

**REPTILE SURVEY OF LAND OFF CHAPEL LANE,**  
**HADFIELD, DERBYSHIRE**

**2016**



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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2016 by Mellor Dowd to carry out a reptile survey of land off Chapel Lane, Hadfield, Derbyshire. The site is the subject of a planning application for the erection of ten new residential dwellings (planning reference HPK/2016/0063).
- 1.2 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken in 2016 by RH Ecology. The habitats recorded on the site were grassland, scrub, trees and ruderal vegetation. The site is frequently used by dog walkers. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (DWT) requested a reptile survey be undertaken to determine if reptiles are present on the site.
- 1.3 Chapel Lane is located in Hadfield, Derbyshire (O.S. grid reference: SK 01698 96013). The site is surrounded by residential development and a small park.
- 1.4 Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*, Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, Adder *Vipera berus* and Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* are all protected under The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), against killing or injuring. They are all included on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, making them Species of Principal Importance in England.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1 A presence/absence reptile survey was undertaken, following the guidelines within Gent & Gibson, 2003.
- 2.2 An initial visit to the site took place, to lay artificial refugia onto the site. 30 reptile mats were laid onto the site in suitable locations, such as next to vegetation on open ground or within edge habitats such as grassland or scrub. The mats comprised 0.5m x 0.5m mats of bitumen roofing felt. They were laid flush to the ground. During the site visit, reptile transect routes were determined, to cover suitable habitat and existing refugia such as litter, logs and brash.
- 2.3 Following the initial visit, seven survey visits were undertaken to search for reptiles. Each of the artificial reptile mats was surveyed from a distance using close-focussing binoculars, to search for reptiles basking on top of the mats. Each mat was also lifted to search beneath. The transect routes were walked slowly and binoculars were used to search the ground ahead of the surveyor. Existing refugia were also searched.

### **Timing and Personnel**

- 2.4 The surveys took place in suitable weather conditions, on either mornings or afternoons, between 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016 and 24<sup>th</sup> June 2016. Rachel Hacking (Principal Ecologist), Joel Hacking and assistants undertook the surveys. Rachel has over fifteen years of experience in undertaking habitat and protected species work, including reptile surveys and mitigation. All of the surveyors are fully trained in reptile survey methodologies and reptile identification.

### **Survey Constraints**

- 2.5 The optimal months for undertaking reptile surveys are April, May and September. Due to the survey request being published at the end of May 2016, the surveys were undertaken in June 2016, in association with a planning timeline. June is a month when reptiles could be less likely to be detected due to warm weather conditions. However, June 2016 was mild, with no hot weather, and the survey visits were undertaken in suitable weather conditions (between 9°C - 17°C) and therefore it is considered that the survey effort is robust.
- 2.6 During the first survey visit, it was noted that some of the reptile mats had been removed from the site and others moved on the site. The remaining mats were replaced but were again moved or disturbed by the second visit. Therefore, it was decided to use transects and existing refugia for the remaining five visits.

### 3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Table 1 details the weather conditions before and during the survey visits. Figure 1 shows the routes of the reptile transects.

Table 1. Weather conditions during the reptile survey visits	
Date & Time	Weather
02/06/16 8am	Clear and dry overnight. Dry with sunny spells during survey. Calm. 10°C
06/06/16 8am	Clear and dry overnight. Dry with scattered clouds during survey. Slight breeze. 16°C
10/06/16 4pm	Rain showers all day. Bright spells during the survey. Calm. 16°C
15/06/16 9am	Dry and overcast overnight. Scattered clouds during the survey. Calm. 14°C
17/06/16 5pm	Dry and cloudy all day. Overcast during survey. Slight breeze. 15°C
20/06/16 4pm	Light rain in morning. Sunny spells during the survey. Slight breeze. 17°C
24/06/16 9am	Clear and calm overnight. Cloudy during survey. Slight breeze. 15°C



Figure 1 showing the reptile transect locations (dotted blue lines)

- 3.2 No reptiles were located during the survey visits, during the transects or the refugia searches (see Photograph 1). The site is regularly disturbed by walkers and dogs.



**Photograph 1 showing the existing refugia and tall grass**

#### **4.0 ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 No reptiles were found during the seven survey visits. All of the survey visits were undertaken in optimum weather conditions. The use of artificial refugia was found to be ineffective as the reptile mats were frequently moved or disturbed. However, extra effort was then used to survey existing refugia on the site. From the results, it can be deemed that reptiles are not currently using the site.
- 4.2 No dedicated reptile mitigation and compensation is considered to be necessary. The provision of gardens on the site may provide suitable habitat for reptiles such as Slow Worm.

## **5.0 REFERENCES**

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