiatives in operation, little is being done at the present time, either nationally or locally.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable for this species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Halt any decline in adder populations within the county borough.
- 5.2.2 Actively manage sites where succession may pose a threat to resident adders.
- 5.2.3 Continue to improve public perception of the adder.

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.2 Seek to designate sites with breeding populations of three or more species of reptile as SINC.	CCBC	-									✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Manage habitats to prevent vegetation from shading out existing colonies through natural succession.	CCBC	GWT GLWT	✓								

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management (continued)											
6.2.2 Ensure forest plantation schemes do not endanger existing populations.	FC	-	✓								
6.2.3 Seek to include the maintenance of suitable open areas in agri-environment schemes wherever possible.	CCW	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Encourage natural colonisation of new sites to link fragmented habitats.	CCBC	-		✓							
6.3.2 Provide relocation sites for populations where disturbance to habitat is unavoidable.	CCBC	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.3 Adders pose a limited threat to public safety; provide relocation for any individuals or colonies that may be in danger of persecution.	CCBC	CCW RSPCA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.4 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Provide advice to all concerned parties on sympathetic management of adder habitats.	CBP	GWT GLWT	✓								
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Set up a Caerphilly county borough records database for reptiles, including the adder.	CBP	-		✓							
6.5.2 Develop an effective way to monitor known sites for population fluctuations.	CBP	-		✓							
6.5.3 Encourage a county wide survey of reptile sites to accurately ascertain present status and distribution, and input data into the county borough database.	CBP	-	✓								
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Liaise with local wildlife and community groups to educate members about the adder (other snakes/reptiles) in an attempt to dispel inbuilt fears.	CBP	local community/ wildlife groups	✓								
6.6.2 Promote, through publicity, media and events, a wider and more sympathetic understanding of reptile conservation.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓