

7.9 REPTILE SURVEY

Introduction

- 7.9.1 A reptile survey was undertaken between March and June 2013. The survey method agreed with CCW and NCC involved a combination of artificial refugia and direct search methods, with a total of 7 survey visits during suitable weather conditions.

Survey method

- 7.9.2 A total of 65 refugia were set out in the parts of the site considered to provide the greatest potential to support reptiles. These included areas of tussocky grassland and scrub margins in the drier parts of the site. Much of the site was considered unlikely to support reptiles and these areas were avoided. (These included wet areas that were waterlogged during the winter, and areas of bare ground with no potential cover). Refugia were also positioned where they were considered least likely to attract attention from members of the public. The locations where they were positioned are indicated in Figure 7.9.1. The refugia each measured approximately 50cm x 40cm. 45 were made from roofing felt and 20 were made from corrugated roofing board.
- 7.9.3 The refugia were set out on 18 March 2013 and left in place for 2 weeks before first checking for reptiles. Each subsequent visit involved walking a route through potential reptile habitat in suitable weather and at times when reptiles were likely to be basking. The surveyor walked slowly and quietly to record any reptiles basking in the open or sheltering on or beneath the refugia. An additional 11 refugia made from refuse that had been dumped on site were set out on 20 April 2013. Any items of litter or similar debris offering potential cover for reptiles were also checked.

Survey findings

- 7.9.4 The observations to date are summarised in Table 7.9.1 below.

Table 7.9.1. Reptile survey observations

Date	Time	Weather	Observations
18/3/2013	11:30am to 2:45pm	70% cloud, calm, 8.5°C	63 refugia set out around site.
5/4/2013	1:10pm to 2:55pm	Sunny intervals with 45% cloud, light breeze, 9°C	No reptiles seen. (2 refugia replaced/ repositioned after disturbance).
20/4/2013	10:30am to 12:noon	Sunny, 5% light cloud, calm, 10.5°C	1 Slow Worm. Juvenile at post-industrial margin. Several refugia repositioned after interference, 11 new ones set out.
1/5/2013	10:30 to 11:50am	Sunny, 10% light cloud, calm, 12.5°C	2 Slow Worms. 1 juvenile at post-industrial margin (same as before). 1 adult male at top of bramble bank, north of Cadet Centre.

Date	Time	Weather	Observations
13/5/2013	12:15 to 13:45	Sunny intervals after showers earlier in morning, 25% cloud, light breeze, 12 to 13°C.	4 Slow Worms. 1 juvenile and 1 adult male at post-industrial margin (juvenile same as before). 1 adult male at top of bramble bank, north of Cadet Centre (same as before). 1 juvenile at north-east margin near railway.
16/5/2013	13:00 to 14:30	Sunny intervals, calm, 50% cloud, 13.5 to 14°C	3 Slow Worms. 1 juvenile and 1 adult male at post-industrial margin (same places as before). 1 adult male at top of bramble bank, north of Cadet Centre (same as before).
22/5/2013	08:40 to 10:20	80% light cloud, light breeze, 14°C.	3 Slow Worms. 1 juvenile at post-industrial margin (same place as before). 1 adult female at north-east of post industrial margin (where a male had been seen previously). 1 juvenile at north-east margin near railway (same as before).
5/6/2013	09:15 to 11:20	Sunny with 30% cloud, light breeze, 14.5 to 16°C	4 Slow Worms. 2 young females along railway side of post industrial area. 1 very large gravid female at northern edge of post industrial area. 1 adult male with previously broken tail in north-eastern corner near railway. Refugia were removed at the end of the survey.

Discussion

- 7.9.5 The Herbert Road site supports a population of Slow Worms, which appears to be centred around the post-industrial area and the land adjacent to the railway. The railway and the allotments to the north-east are also very likely to support Slow Worms, so that the animals in the study area probably form part of a wider population. No reptiles were seen along the western side of the site. The reason for this is unclear, but possible factors might include the ground in this area being heavily compacted, or recent disturbance.
- 7.9.5 Reptiles were seen on most survey occasions, and all of these were beneath the artificial refugia. In many cases the observations were of the same individuals under the same refugia on more than one occasion. Based on the locations of sightings, and the size and sex of the animals seen, the survey is estimated to have seen approximately 10 different individuals over the 7 visits. There is no reliable way to estimate the size of the total Slow Worm population from this, but based on the limited number of refugia that were used overall, it is likely to be a small population (probably numbering tens rather than hundreds, and likely to be reinforced by animals entering from the adjacent railway). In the short term, the Slow Worm population is likely to increase on this site, as the habitats on the post-industrial land become more established through natural successional processes.

Figure 7.9.1. Reptile survey observations

