



DERBYSHIRE REPTILES - INFORMATION

GRASS SNAKE

Grows to an average length of 1 metre (just over 3 ft) and is therefore twice the length of an adder (the only other snake found in Derbyshire). Body is olive green to olive brown/grey in colour with black bars on its side and two rows of black dots on its back. Behind its head is a prominent collar usually yellow or creamy white, more rarely orange or pink, behind which is a black band sometimes separated into two triangles or crescents. Even juveniles, which are the same size as slow-worms, are distinguishable by their colour and body markings. Very dark or black individuals are not uncommon in the Rother valley from Chesterfield south to Stretton. Mostly but not exclusively found near water, as it's favourite prey are frogs. The only British snake to lay eggs which are often found in compost or muck heaps or in piles of vegetation. Relatively widespread across the County especially along river valleys, it sometimes visits suburban and rural gardens

ADDER

Growing to an average length of 0.5 metre (20 inches) and easily recognised by the dark zig-zag markings that extend along the middle of the back. Behind the head there is a black V shaped mark at the end of the zig-zag and there is often a black streak extending back from the eye. Tends to emerge from winter hibernation at least a month earlier than grass snakes, when several snakes may be found basking close together in March. Later in season they disperse more widely, returning to communal hibernation sites in the autumn.. Relatively rare in Derbyshire, any sightings away from the Peak District East Moors are very important.

COMMON or VIVIPAROUS LIZARD

This lizard grows up to 18cms (7 inches) but is usually shorter. Its stouter body and tail, scales and speed of movement distinguish it from newts, which it superficially resembles. Like most reptiles they are most easily spotted when basking in spring or early in the day in summer. Colour very variable but usually brownish to olive with darker markings. Found throughout Derbyshire but most common in gritstone areas of the Peak District.

SLOW-WORM

A legless lizard, with a snake-like body, that grows to a length of about 45cms (18 inches). It is distinguished from snakes by its small smooth scales which give the animal a polished appearance and in the unlikely event of a close view the fact that it has moveable eyelids. Also they lack the patterns of the snakes with their colour varying from blue-gray, through grey-brown to reddish. Young animals are often golden-brown with a very thin black line down the middle of the back, this disappearing in males when they attain adulthood. Under-recorded across Derbyshire, the animal can be found in urban sites such allotments, gardens and derelict land.