Reptile Identification amphibian and reptile conservation **Viviparous lizard** ENGLAND Adults 13-15 cm. Coloration and markings variable. Occasionally green, Background colour generally brown. Males leading to mistaken Males often have a flecked identification as pattern on back. sand lizard. Some have few **Female** markings, being solid brown Male **Female** or black. Young male Females often have stripes on back. Newborn young are Males have thicker dark in colour. base to tail and brighter, almost black. 4 cm. speckled underside. Breeding male has vivid green Sand lizard Male flanks (late spring). Larger and more heavily-built than viviparous lizard. Adults 16-19 cm. Most have three rows of eyespots, one along the back, one on either flank. A rare species, almost entirely Female confined to heathland sites in Dorset, Hampshire and Surrey, and sand dunes on the Mersey and Welsh Coasts. Young Strictly protected, requiring a licence to handle or disturb. Young hatch from eggs. Eye-spot markings. 5.5 cm. Wall lizard A non-native species found at relatively few, but an increasing number of, sites mainly in southern England. Grows to 17-18 cm, but most of Some have bright green mottling on the back, length is tail. Body length 6 cm. others are brown. Prefers south-facing, vertical habitat such as walls and cliffs.



Adults 35-40 cm. Generally grey or brown, very rarely black. Small, shiny scales, giving a metallic appearance.

Blue spots on some (usually males).

The most common reptile in the UK, found in a variety of habitats, including gardens. Spends most of its time underground or in vegetation litter. Most likely to be found underneath objects lying on the ground, or in compost heaps.

Young have similar markings to the females, but better defined.



New-born 7-10 cm, usually with a black spot on the head.

Female

Females have darker coloured flanks and often a black line running along the back.

/lale

Grass snake

Adults 70-100 cm, occasionally some females growing larger.

Cream, yellow or white collar behind the head, bordered to the rear by black marks.



Body colour ranges from bright green to dark olive, but mostly the latter. Darker specimens can appear black from a distance. Truly black grass snakes are rare. Most have black bars on the flanks, some also have black spots on the back.

Eggs 2.5 cm long, in clutches of 10-40, usually stuck together. Several clutches may be laid together (usually in decomposing material such as a compost or manure heap).

Hatched egg shells. These are very persistent and may remain up to a year after hatching.

Hatchlings (here with 2p coin) 16-20 cm with similar markings to adults. Appear late August to September.

May pretend to be dead as defensive behaviour.

Note chequered black markings on pale underside.



Non-native snakes

Non-native grass snakes, with two yellow stripes along the back, are established in a few places.



Many species are kept as pets. Escaped or released snakes are occasionally encountered. Expert identification may be needed.

Reptile sloughs Reptiles periodically shed (slough) their skins, to allow for growth and to replace ageing tissue. The shed (sloughed) skins can be useful in identifying species.

Lizards Skin sloughed in fragments, often much smaller than shown here.



Viviparous lizard (left) Sand lizard (right)

Dorsal (back) patterning evident. Small, bead-like scales on back. Large scales on ventral surface (underside) – but single scales not spanning the width of the body.

Snakes Large ventral scales spanning the width of the body.





Grass snake

- Keel on dorsal scales.
- Divided anal/pre-anal scale.
- Large plates on head (e.g. behind eye).

Adder

- Dorsal zigzag pattern usually visible, especially against a light background.
- Keel on dorsal scales.
- Large plates, but also small
 scales, on head (e.g. behind eye).
- Undivided anal/pre-anal scale.

Smooth snake

 No obvious markings on slough and no keel on dorsal scales.

Slow-worm

Fragments of skin may be rolled up, like a removed sock.

Corn snake



Uniformly sized scales on dorsal and ventral surfaces.





Sexing snakes Male snakes have relatively longer tails than do females – hence males have more ventral tail (subcaudal) scales. These can be counted on sloughed skins.

Adder		Grass snake		Smooth snake		Source: Beebee, TJC and Griffiths, RA (2000).
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Amphibians and Reptiles. A Natural History of the British Herpetofauna. The New Naturalist Library.
32-46	24-38	61-73	49-64	50-64	43-57	

Further information Howard Inns (2011). Britain's Reptiles and Amphibians. WILDGuides.

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