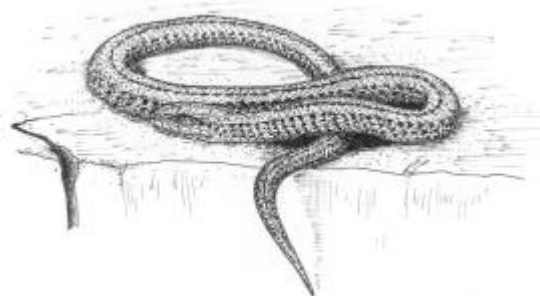


SLOW WORM AND COMMON LIZARD SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The **slow worm** (*Anguis fragilis*) is one of only three species of lizard found in the UK. It is unusual in that it is legless, bearing a superficial resemblance to a snake. It has undoubtedly suffered a population decline over the last few decades and for this reason, as well as being one of the few reptiles often found by children on nature rambles, it has been included in a local action plan. The **common lizard** (*Lacerta vivipara*) is similar to the slow worm in many of its requirements and pressures, and is therefore included in this species action plan.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
	slow worm and common lizard
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S) ³⁹	S
EC Habitats Directive	-
Conservation Regs 1994	-
Berne Convention (1982)	-
Bonn Convention (1979)	-
CITES (1975)	-
WCA (1981)	Sch. 5



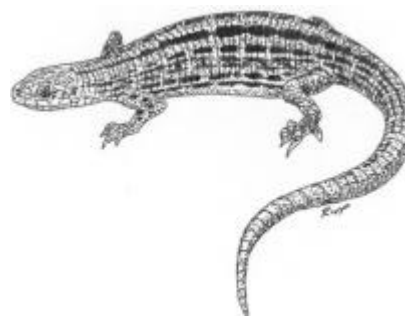
slow worm

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2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

Slow worms were ubiquitous in the UK until a few decades ago. There seems to have been a significant decline in numbers, although this is based mainly on anecdotal evidence. Within Wales, the species is widespread, but appears to be in decline. Slow worms like well-vegetated areas with good cover from predation. They are very rarely seen in the open, but are often found beneath steel sheets. These may be placed in areas to help confirm the presence of this species.



common lizard

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Although secretive slow worms seldom flee before they are discovered. They are easily distinguished from British snakes by their smooth, almost cylindrical body, very small scales and uniform grey or brown coloration. Like many other lizards, slow worms shed their tails when stressed, and if capture is necessary, they should be handled with great care. Slow worms are ovoviviparous (the method of reproduction in which the young develop from eggs retained in the mother's body), with eggs hatching on laying to reveal coppery gold young with bold dark brown sides.

Common lizards are agile, alert and extremely fast when warm. They rely on cryptic camouflage, lying motionless before fleeing to cover. This rapid movement is often all that betrays their presence. Common lizards are often found along railway lines and in the vicinity of old dry-stone walls, in which they hibernate (not communally). They are active at lower temperatures than the grass snake, though not as low as the adder, basking between 9°C and 18°C. Common lizards are much less easily observed than the slow worm and for that reason are less commonly recorded on a

site. However, this species is found throughout the UK and is notable in being Ireland's only reptile. Within Wales, it is often found along old railway lines where the bare ballast provides basking and hunting sites.

Surveys for both species ought to be undertaken during the months April/May and September, when there is adequate sun but the nights are cool enough to require basking during the day. The optimum season is spring when there is an increase in mating activity and the best times of day are 0900 to 1100, and 1600 to 1900, when reptiles are most likely to be basking in open locations. Most reptiles are deaf to a large part of a human's audible range, but are easily alerted by heavy footfalls and sudden dramatic movements.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

Both species are widespread within the county borough, although it is likely that both have suffered a decline in numbers over recent years. Old industrial sites and railway lines are found throughout the county borough and may be locally important for these species. Further surveys are required to confirm the status of the species in the county borough

2.3 Links with Habitats

These species require a varied diet of invertebrates, which may be found in most habitats. They both require a degree of direct sunlight, although the slow worm lies beneath dead vegetation, scrap-metal and other rubbish to receive the heat indirectly. All Habitat Statements/Action Plans should consider whether these species are present.

- **Wildlife Corridors** (hedgerows railway lines, stone walls)
- **Post-Industrial Land**
- *Common Land*
- *Urban Habitats*

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of suitable habitat due to development, natural succession, etc.
- Loss of suitable hibernation sites due to decline in traditional farm practices (less long-term storage of manure, loss of dry-stone walls).
- Persecution, particularly of the slow worm.
- Probable locally high rates of predation by domestic cats.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 Other than small-scale educational projects and talks, no action is currently taking place within the borough.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to these species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

- 5.2.1 Obtain quantitative data on location and numbers of both species through local knowledge, historical evidence and survey.
- 5.2.2 Halt the probable decline of these species and monitor present sites for possible threats to the population.
- 5.2.3 Use every opportunity to promote the conservation of, and improve public conception of reptiles.
- 5.2.4 Improve existing habitats which may be suitable for future species colonisation.

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											
6.1.1 Seek to designate sites with three or more species of breeding reptiles as SINC.	CCBC	-									✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Prevent loss or degradation of existing sites.	CBP	-	✓								
6.2.2 Encourage provision for reptiles on any new habitat developments, for example, school grounds.	CCBC	Gwk CMCS GWT GLWT	✓								
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Encourage, through provision of suitable cover, the colonisation of new areas by these species.	CBP	(CCBC CMCS GWT GLWT)			✓						
6.3.2 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	-									
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Raise awareness of the conservation requirements of these species among landowners and managers.	CBP	-	✓								
6.4.2 Provide a support and problem solving service to landowners, especially allotment owners, on methods of management sympathetic to reptiles.	CBP (CMCS)	Allotment societies landowners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Set up a county database for reptiles, and support the setting up of a Local Record Centre to hold and give access to useful information.	CCBC			✓							
6.5.1 Carry out surveys to ascertain sites and population sizes and input the data into the county borough database.	CBP	(GWT GLWT CMCS CCBC)	✓			✓			✓		

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by:								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Promote reptile conservation and improve public image through events and activities.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.2 Liaise with local wildlife groups to encourage reptile awareness.	CBP	local groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓