



REVISED PLAN MARCH 2018

ADDER *Vipera berus*

Following many years with no verified sightings, it is proposed to put this action plan on hold until a sighting is confirmed. Actions related to relevant habitats will be continued through existing habitat plans.

1. INTRODUCTION

The adder has a wide distribution in Britain and its sparse distribution in the Midlands may be because of high human population densities together with a lack of suitable habitats. The last confirmed sighting in Warwickshire is from 2004 and records prior to this date indicate that adders were only present at a few sites in Warwickshire.



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Habitats favoured include rough commons, heathland, railway embankments, woodland rides and borders. The adder's main requirement appears to be undisturbed sunny glades or slopes in the vicinity of some thick cover. It is rarely found in urban/ suburban areas unless these are next to suitable adder habitat.

Adders feed largely on voles and other small mammals and common lizards. Predators include raptors, magpies, crows and possibly hedgehogs and foxes. Pheasants will also predate reptiles and have been known to kill adult adders. In Victorian times the adder was described as not abundant in the county, being absent from alluvial areas and mainly found in sandy or stony places and is unlikely to be found on solely clay habitats.

Adders are particularly faithful to their communal hibernation sites, with females especially spending much time in their vicinity. This also makes them extremely vulnerable if such a feature is lost. Declines in adder populations across Britain have been more extensive than in other reptile species, largely due to its restricted habitat preferences which has led to fragmentation of populations and concerns about genetic impoverishment. Also despite their protected status they are still subject to human persecution, fuelled by exaggerated media reports.

2.	OBJECTIVES	TARGETS
Associated Action Plans are: 'Lowland Heathland', 'Lowland Acid Grassland', 'Woodland' and 'Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land'		
PLEASE CONSULT THE '<i>GENERIC SPECIES</i>' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR OBJECTIVES COMMON TO ALL SPECIES PLANS		
A.	Determine whether adders still exist in Warwickshire, and if so, establish their distribution.	2020
B.	Pursue opportunities for a reintroduction site for adders of local provenance within suitable habitat to increase their range.	ON HOLD

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

The adder is on the current UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Species list published in 2007([Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#)). The targets and objectives for the [Adder](#) BAP, updated in 2010, may be seen online.

4. CURRENT STATUS

As there have been no confirmed sightings of adder in Warwickshire for almost 10 years the action plan has been placed on hold until a sighting is confirmed. Actions related to relevant habitats will be continued through existing habitat plans.

Recorded unofficial sightings are commonplace but most of these are likely to be grass snakes (*Natrix helvetica*) given the description of the animal and habitat it was recorded in.

Some credible records have surfaced over recent years although no firm evidence has been presented; there have also been reports of adders close to the Warwickshire borders It should be borne in mind that while barriers such as roads may inhibit adder dispersal, linear features such as the road verges and railway lines could provide opportunities for adders to move into and around the county.

If an appropriate site can be found with adequate provision of overwintering hibernacula and good hunting grounds in place, Warwickshire could home adders in the future. Ideally they would come from a nearby colony such as Staffordshire, as local provenance is important.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

A wide range of species and habitats are protected under international and domestic laws, including the [Wild Birds Directive](#) (1979), the [Wildlife and Countryside Act](#) (1981), the [Conservation Regulations](#)(1994) and [EC Habitats Directive](#) (1992). Protection of sites is afforded nationally through [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSI) designation, [Special Areas of Conservation](#) (SAC) and [Local Nature Reserve](#) (LNR) statutory status. Other sites are offered recognition of their value through Local Wildlife Site status (LWS), Local Character Areas and identified Landscape Scale Areas. The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2012) chapter/section 11 states conditions with regard to any development negatively affecting biodiversity, including protected sites, ancient woodland and other irreplaceable habitats (paragraph 118). The Wildlife & Countryside Act and schedule 2 of the [Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations](#) (2010) make it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take, possess, sell, buy or transport a range of species.

The adder has some protection under the [Berne Convention](#) as to its exploitation and is protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (as amended in 1991) from trade, injury and killing.

4.2 Current Factors Affecting the Species

- **Loss and fragmentation of suitable habitat**, especially heathland, by roads and agriculture.
- **Unsympathetic habitat management.**
- **Damage and disturbance to habitats and persecution** by people.
- **Increasing isolation** and subsequent lack of gene flow between populations'.

5. LOCAL ACTION

- All known reports are stored electronically in the [Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team](#) (WART) database and at the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC).
- Since 2003 members of WART have carried out site visits to most of the original 2003 sites, although some of these sites have since been developed. Though no adders were found, a number of the sites had resident grass snakes, which could have led to misidentification although this doesn't preclude the presence of adders. Further investigation was carried out using artificial reptile refugia at five of these sites but again no adders were recorded.
- Current survey work based on previous records has been narrowed down to sites at [Sutton Park](#), Kenilworth, [MOD Kineton](#) and [Packington Estate](#). The Kenilworth site continues to be monitored and surveys are currently being undertaken at the other three sites.
- Recent survey work has been carried within the [Hartshill Ridge](#) at Purley and Hartshill quarry where there is suitable habitat present and anecdotal evidence of adders being present. Both grass snake and slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) were recorded during the surveys but no adders have yet been found; survey work continues.
- Recent adder reports and a suspected adder bite on land to the south of Nuneaton are also being followed up by WART, with artificial reptile refugia being monitored close to where the incident occurred.
- The adder record in 2012 from survey work by [High Speed 2](#) (HS2) in the south of the county is being followed up, with artificial reptile refugia placed in a suitable location close-by where an adder had been recorded in 2004.
- Installation of 2 reptile hibernacula at Malpass Quarry by [Butterfly Conservation Warwickshire](#) in 2016
- Promotion of adders through the WART website and Social Media sites.

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By
PLEASE CONSULT THE '<i>GENERIC SPECIES</i>' ACTION PLAN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT FOR ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL SPECIES PLANS			
Policy, Legislation & Protection			
PL1. Ensure that any confirmed adder sites are considered for designation as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs).	LWSP	WWT WCC WART HBA LAs	ongoing
PL2. Ensure Local Authorities are aware of the conservation status, legal protection, management requirements and consequences of development proposals on sites that could affect reptiles.	WCC	NE WWT LAs	ongoing
Site / Species Safeguard & Management			
Actions to be formulated if adder presence is established. The situation to be reviewed on a regular basis.	WART		
Research & Monitoring			
RM1. Use available information to create an adder 'hotspots map' utilising existing records, including those from neighbouring counties, soil maps and clusters of lizard populations.	WART	WCC WBRC SRNBG	ON HOLD
RM2. Respond to recent credible adder reports by surveying all such sites and monitor over an appropriate period: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artificial refugia survey of land south of Nuneaton. Artificial refugia survey of land at Hartshill. Artificial refugia survey of suitable habitat neighbouring an HS2 record. 	WART	WCC WWT LOs LAs	ON HOLD
RM3. Revisit and continue to monitor sites that are thought to have previously been adder positive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artificial refugia survey of land at MOD Kineton. Artificial refugia survey of Sutton Park. Artificial refugia survey of Kenilworth Common. Artificial refugia survey of land at Packington. Artificial refugia survey of land at Bishops Itchington. 	WART	WCC WWT LOs	ON HOLD
RM4. Work with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust's Conservation Management Officer to identify at least one Trust Reserve to be surveyed annually to	WART	WWT	ON HOLD

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contribute to WART's efforts to identify adder presence in the county.			
RM5. Review all sites where post-1960 records exist to identify key areas where an adder reintroduction could occur, making use of available habitat mapping information from the HBA and WCC connectivity mapping.	WART	WCC WWT HBA	ON HOLD
Communication, Education & Publicity			
CP1. Encourage recording of adder sightings in the county through the WART website and through promotion of Social Media sites, leaflets and posters.	WART	WWT WBRC	ongoing

Abbreviations: HBA – Habitat Biodiversity Audit partnership, LAs – Local Authorities, LOs – landowners, LWSP – Local Wildlife Sites Project, NE - Natural England, SRNBG – Sun Rising Natural Burial Ground, WART – Warwickshire Amphibian & Reptile Team, WBRC – Warwickshire Biological Record Centre, WCC – Warwickshire County Council, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. PROGRESS WITH ACTIONS

From 2015–2020 there will be a rolling programme of reporting on progress, of 10 action plans per year with an annual summary of results. Progress with this plan up to 2017 can be seen at www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/LBAP.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Clemons, J. (1998). A Provisional Atlas of the Amphibians & Reptiles of Warwickshire.

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DEFRA (2011) [Biodiversity 2020](#): A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services.

Whiting C. & Booth H. (2012) Adder (*Vipera berus*) hibernacula construction as part of a mitigation scheme, Norfolk, England. [Conservation Evidence](#), 9, 9-1

RSPB (2016) [State of Nature](#) – a stocktake of all our native wildlife by over 50 wildlife organisations.

Natural England (2016) The [Conservation Strategy for the 21st Century](#) sets out how NE will help deliver DEFRA's ambitions for the environment to reverse biodiversity loss, sustain distinctive landscapes and enhance engagement with nature.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA) for Warwickshire, Coventry & Solihull – mapping data set and associated information. Phase 1 ([JNCC](#)) 1996-2002 and Phase 2 (Local Wildlife Sites) ongoing.

[‘Add an Adder’](#) is a web-based initiative calling for all records of adders, past and present, from the general public to build up details of past distribution against which current data can be compared.

[Amphibian & Reptile Groups of the UK](#) (ARG) – a group of volunteers working for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles.

[Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust](#) (ARC) (2011) Reptile Habitat Management Handbook. Tel. 01202 391319

Natural England: Reptiles: surveys and mitigation for development projects.

10. CONTACT

Camille Newton: camillenewton1@gmail.com