

Reptile Checklist for Leicestershire and Rutland

Compiled in 2016 by Andrew Heaton, County Recorder for Amphibians and Reptiles
in Vice-County 55 (Leicestershire & Rutland)

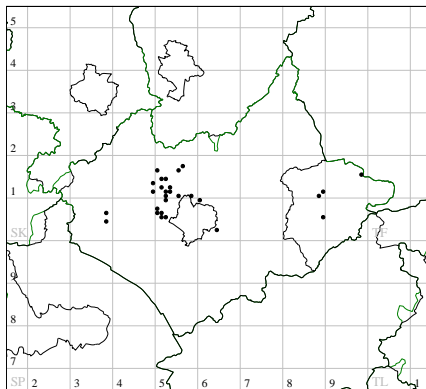
R1. Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*

Native.

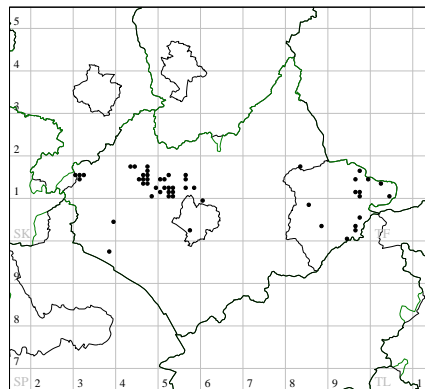
Uncommon, with few scattered records in Charnwood, West Leicestershire and Rutland (the main concentration, if any, being Charnwood Forest). This legless lizard, being rather elusive, may possibly be under-recorded rather than rare – elsewhere around the Midlands, it is frequently found in urban areas (gardens and allotments). There may have been a decline since recording began.

RDB species.

Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*)



Viviparous Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*)



R2. Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*

Native.

Uncommon; records are concentrated in the heathy habitats of Charnwood Forest and the Moira area of North West Leicestershire, and in the drier habitats of East Rutland. Elsewhere, they are rather scarce, but, pleasingly, new sites seem to keep turning up. Confirmation of the presence of lizards outside Charnwood Forest was only made in comparatively recent years (since the 1960s).

RDB species.

R3 Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*

Native to Britain (but probably not in Leicestershire).

Native to heaths and sand dunes in south-central England. Reported in the Victoria County History of Leicestershire (1907), as formerly present, in the 1840s, (in Charnwood?), though rare. There is no firm evidence for this (and the VCH author appears sceptical). The Victoria County History for Rutland (1908) seems to assume that the species is present in Rutland and is surprised by the absence of any firm records. There might be a certain amount of wishful thinking here.

R4 Grass Snake

Natrix natrix

Native

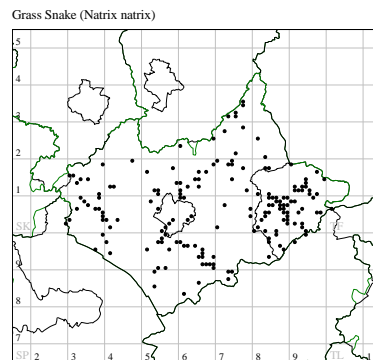
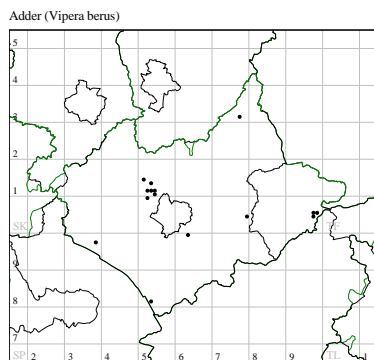
Grass snakes are widespread and fairly common, with concentrations of records especially in river valleys (notably the Soar and Wreake), along canals (Ashby Canal and Grand Union Canal) and around Rutland Water. Frequently seen in wetland habitats, where they hunt amphibians and fish. RDB species.

R5 Adder

Vipera berus

Native.

Rare; only two definite populations (Bradgate and Ketton); occasional reports from elsewhere are often misidentifications, though there appears to be evidence of small populations at possibly two or three other sites. There is often misidentification of grass snakes as adders “seen swimming in a garden pond”. RDB species.



R6 Kingsnake

Lampropeltis sp.

Introduction.

One record from a garden in Wing in 1995. (Several other species, kept by reptile collectors, may escape from time to time).

R7. Pythons *Python sp*

Introduction.

Astonishingly, it appears that several dead specimens of large pythons (one was 2.3 metres long) have been retrieved from the River Soar system near Aylestone Meadows, Leicester city - possibly as many as 11 between 2003 and 2016. This was reported by Leicester City Cleansing Dept, when, during the course of the year, three large pythons, all dead, were retrieved from the waters in the Aylestone Meadows area of the city. One was identified as a Burmese python *Python molurus*; others were probably the same species but difficult to identify as they were albino specimens. There was no explanation for this – presumably a reptile collector wanted to get rid of some sickly specimens or establish a local population by releasing live snakes, which were then unable to survive in the centre of Leicester.

R8. Red-eared Terrapin

Trachemys scripta elegans

Introduction.

Occasional records, mainly of single animals (eg Cossington, Ashby Canal, Blackbrook Reservoir, Eyebrook Reservoir, Oakham Canal) and larger numbers of up to 5 (Groby Pool) have been reported. Inspired by Teenage

Mutant Ninja Turtles, mainly in the 1980s, these terrapins were often purchased as pets when small, and abandoned in the countryside when they grew bigger than expected. It is suggested that, though they prey on native species, they cannot breed in Britain and will not cause long-term problems, dying out when the current specimens die.

R9. Alligator

Alligator mississippiensis

Introduction.

Press reports in 1964 suggested the presence of two canal-dwelling alligators in Leicester. Such press reports may have been an exaggeration.

Notes:

1. Vice-County 55

This long-established approach to biological recording divides the UK into roughly equal-sized units (following county boundaries wherever possible), thus identifying 113 recording areas, each known as a Vice-County. These are given consecutive numbers, starting in SW England (VC 1 being "West Cornwall (with Scilly)", going through to NE Scotland, where the final VC is 112 "Shetland Islands". VC 113 encompasses the Channel Islands, whilst there is a parallel system in Ireland.

So biological recording in our part of the world is undertaken within the framework of Vice-County 55, "Leicestershire (with Rutland)", an area which closely follows the boundaries of the two historic counties taken together.

Note that it is vital to provide standard National Grid References for biological records, as this allows identification of the precise position on the ground, whereas vice-counties allow comparisons to be made over time without confusion due to changes in political boundaries.

2. Red Data Book

The Red Data Book for Leicestershire and Rutland is referenced as follows:

Heaton A (2012) "Leicestershire and Rutland Red Data Book: Lower Vertebrates (Reptiles, Amphibians, Fish)"

– available on the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust website:

<http://www.lrwat.org.uk/news-events/news/149-leicestershire-and-rutland-rare-species-update/>

This document provides details of conservation needs of three amphibian and four reptile species (together with seven freshwater fish), under the headings "Habitat, Ecology and Status"; "Threats"; and "Conservation".