

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Adder

BftB project: IPO6 Roots of Rockingham

Project lead organisation: Butterfly Conservation

Contact: info@butterfly-conservation.org

Partner organisation for species: Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust

Species name – common & scientific	Adder <i>Vipera berus</i>
<p>Photograph</p>	 <p>© Kev Clarke / Back from the Brink</p>
<p>Taxon group</p>	<p>Reptilia</p>
<p>Conservation status</p>	<p>Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (Illegal to injure, kill or sell them). Priority Species under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework/UK Biodiversity Action Plan and is thus recognised as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006).</p>
<p>UK distribution</p>	<p>The adder has a widespread, albeit very patch, distribution through England, Scotland and Wales. It is rare in the English midlands, much of northwest England, central Wales, and parts of Scotland, but more abundant in areas such as the North Yorkshire Moors, East Anglia, the southern heathlands and chalk downlands, the coasts of west and south Wales and southwest England and the southern Highlands of Scotland.* The adder has suffered extensive declines in recent decades, with many local extinctions occurring outside its core range.</p>

Habitat associations	<p>The adder prefers lighter chalk or sandy soils and is almost never found in habitats based solely on heavy clays. Favoured habitats include heathland, moorland (usually at fairly low altitudes), grassland with a dense sward and low scrub, including acid and chalk grasslands, clearing, rides and edges in deciduous or coniferous woodland, coastal dune systems and cliffs, field edges, disused quarries, some brownfield sites such as disused allotments, sea walls, and road, railway and canal embankments.</p> <p>In all suitable habitats, dry, open, sunny areas with adjacent dense ground cover are essential. Hibernation sites tend to be on south-facing slopes; tree roots systems, crevices in banks, and voids in piled materials are often used. Wetter areas around ponds, lakes, bogs or mires are also used (especially in the summer) providing there are dry banks or grass tussocks for basking.*</p>
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	<p>Walkover surveys carried out at known sites, historic sites, private sites with suitable habitat, road verges & suitable habitat around core Adder area. Refuge surveys carried out at known sites and 2 historic sites. Regular surveys are also carried out on additional site by local group.</p>
Sites habitat management works	<p>2ha clearings with windrows created at Site 1. Scrub clearance carried out to maintain open habitat at Site 1 and on well-used road verge.</p>
Technical advice provision	<p>Reports produced by ARC on historical status of Adder in Rockingham Forest, habitat conditions and improvements on key sites, and landscape-scale status.</p> <p>Site advice visits with landowners. Section on managing woodland for Adder was included in each of the three landowner workshops and in the video 'Managing woodlands for nature' available on YouTube</p>
Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	<p>Open habitat that provides sheltered, basking opportunities for Adder is also good for Dingy, Grizzled & Chequered Skippers and Concolorous and provides foraging habitat for bats & birds.</p>
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	<p>ID and survey training, guided walks, talks, family engagement events, volunteer work parties, workshops at ARC conference, education workshops with schools, creative writing workshop</p>
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	<p>Adder was recorded in two project sites and on a number of nearby road verges along the A47. There is also a population in an additional site which borders Site 1.</p>
Recorded Abundance of species populations	<p>Healthy population at Site 1. Small number at Site 2. Further work would need to be carried out to assess number of individuals (using head shot photography for example).</p>
Species Recovery Curve progress made	<p>Species Recovery Curve moved from 4 to 6</p> <p>The range of the adder across Rockingham Forest and environs is better understood. This has been achieved by surveys within the project area but also through a review of existing records and reports and contacting and liaising with amateur and professional reptile ecologists.</p> <p>Adder will benefit from the creation of more open habitat created through the project</p> <p>Adder will benefit from more open habitat created through the project and continued work built into Forest Design plans.</p>

Recommendations for future work:-

Maintenance of open habitat. Radio tracking to look at movement of adders. Further surveys to identify individuals (through head shot photography). Genetic work could determine if the Kingscliffe and Fineshade populations are separate, and also look at level of 'inbreeding' which can occur in isolated populations.

* Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010). *Reptile Habitat Management Handbook*. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.