

Reptilewatch JE Level 1 handbook

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to be part of this project. Reptilewatch JE is an island-wide effort to record Jersey's reptiles, with the aim of detecting changes in their conservation status. By taking part, you will also be helping us to improve our knowledge on the distribution and habitat requirements of Jersey's reptiles and other species. It's also a good opportunity for you to spend some time in nature too!

In this handbook you will find out everything you need to know to become a Reptilewatch JE surveyor.

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Level 1 reptile surveys

Where to survey

Reptiles can occur in a number of different habitats. They are more likely to be found in south-facing areas that receive more sun. We want you to survey anywhere you like (as long as you have permission), but here are a few suggestions for places and habitats to survey:

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|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--|
| • Wild' gardens | • Tussocky grass | • Roadside verges | • Brownfield sites |
| • Sand dunes | • Banks | • Field margins | • Piles of vegetation (e.g. compost heaps) |
| • Heathland | • Stone walls | • Log piles | |
| • Bramble thickets | • Forts (wall lizards) | • Allotments | |
| • Gorse | • Forest ride | • Cemeteries | |

Pictures of many of these habitats can be found in the NARRS reptile habitat guide at http://www.narrs.org.uk/documents/Reptile_habitat_guide.pdf and in the Reptilewatch JE presentation.

When to survey

Time of year: Jersey's reptiles can be active between March and October; relying on heat from the sun to regulate their body temperature. There is a greater chance of seeing reptiles in the spring (April to June) and autumn (mid-August to mid-October) when the cooler weather means they have to bask for longer. In comparison, they do not need to spend much time in the open during the hottest summer months to get enough heat.

Time of day: The best time of day to find reptiles depends on the weather, but peaks of activity are generally during the morning and afternoon. As the days get hotter and longer, the time that reptiles may be visible whilst basking becomes reduced and shifts further towards earlier in the mornings and later in the afternoon. Good conditions for spotting reptiles include days with sun or partial cloud with temperatures between 10 and 20°C. Strong wind and heavy rain are generally bad conditions for looking for reptiles, but sunny periods after rain can be productive. Long periods of hot dry weather are not favourable, though you may still find green lizards and wall lizards in these conditions.

Number of surveys: We are asking you to look for reptiles **once** between March and October. If you wish to, you can carry out more than one survey but you will need to fill out an additional survey form each time.

How to survey

Equipment

You will need:

- ☐ a Reptilewatch JE Level 1 survey form
- ☐ a pen or pencil

- ☐ a mobile phone (for use in the event of an emergency)

Optional (recommended):

- ☐ a camera (a smart phone camera is fine)

The camera will allow you to take pictures of anything you are not sure about, which can also help others check the identification of what you record.

How to survey

Step 1: Visit your chosen site and record the survey location, habitat type and type of location as shown on the survey form.

Step 2: Spend 30 minutes visually searching for reptiles. When possible, take photos of what you see but remember not to touch or handle any wildlife. **Remember**, much of Jersey's wildlife is protected by law, and should not be harmed, taken or possessed, nor should their breeding or resting sites be disturbed.

If you need help identifying the species you saw, see the species ID guides on the [JARG website](#).

Step 3: Record the date you carried out the survey and the number of any reptiles seen.

Step 4: [Submit your results](#), **even if you don't see anything**. Absence data is very useful.

Safety

It is very important to make sure you are safe at all times during your survey. Avoid surveying areas with uneven or unstable ground. Carrying a fully charged mobile phone is also advisable in case of emergency. A [risk assessment template](#) is available on the Jersey Amphibian and Reptile Group website if required. You are under no obligation to participate or complete the survey.

It is best to do your survey with someone else, but if you are on your own then make sure you tell a responsible person where you will be and when you expect to be back. Lone working procedures are described in the [Volunteer Working Agreement](#) (available on the [Jersey Amphibian and Reptile Group website](#)).

Submitting your results

Once you have finished your survey, make sure you submit your data. The preferred way is online at <http://jerseybiodiversitycentre.org.je>. Alternatively, you can email it to jbc@societe-jersiaise.org or post it to:

Reptilewatch JE
Natural Environment, Growth Housing and Environment
Howard Davis Farm,
Trinity,
JE3 5JP

Please only submit your data using one method, as submitting through multiple avenues can lead to information being duplicated.

Resources

The survey forms, species ID guides and all other information needed for completing reptile surveys are available on the Jersey Amphibian and Reptile Group (JARG) website: <https://groups.arguk.org/jarg>.

Survey results can be submitted online to the Jersey Biodiversity Centre (JBC): <http://jerseybiodiversitycentre.org.je>.