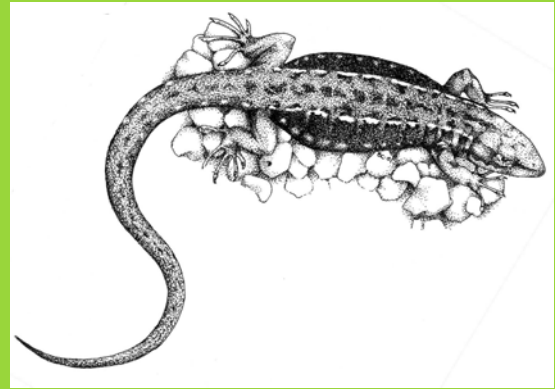


Common lizard

Lacerta vivipara

STATUS

Possibly declining



WHAT IS THE COMMON LIZARD ?

The common lizard is the most widespread of the three British lizards. Its small size, mobility, and, to a lesser extent, the ability to bear live young, enable it to occupy areas and habitats unsuitable for other reptiles.

WHERE IS IT FOUND IN THE UK?

The common lizard is quite widespread in Britain and Ireland.

WHY IS THE COMMON LIZARD OF CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

The common lizard is a useful indicator species of the health of heathland and similar habitats.

THE COMMON LIZARD IN THE DURHAM AREA

HOW HEALTHY ARE THE POPULATIONS OF THE COMMON LIZARD?

Records of common lizard are rarely made on a systematic basis, so this is difficult to assess. Distribution maps of records may indicate a decline in some areas, but also show long-term continuity, for example on the coastal cliffs.

HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE COMMON LIZARD IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

There are sufficient records of sightings of common lizards to produce a fairly accurate distribution map. Some of the areas have provided regular records over a period of several decades.

WHERE HAS IT BEEN FOUND IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

The common lizard is widespread, but nowhere common, in the Durham area. The best-favoured areas are the south-facing slopes of the dales; particularly where there is open heathland at old disused quarries, railway lines and mine workings. There are also more fragmented populations in lowland areas, and along the coast. There may have been recent losses from its distribution in lowland Durham.

THE COMMON LIZARD IS AT RISK FROM:

Habitat fragmentation.

Succession of suitable habitat to woodland.

Loss of hibernation sites.

Loss of suitable habitat due to the infilling or re-working of disused quarries.

Loss of heathland as part of agricultural change and heather burning.

The conversion of disused railway lines to footpaths/cycleways.

THE COMMON LIZARD BENEFITS FROM:

Protection of the remaining suitable habitats.

Monitoring of distribution.

Policies to protect adders and slow-worms which will often also protect common lizards.

IMPORTANT HABITATS FOR THE COMMON LIZARD:

Inland rock exposure and spoil heaps
Rough grassland
Lowland and mid-altitude heathland **
Upland heathland *
Quarries
Railway embankments
Urban waste ground
Coastal edge

OTHER SPECIES ACTION PLANS COVERING ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE COMMON LIZARD:

Grass snake **
Adder and slow-worm **

N.B. ** indicates action plan produced in 1998.

* indicates action plan produced in 2000.

THE COMMON LIZARD AND THE LAW

It is illegal to kill, injure or sell common lizards.

Common lizard *Lacerta vivipara*

TARGETS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE COMMON LIZARD IN THE DURHAM AREA:

DATE

Target 1 *Maintain the current range and population above the present level.* **ONGOING**

Target 2 *Survey and monitor the common lizard in the Plan area.* **2005**

Target 3 *Protect key over-wintering sites in the local area from disturbance and development and ensure that there is sympathetic management of these sites.* **ONGOING**

Target 4 *Raise the profile of the common lizard and promote a positive image to the general public, land-owners and managers.* **2005**

COMMON LIZARD ACTIONS

ACTION	DATE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	MEETS TARGET NO.
<u>SITE MANAGEMENT</u>			
1. Protect all key sites from habitat loss and adverse development.	2005	DWT, LAs, NEARG, Site Owners	1, 3
2. Ensure sympathetic management of key sites, working with landowners and managers.	ONGOING	FWAG, NEARG, Site Owners	1, 3
<u>RESEARCH AND MONITORING</u>			
3. Undertake a survey to determine the current status of the common lizard in the Durham area.	2005	Local specialists, NEARG	2
4. Identify key sites for the common lizard.	2005	Local specialists, NEARG	2
<u>ADVISORY</u>			
5. Provide guidance on habitat requirements for the common lizard and suitable management to relevant landowners and managers.	ONGOING	DBAP, LAs, FWAG, NEARG	1, 3, 4
<u>COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY</u>			
6. Raise the public profile of common lizard conservation and promote a positive image of the species. Incorporate this into species strategies for environmental education and interpretation.	ONGOING	DBAP, EN, LAs, Local Specialists, NEARG	4