

SMOOTH SNAKE

(*Coronella austriaca*)



Identification:

- Adults 60-70 cm in length. Females often bigger than males.
- Slender body.
- Usually grey or brown in colour with a paler belly.
- Usually have two rows of dark spots down the back and a heart-shaped crown on the head.
- Dark line runs along the side of the head, through the eye.
- Circular pupils.



Photo: Silviu Petrovan

Distribution:

- Native to the UK.
- UK's rarest reptile: only found on heathlands of Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey and West Sussex.
- Found across Europe and in parts of Russia.

Ecology:

- Found in dense, mature heather on dry, sandy or gravelly heathland sites.
- Often found hiding under stones, logs and other debris in sunny spots.
- Ground dwelling but often seen climbing in bushy vegetation.
- Feed on small reptiles, small mammals and birds.

Lifecycle:

- Adults emerge from hibernation in March/April, and the mating season begins.



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- Males may fight during the breeding season.
- Females incubate eggs internally for several months and 'give birth' to 4-15 live young in September.
- Smooth Snakes hibernate in groups between November and March.



Predators and other threats:

- Predators include birds of prey, pheasants, crows, foxes, badgers, and weasels.
- May secrete foul-smelling substance from anal glands if threatened.
- Threatened by loss and degradation of heathland habitats.

N.B. Smooth Snakes have full legal protection under UK law making it an offence to kill, injure, capture, disturb or sell them, or to damage or destroy their habitats. This applies to all life-stages.



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