

SAND LIZARD

Lacerta agilis

Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership

1 INTRODUCTION

The sand lizard is a rare terrestrial reptile, found mainly in southern England in the counties of Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex. There is a highly vulnerable colony in Lancashire and various re-introductions have been made in recent years to some of the coastal regions of Devon, Cornwall and Wales.

2 CURRENT STATUS

2.1 Ecology and Habitat Requirements

The sand lizard's habitat requirements are well known and usually consist of either mature dry heathland growing on a sandy substrate or alternatively coastal dune systems where Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) is the main source of cover. A common feature of all successful sites is that they are exposed to the sun for the greater part of the day. Most populations are also strongly associated with south-facing slopes. The females have a requirement for exposed sand in which they can lay their eggs. In the absence of such sand, eggs fail to hatch and colonies dwindle away as the adults die of old age.

They feed on various invertebrates, the availability of which may determine population density. Males are strongly territorial in the spring and early summer when they can be recognised by their green colouration.

2.2 Population and Distribution

In Hampshire all known populations are on heathland sites, mainly in the north-east of the county and in parts of the New Forest and Ringwood Forest. The New Forest colonies became extinct by the early 1970s and breeding groups have been re-established in suitable places by means of releasing large numbers of captive-bred juveniles. Most of the Hampshire colonies are small in size and are supported by specific habitat management.

2.3 Important Sites

The main concentrations of the species in the County are well known. They naturally occur on ride edges and open spaces in three areas of Ringwood Forest and three successful translocations have re-introduced the species to reclaimed heathland in parts of the western New Forest. In the north-east of the County,

sand lizards have been successfully re-introduced to Woolmer Forest, Weavers Down and Broxhead.

2.4 Protection

The sand lizard is Endangered in the UK and is protected by both national and international legislation. It is listed on Annex IVa of the EC Habitats and Species Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and, Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994.

The sand lizard is also a typical species found on Annexe I habitat of the EC Habitats and Species Directive ie, heathland. An underlying aim of the Directive is to restore such species to a Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) across the EC. Conservation measures undertaken in Britain should contribute to this wider objective.

The Habitats Directive states that conservation status will be taken as favourable when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitat, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its population on a long-term basis.

3 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SAND LIZARD

The main factor affecting the survival of the species is the degradation of suitable habitat, either by lack of appropriate management or by temporary loss by wild fires.

Concentrated use of the heathland paths by the public and horse riders can cause damage to the vegetation structure and destruction of the eggs by trampling.

In the New Forest the traditional practice of cutting and burning heathland vegetation caused the extinction of the species in the past and the practice is currently limiting the spread of the introduced populations into adjoining heathland areas.

4 CURRENT ACTION

4.1 National

- Pilot Study for the sand lizard Recovery Programme compiled (Corbett, 1994)
- Sand Lizard Recovery Programme 1994-7 (Corbett & Moulton, 1997)
- Sand lizard Species Action Plan ongoing 1998-2003+ (Lead Partners HCT/EN).

4.2 Local

- Regular survey of all known natural and re-introduced populations by The Herpetological Conservation Trust and Forestry Commission.
- Regular meetings with English Nature, Forestry Commission, The Herpetological Conservation Trust and private land-owners/managers concerning habitat management and the species Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) and re-introduction potential.

5 OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this Plan is to protect and, where appropriate, increase the distribution and population size of the sand lizard in Hampshire. This broad aim translates into the specific objectives set out below. Where feasible, objectives have been allocated targets against which achievement can be measured.

The 'Proposed Action' table in section 6 identifies the action to be taken to meet these objectives.

	OBJECTIVES	PROPOSED ACTIONS
A	Achieving Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) in Hampshire by 2015	1-15
B	Setting monitoring systems to measure FCS by 2005	2,11,12,13
C	Maintain all breeding populations at current levels and enhance where possible.	1-9
D	Through involvement with heathland Habitat Action Plans, implement habitat re-creation schemes to link populations and overcome the adverse effects of fragmentation where possible.	3,6,9
E	If appropriate, initiate translocation programmes to re-establish populations on 2-4 sites within the species known/historic range in line with JNCC policy and IUCN guidelines.	6,10,14
F	Raise awareness of the status of the species and the importance of its habitat.	1,3,5,11,15

6 PROPOSED ACTION

The following table lists the actions required to achieve the objectives set out in this Plan. Each action has been assigned to one or more 'Key Partners'. Key Partners are those organisations that are expected to take responsibility for the delivery of the actions assigned to them, according to the targets set in this Plan. Other organisations may also be involved in the delivery of action, and they have been indicated in the 'Others' column.

Key to symbols in Action Table:

- ◆ To be completed by the indicated year. Work can commence at any time before the due date, at the discretion of the Key Partner.
- ◆⇒ Design or production of a plan/strategy to be completed by this year and then followed by its implementation.
- ➔ To start by the indicated year and usually followed by ongoing work. A start arrow in year 2003 can indicate a new action, or a new impetus to existing work.
- ⇌ Work that has already begun and is ongoing.

	ACTION	DELIVERY BY		YEAR						MEETS OBJ.
		Key Partner	Others	2003	2004	2005	2006	2010	2020	
◆ = complete by ➔ = start by ⇌ = ongoing ◆⇒ = design by and implement										
Site and Species Policy and Protection										
1	Develop species protection policies for incorporation in Local Plans/Unitary Development Plans to assist the conservation of the species and to ensure that there are no net losses of sites through development or other "planned" activities.	EN/LAs HCT HARG	FC HWT			◆⇒	⇌	⇌	⇌	A,C,F
2	See the development of a data management system that allows the presence of the species to be identified so that it can be given due consideration in site development or site management proposals	JNCC EN/BRC HCT	HWT HBIC			◆⇒	⇌	⇌	⇌	A,B,C
3	Ensure that due regard is given to the threatened status of this species when developing Habitat Action Plans, conservation management proposals, agri-environmental incentive schemes and national and local Biodiversity Action Plans	EN/FC DEFRA LAs	Heath Projects HCT HWT	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	A,C,D,F
4	Ensure that key sites are protected by SSSI designation and that boundaries are appropriate to cover the need for this species	EN/HCT	HWT/FC	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	A,C
5	Promote favourable management on all key sites where the species is known to occur	EN/HCT FC/HWT	DERFA MoD/NT	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	A,C,F
6	Integrate conservation and management requirements of the species into heathland HAPs and other heathland conservation programmes and projects	EN/HCT HCC/HA PsFC	DEFRA HWT/NT LAs		◆⇒	⇌	⇌	⇌	⇌	A,C,D,E

Sand lizard

Site and Species Management										
7	Ensure sand lizard needs are catered for in programmes of cutting, burning or grazing management on sites supporting populations or likely to do so	EN/FC	HCT	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A,C
8	Maintain all breeding populations at current levels and enhance where possible	All land-owners/ manager		↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A,C
9	Encourage the natural dispersal of the species to new and former sites through habitat management, restoration and re-creation	EN/HCT/ FC	HWT/NT/ MoD/LAs			◆↔	↔	↔	↔	A,C,D
10	Subject to the provisions contained in Section 5 Objective E of this Plan, develop a programme of translocations (2-4) to former sites following habitat management, restoration or re-creation	EN/HCT/ FC	HWT/NT/ MoD/LAs			◆↔	↔	◆		A,E
Research, Survey and Monitoring										
11	Develop a survey programme to assess the current distribution of the species	HCT/FC/ EN	HWT/ HARG			◆				A,B,F
12	Develop a monitoring programme to allow assessment of the status of the species throughout the County and to allow comparisons between sites.	HCT/FC/ EN	HWT/ HARG			◆				A,B
13	Recording and data management systems need to be established to allow analysis of data and to allow information to be provided to investigate threats	HCT/FC/ EN	HWT/ HARG		◆↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A,B
14	Continue to develop and enhance captive breeding facilities for re-introduction programmes	Marwell Zoo/FC	HCT	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A,E
Communication, Awareness and Promotion										
15	The species is rarely seen and poorly understood. Its local significance needs to be explained and opportunities to see, or at least appreciate, the species should be investigated. It is not a good display animal but the value of captive collections would be valuable for promoting the conservation of this species	Marwell Zoo/FC	HCT	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A,F

KEY TO ORGANISATIONS:

BRC Biological Records Centre
 DEFRA Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 EA Environment Agency
 EN English Nature
 FC Forestry Commission
 HAP Habitat Action Plan
 HARG Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Group
 HBIC Hampshire Biological Information Centre

HCC Hampshire County Council
 HCT The Herpetological Conservation Trust
 HWT Hampshire Wildlife Trust
 LAs Local Authorities
 MoD Ministry of Defence
 NT National Trust
 JNCC Joint Nature Conservancy Council

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This is one of many Habitat, Species and Topic Action Plans being prepared by the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership. It will be monitored by the Partnership and fully reviewed.

This species action plan has been prepared by The Herpetological Conservation Trust on behalf of the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership.

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