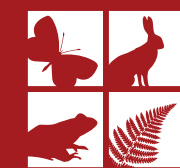


# Ayrshire Reptile Survey



Common Lizard ©Nic Coombes



## Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire?

*Putting Ayrshire's wildlife on the map*



Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire is a focal point for environmental information in the region, providing public access to essential information on local species, sites and habitats.

Through its activities, Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire promotes awareness and appreciation of the regions biodiversity. By supporting and encouraging community engagement, local people can record wildlife and learn about the natural world on their doorstep.

## Status and Conservation

All three Ayrshire species occur widely throughout Scotland, though distributions of Adders and Slow-worms are localised and patchy. All are listed as priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) due to declines in range and numbers. All native reptiles in the UK are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it illegal to deliberately kill, injure or sell them.



Common Lizard ©Richard Eagles

### For more information on amphibians:

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust  
[www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org)

Froglife  
[www.froglife.org](http://www.froglife.org)

For more information and to submit your records online and upload any photos visit [www.whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk](http://www.whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk) or contact Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire at c/o Ayrshire Rivers Trust, 1 Gibbysyard, Auchincruive Estate, Ayr. KA6 5HW. Email [info@whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk](mailto:info@whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk)

## Living with Reptiles

It is uncommon to find reptiles in your garden, but should you find any, here are some tips to encourage them to stay.

Creating a small rockery can encourage existing reptiles to stay in your garden if situated in a south facing direction. The rocks provide basking spots for reptiles to warm up on sunny spring mornings, and the nooks between the rocks act as escape routes if disturbed.

Having several log piles in your garden will create a food source for reptiles as the invertebrates that feed on dead wood provide a food source for lizards, as well as the logs providing an ideal basking site.

South-facing compost heaps provide an excellent habitat for slow worms. Increase your chances of seeing a Slow-worm by covering the compost heap with a piece of old carpet, or leave a small piece of corrugated iron on top of the pile to sneak a peek at some slow worms.



Common Lizard ©Marek R. Swadzba

## What to do now? Please fill in this form and send it to us!

<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Address</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>To be added to the Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire mailing list please tick</b>	

**Reptile Sightings.** If you see a reptile, record your sighting here. Please give as much information as possible. Or you can submit your records online at [www.whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk](http://www.whereswildlifeinayrshire.org.uk)

Date	Location	Grid Ref or Post Code	Species	Life Stage (Adult, Juvenile)	Number Seen	Comment

**Comments.** Please add any comments, including records of reptiles you may have seen in the past. Older records are as useful as recent ones.

Information submitted on this form will be collated and disseminated manually or electronically and used for environmental decision-making, education, research and other public benefit use. Your name forms and integral part of the record you submit. We ask for your contact details in case we need more information about your record and this information may be stored on computer. Your name (but NO other details) may be passed to third parties with your record. If you object to your personal detail being retained, please contact Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire, although please note this will limit the usefulness of the information provided.



## Reptile survey in Ayrshire

Ayrshire is home to three of the four species of reptile found in Scotland: Adder, Slow-worm and Common Lizard. These creatures evolved in the hot and humid swamps of the carboniferous period around 230-310 million years ago, yet have adapted to survive in Scotland's much cooler climate. Reptiles are a very under recorded group in Ayrshire and we need your help to find out how these weird and wonderful species are faring in our local area.



Slow-worm ©Henrik Larsson

## What is a Reptile?

Reptiles are a cold-blooded vertebrate animal of the Order Squamata, the scaled reptiles which includes all snakes and lizards. They are distinguished by having a dry scaly skin, and typically laying soft-shelled eggs on land. Unlike amphibians, they do not depend on water for reproduction. The reptile species found in Ayrshire are unusual in that all three species give birth to live young, whilst most reptiles globally lay eggs. This is an adaptation to breeding in cooler climates.

## Identification

### Adder - *Vipera berus*

The UK's only venomous snake. Adults can be anywhere between 60-80 cm in length with a distinct dark zig-zag pattern down the centre of the back. Males are generally grey with black markings, while females are usually light brown with dark brown markings. Adders have a 'V' or 'X' shaped marking on the head and a reddish iris with a vertical pupil.



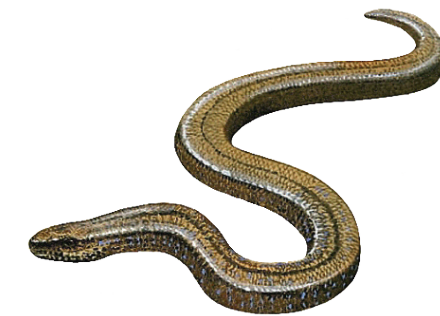
### Common Lizard - *Zootoca vivipara*

Adults are up to 15 cm in length (including tail). Males have a larger head and slimmer body than females, with a prominent swelling at the base of the tail. They are usually a shade of brown, but colour variants include yellow, green and black, with a pattern of spots and/or stripes down the back. Males have a yellow/orange belly, sometimes with black spots, while females have a pale, unspotted belly. Lizards have scaly, rather than smooth skin, and move away very quickly when disturbed.



### Slow-worm - *Anguis fragilis*

Adults are up to 50 cm in length with shiny, smooth skin. Males are usually grey or brown in colour, and may have bright blue spots. Females are generally golden brown on top, with darker sides and belly, and they often have a dark stripe running along their back. Juveniles are smaller and can be gold, silver or copper coloured with darker flanks and belly, and strong dorsal stripe. Slow worms have visible eyelids and the ability to blink. They have a flat forked tongue and can drop their tails if attacked.



Illustrations © Chris Shields at Illustrated Wildlife

## Where to find them?

Reptiles begin to emerge in the spring months, and from mid-April onwards can be seen basking in the early morning sun. Reptiles are easily disturbed, and quick to disappear, so approach quietly to get a closer look. Adders can be found across quite a broad range of open habitats which get plenty of sunshine, such as moorland, woodlands and sea cliffs. Slow worms are the most likely reptile to be found in urban areas under stones, wood, sheets of metal, and in compost heaps. They can also be found in rough grassland, in hedgerows and often in gardens. The Common Lizard prefers dry, open areas with plenty of sunshine, such as sand dunes, woodlands and moorland.

**Adders can and do bite! Adders are our only venomous reptile and can give a painful bite if threatened or disturbed. If you find one please keep yourself and any pets at a safe distance, and never attempt to handle it.**

## Helpful Hints

- A 1:25,000 scale OS map can be useful in identifying features such as vegetation changes, which may give an indication of the best places to start looking for reptiles.
- Historic records - has it been observed there before?
- Look out for potential basking spots such as sun-warmed rocks or logs.
- Look under objects such as logs, stones or dead wood as these places provide refugia for reptiles.
- Best weather conditions are hazy or intermittent sunshine with little or no breeze, generally mid-morning or late afternoon.
- Times of the year- between March and May, and September and October, when they spend more time basking to warm up.



Adder ©Creative Nature Media

Where's Wildlife  
in Ayrshire?



Please  
Affix  
Stamp

Where's Wildlife in Ayrshire  
c/o Ayrshire Rivers Trust  
1 Gibbsyard  
Auchincruive Estate  
Ayr  
KA6 5HW