

# MAKE SPACE FOR **WILD**life

*'Wildlife habitat creation in small open spaces and gardens' – a series of leaflets to help manage, enhance and create areas for wildlife in the Vale of Glamorgan*

Leaflet  
**7**

## Reptiles

This leaflet acts as a basic guide to help you manage, enhance and create wildlife habitats for reptiles. Reptiles are some of the rarest visitors to any wildlife area but in the Vale of Glamorgan there are two species of snake and two lizards. The information here introduces some background detail to these animals and suggests ways you can attract them to your wildlife area or garden.



All reptiles in the UK are protected species.

Common Lizard - Kevin Lewis

**The two lizards that live in the Vale of Glamorgan are the common lizard and the slow-worm. Slow-worms are actually specialised kinds of lizard that have lost their legs. Common lizards can move very quickly but won't travel long distances. They might move into your wildlife area and in the surrounding habitat.**

snake and the adder. Both of these have distinctive markings. Adders will very rarely come into wildlife areas unless they are adjacent to heathland or scrub. Grass snakes travel long distances looking for suitable habitat and may even breed in your wildlife area.

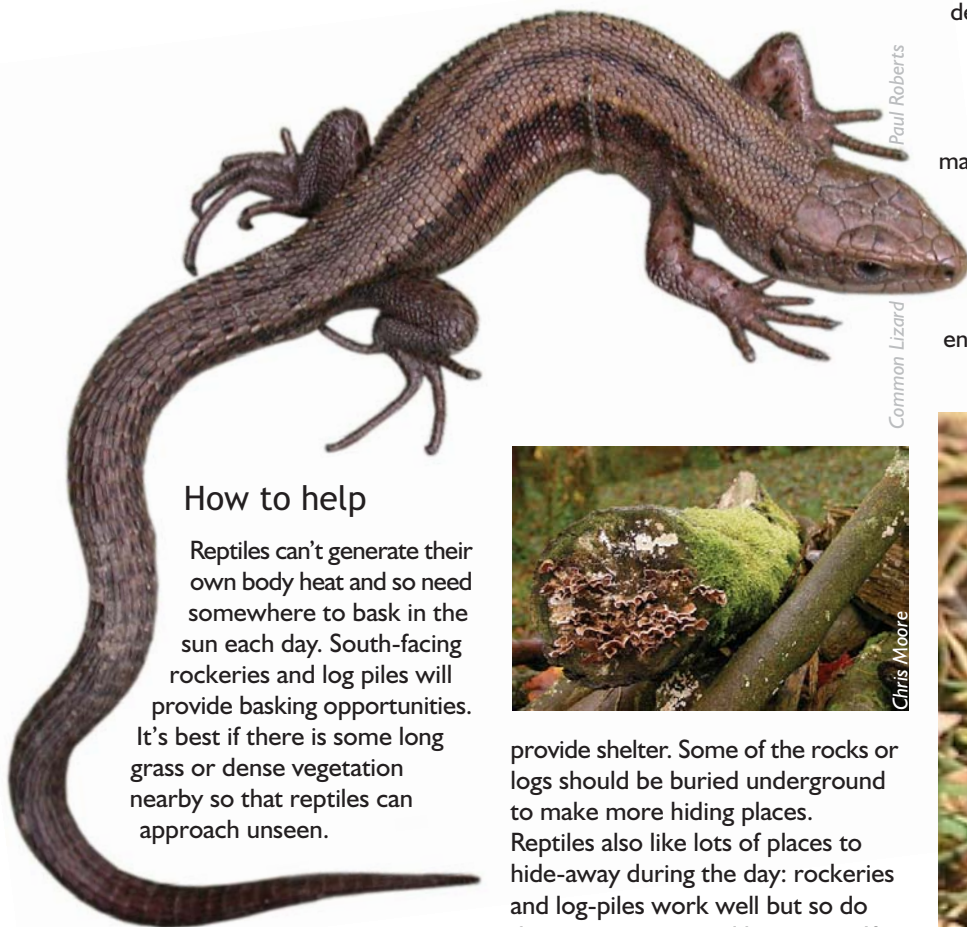
The two species of snake that live in the Vale of Glamorgan are the grass



Common Lizard - David Fincham



Grass Snake - David Fincham



Paul Roberts

Common Lizard

### How to help

Reptiles can't generate their own body heat and so need somewhere to bask in the sun each day. South-facing rockeries and log piles will provide basking opportunities. It's best if there is some long grass or dense vegetation nearby so that reptiles can approach unseen.

Make sure your basking areas don't become over-shaded though. Compost heaps will attract reptiles for the same reason: as vegetation rots down it releases heat.

Both lizards and snakes need somewhere to hibernate in the winter. You could build a log-pile or a rockery with lots of crevices and loose soil to



Chris Moore

provide shelter. Some of the rocks or logs should be buried underground to make more hiding places. Reptiles also like lots of places to hide-away during the day: rockeries and log-piles work well but so do dense vegetation and long grass. If you want a better chance of seeing them, leave some old carpet tiles in a quiet corner for a couple of weeks and then occasionally check underneath them. These hiding places can also help protect reptiles from cats and other predators. Take care when mowing your lawn so as not to hurt foraging reptiles.

All the reptiles in the UK have seen declines in abundance and range over the last century due to habitat loss and changes in land management. It's really important that you help to provide an alternative habitat for these endangered creatures.



Slow-worm - Andy Horton



Adder - Kevin Lewis

*Lots of people are nervous around snakes but they really aren't that dangerous.*

*Adders are Wales' only venomous snake and they won't bite unless they feel threatened - so don't try picking them up.*

	Identification features	Max. length	Garden visitor
<b>Grass snake</b>	Olive-green, brown or grey with yellow markings around the neck. Black collar.	75cm	Frequent near ponds
<b>Adder</b>	Grey or brown with a dark or black zigzag down the back.	55cm	Rare
<b>Slow-worm</b>	Brown, golden or grey. They have a stripe down their back and females have dark sides. Very shiny.	35cm	Common
<b>Common lizard</b>	Brown and grey with light and dark flecks. Variable. Can be confused with newts but distinguished by fast movement.	14cm	Occasional



**GENERAL TIPS**

- Don't be afraid of reptiles. Adder are very rare visitors and only bite if they feel very threatened – don't try to pick them up.
- Provide basking areas with log-piles or rockeries.
- Leave some old carpet tiles out for shelter.
- Make sure there are some quiet, overgrown corners of your garden.
- Build a pond to attract amphibians – important prey for grass snakes



Adder - David Fincham



Slow-Worm

**Lizards are a great form of pest control – slow-worms love to eat slugs and snails.**



Grass Snake eggs

*Amphibians are a really important prey item for grass snakes (in fact they mostly hunt in water - not grass) so having a garden pond will help to attract them (see Ponds leaflet). Leave an area of uncut grass nearby for cover. Grass snakes may lay several rubbery-skinned eggs in your compost heap so try not to disturb it between June and October. A grass snake-friendly garden will see them returning year after year to lay their eggs in the same compost heaps.*

Designer: Jet Hodgetts. Translator: Arthur Griffith. Author: Richard May

These leaflets are produced by

**Ecology Team**  
**The Vale of Glamorgan Council**  
**Dock Office, Barry Docks,**  
**Barry. CF63 4RT**

Tel: 01446 704600  
 visit our website at [www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)



**Vale of Glamorgan Council,**  
 Dock Office,  
 Barry Docks, Barry.  
 Tel: 01446 704600



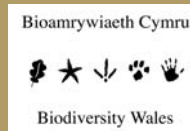
**Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)**  
 Government's adviser on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and outdoor enjoyment in Wales. The national wildlife conservation authority.  
 Tel: 02920 772400



**The Welsh Assembly Government**  
 A devolved government for Wales. Responsible for health, education, economic development, culture, transport and the environment.  
 Tel: 0845 010 5500



**Biodiversity and Sustainability in the Vale**



**Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP)**  
 WBP brings together organisations involved in biodiversity conservation in Wales and provides advice.  
 Tel: 01248 385743



**British Herpetological Society**  
 Promoting the conservation and study of all reptiles and amphibians.  
[www.thebhs.org](http://www.thebhs.org)