

Reptile Translocation

DF Clark Bionomique Ltd were instructed in September 2007 to carry out a preliminary ecological assessment (Phase 1 Habitat Survey) of a site for a local developer, who already had full planning permission on an adjacent area of land. The survey site, around 1.5ha in size, comprised ideal reptile habitat and common lizards were observed basking during this initial survey.

A storage compound and sales office to support the adjacent development had been planned for part of this new site, to cover an area less than 0.1ha. This was to be built during winter 2007, but nothing could take place until all reptiles had been safely removed from this area.

In late September, in warm conditions, a reptile fence was erected around the required area, vegetation strimmed into islands, and a high density of traps laid around these islands. Trapping began immediately, with 76 lizards translocated in 3 weeks. The only option for translocation at such short notice and late on in the year was into the familiar habitat on the other side of the fence. This area was to be fully trapped out from April 2008.

A survey of the site to determine the size and distribution of reptiles present was not possible due to time constraints, but during the trapping it was found that reptiles were not using the northern area of the site. This was cut to ground level in mid October, in such a way that the ground vibrations would push any reptiles towards the south to concentrate the trapping effort.

This was a risky venture, since it was not known how many reptiles were present and the late September / early October weather may not have provided suitable reptile trapping conditions, so it was always possible that the site would not be cleared of reptiles before the cold autumn weather set in. However, the risk paid off, all reptiles were removed, the area was stripped of vegetation before the end of October, and the reptile fence will remain in place and intact until the rest of the site has been cleared in 2008.

