

THE REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS OF CHUDLEIGH PARISH

The following annotated checklist has been prepared by Dave Smallshire on behalf of Chudleigh WILD. All records up to the end of 2020 known to him and other local naturalists, including those from the National Biodiversity Network Atlas (<https://nbnatlas.org/>) that can be allocated to the Parish, are summarised. It should be regarded as work in progress and will be updated periodically as new information comes to hand. It does not necessarily represent all areas of the Parish equally and anyone who can add, correct or update this information is asked to send details to davesmall@btinternet.com.

The scientific and vernacular names follow those in current usage.

Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*

Probably widespread wherever long grass is present, including some gardens, but prone to cat predation. A 'good' population was found at Coburg Fields prior to development in 2007. Records from Oldway Batfields Reserve (up to ten under three refugia in spring and summer 2020, with juveniles in late summer); gardens in Great Hill (up to three, with young in some years), Palace Mill (caught by a Blackbird), Twindle Beer garden pond (one or two fairly regular) and Woodway Street (seen every year). A juvenile once rescued from Woodway Street, but a roadkill on the sewage works lane off Oldway 26/8/20 was not so lucky.

Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*

Present at Deer Park Farm and likely to be present along rides and in heathy areas of Haldon; has been recorded at Ducksmoor Covert CWS (presumably in heathland above the woodland). [About six were seen at Haldon Racecourse on 17/5/14, but not necessarily within the Parish.]

Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*

Recorded from Chudleighwoods Farm, Deer Park Farm (where it has bred in a compost heap), Palace Farm (1999), Oldway (road-kill on 7/5/20) and a Twindle Beer garden pond (one seen occasionally during 2018-20).

[Adder *Vipera berus*

A population at Haldon Racecourse was studied by the late Robin Khan, but not necessarily in the Parish; they were found to feed especially on Field Voles. Adders are likely to occur in the heathland blocks and along rides in Haldon Forest, although the species does not cope well with ground disturbance such as forestry operations.]

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Probably widespread and very common. Detailed observations come from ponds in a Twindle Beer garden, where noted annually, the peak counts of between 65 and 112 (on 31/1/95) occurred during 1992-2000; first arrival dates have been between

14 January (2020) and 20 February (2010), with the mean arrival date over 30 years being 1 February; spawn amounts have varied with peak Frog numbers, covering over 1m² of the surface in some years, but very few froglets have ever been seen emerging, probably due to predation by newts; very few adults are noted in the second half of the year.

Common Toad *Bufo bufo*

Probably widespread and common. Small numbers seen or heard in a Twindle Beer garden pond, with spawn produced annually during 1992-5, but not since (as the pond matured); unusually, one called in August-September 2019 and 2020 and on 24/11/19.

Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*

Small numbers are regular in a Twindle Beer garden pond.

Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*

There is a 1986 record from just inside the Parish at Ideford Common (SX902791).

Palmate Newt *Lissotriton helveticus*

Likely to be the commonest newt in Parish ponds. Numerous in a Twindle Beer garden pond, where 75+ on 20/5/20 and predation by Blackbird has been recorded. Known from a pond at Deer Park Farm and recorded near Ashcombe Cross on 17/4/87.