



**MWC 1670, 225 58.5, 225,1287, SWM2,
NORTH DOCK.**

OS REF: SS 5000 9980.

ECOLOGY SURVEY.

Ref No: 240723.

Date: 20th August 2024.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page Number
1. INTRODUCTION.	3
2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.	4
3. SURVEY RESULTS.	7
4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.	12
5. RECOMMENDATIONS.	14
6. REFERENCES.	16
Appendix I. REPTILE INFORMATION.	17
Appendix II. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION	19
Appendix III. OTTER INFORMATION	20
TOOLBOX TALK:	
• Reptiles	22
• Great crested newt	
• Otter.	

1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. AmcoGiffen have been commissioned to undertake vegetation clearance and pointing works to an underbridge at North Dock, near Swansea at 225m 1287yds on the SWM2 line at OSGR SS 5000 9980. Proposed works include repair and maintenance works to the structure with minor vegetation clearance, utilising rope access from the track and scaffold access within the watercourse.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out an ecology survey of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on the 9th July 2024. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I to III of this report provide additional information on specific species and are designed to assist the reader to understand the contents of this report.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Prior to visiting the site, the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.2. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

- * Badger setts.
- * Badger latrines or dung pits.
- * Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
- * Badger paths.
- * Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
- * Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.3. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 100m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Dean M, Strachen R, Gow D and Andres R (2016). *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series)*. Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The mammal Society, London: -

- * Water vole burrows.
- * Water vole faeces and latrines.
- * Water vole feeding stations.
- * Water vole runs.
- * Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
- * Water vole lawns.
- * Predator field signs.

2.4. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found and accessible all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter and Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines*: -

- * Otter prints in soft mud.
- * Otter spraints.
- * Otter Holts.

2.5. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies for signs of species during the survey visit.

2.6. The survey area was searched for trees and structures and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

- * Holes, cracks or crevices.
- * Bat Droppings.

2.7. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.8. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.9. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.10. Where appropriate, the habitat within and surrounding the survey area was searched for species such as hazel, oak, honeysuckle, bramble and other species which may provide potential habitat for hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Field signs such as feeding remains and nests were also searched for where possible, in line with P Bright, P Morris and T Mitchell-Jones *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition*.

2.11. Where appropriate, the area within and surrounding the survey area was assessed for its potential to house habitat for red squirrels. Field signs of red squirrels were searched for at least every 50m, looking for any dreys, feeding signs or sightings of red squirrels.

2.12. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.13. This survey was carried out by Kate Hunt MSc BSc (Hons) MCIEEM. Kate has worked as a consultant since 2006 carrying out array of different habitat and species

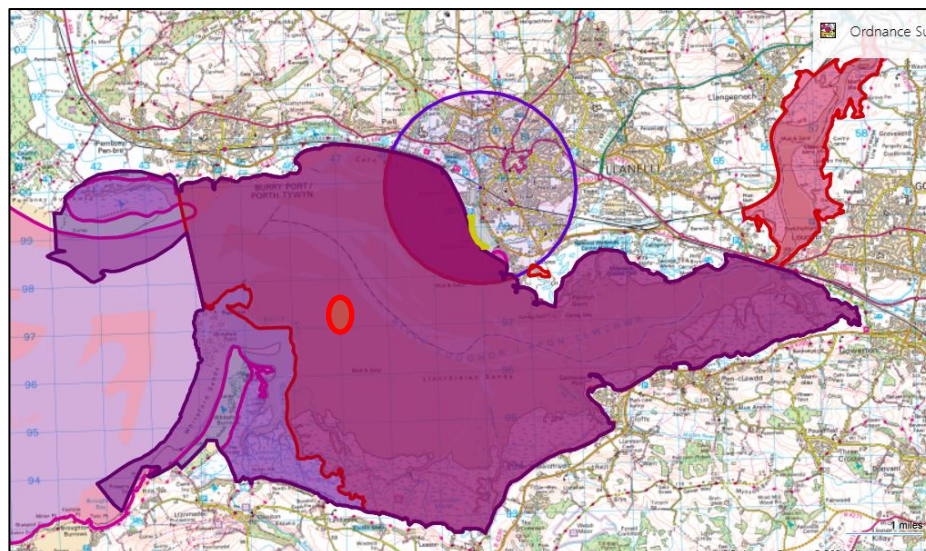
surveys. Kate holds Natural Resources Wales and Natural England Survey Licences for Great Crested Newts, Bats and Hazel Dormice. She has successfully completed courses run by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), to further her knowledge of protected species and plant identification.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request has been submitted to the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) for protected species and designated sites within 2km of the surveyed area.

3.1.2. Six locations of statutory designated sites within 2km were returned. The closest are Burry Inlet Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar, Carmarthen Bay and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Burry Inlet and Loughor Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which all lie 492m from the survey area. Pyllau Machynys SSSI lies 1.9km away. North Dock Dunes Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies 600m away.



3.1.3. No non-statutory designated sites within 2km were returned.

3.1.4. SEWBReC provided various species records including bat species, badger, otter, water vole, hedgehog and reptiles within a 2km radius. The most relevant are summarised below.

3.1.5. Fifteen records for otter were returned; the closest is 70m away on Llanelli beach. Numerous records for water vole were returned, with two records located within 300m of the survey area.

3.1.6. Records for badger were returned; the closest is 150m away.

3.1.7. Records for hedgehog were returned; the closest is 260m away.

3.1.8. The closest records for reptiles were located 24m away for common lizard and slow worm.

3.1.9. Records for bat species were returned; the closest are for common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle located 500m away.

3.1.10. Seventeen records of kingfisher were returned; the closest is over 300m away.

3.1.11. The data search results cannot be made public but are available to the client upon request.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area comprises an underbridge over the River Lliedi at 225m 1463yds on the SWM2 line, at North Dock, Llanelli. The railway runs beneath Traeth Ffordd close to the structure. The wider landscape is largely urban with the town of Llanelli to the east with various car parks and commercial and office units at North Dock. Carmarthen Bay lies approximately 500m to the west. Pastoral land lies to the north of the survey area.

3.2.2. The map below shows the location of the survey area/structure, identified by the red marker.



3.2.3 The survey area consists of a stone underbridge on the SWM2 over the River Lledi. The photographs below show the structure.



Down



Up



3.2.4. The surrounding habitat comprises the tidal watercourse of the River Lledi which flows beneath the structure and out into Carmarthen Bay to the south. The banks are vegetated with frequent buddleia and gorse, bramble and immature willow and sycamore. Rock armour is present to the downside. Outside of the survey area the habitat bordering the watercourse includes grassy banks and estuarine mud.

3.2.5. Some buddleia and bramble are present growing on the structure parapet and wing walls.

3.3. Survey Results.

3.3.1. There was no field evidence of badgers or badger setts within the surveyed area.

3.3.2. The River Lliedi runs through the survey and is suitable for otter. An otter was seen by AMCO during a previous survey visit in 2023 within the watercourse by the structure. No evidence of otter holts was noted during the survey, therefore it is likely that this species just uses the watercourse for commuting.

3.3.2.1. The habitat within the survey area is unsuitable for water vole with rock armour lined banks preventing suitable burrowing opportunities. Furthermore, the grassy banks further upstream and downstream of the structure (outside of the survey area), were assessed as unlikely to support water vole due to the tidal nature of the watercourse, lack of marginal vegetation present and the soft estuarine mud which is unsuitable for burrowing.

3.3.2.2. No records of crayfish were received and the tidal nature of the watercourse and soft estuarine mud are unsuitable for crayfish, therefore this species is considered to be absent from the survey area.

3.3.3. The stone structure is in good condition with no suitable features or voids noted that could be utilised by roosting bats. The structure is assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats.

3.3.3.1. There were no trees within the works area with potential for roosting bats.

3.3.3.2. A comprehensive survey could not be carried out during this daytime survey for foraging and commuting bats although the railway corridor and adjacent habitats provide low to moderate potential for the species due to the coastal and urban location.

3.3.4. No ponds are present within the survey area. Four waterbodies were identified within 500m from online mapping; the closest is North Dock within 120m, an enclosed artificial body of water within a built-up area which is assessed as unsuitable for GCN. A second waterbody, approximately 180m away is separated by various roads and may have brackish/saline conditions due to its close proximity to the sea and would therefore be unsuitable for GCN. The larger waterbodies are associated with a water park and therefore are unlikely to support GCN. The intervening terrestrial habitat comprises hardstanding, the railway, various roads and built up areas with some areas of grassland and scrub. No records of GCN were returned from the data search, therefore GCN are considered to be absent from the survey area.



3.3.5. The survey area provides limited opportunities for reptiles in terms of availability of basking, refugia, and foraging habitat, due to its urban and tidal location.

3.3.6. There is potential for nesting birds within the vegetation within and surrounding the structure and banks of the watercourse.

3.3.7. The habitats within the survey area are unsuitable for hazel dormouse and no records of hazel dormouse were returned from the data search. Furthermore, the site has poor connectivity to wider woodland habitats due to its urban and coastal setting.

3.3.8. The surveyed area is outside of the known UK range for red squirrel.

3.3.9. No non-native, invasive plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were found during the survey.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. There are six statutory designated sites within 2km; the closest are located 492m from the survey area. Given the distance and small scale and temporary nature of the works which will be confined to the structure and immediate surroundings, no adverse impacts on any the statutory designated sites, or the species that are present on those sites, will result. No non-statutory designated sites were returned within 2km.

4.2. The habitat within the works footprint is predominantly scattered scrub with some immature trees and some vegetation growing on the structure and its wingwalls. Limited vegetation clearance on the structure and within 2m will be required. No significant impact on the habitats is therefore anticipated.

4.3. There were no badger setts or field signs identified within the surveyed area therefore there will be no impact on badgers.

4.4. The Afon Lliedi which flows beneath the structure is suitable for otter. No otter holts were noted within the survey area, but observations of the species suggest they are likely to commute through the area. Works are to be undertaken largely from the track using rope access, with some scaffold access required within the watercourse. The works are short term and temporary (3no. night shifts) and confined to the structure and immediate surroundings, therefore provided suitable measures are adhered to, no significant impacts on otter are anticipated.

4.4.1. The survey area is assessed as unsuitable for water vole and crayfish, and these species will therefore be unaffected by the works.

4.5. The structure was overall assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats due to the lack of any suitable features such as cracks or crevices, therefore no impacts on roosting bats are likely to result from the works.

4.5.1. No trees with potential for roosting bats will be affected by the works and no impacts on roosting bats in trees will result.

4.5.2. There are no buildings on site and no impacts on roosting bats in buildings will result.

4.5.3. The watercourse and rail corridor provide limited foraging and commuting habitat for bats within the adjacent area due to the urban and open coastal surroundings. Furthermore, the works will not require significant removal or fragmentation of this habitat therefore, the works will not impact upon foraging and commuting bats.

4.6. No ponds are present within the survey area. Four waterbodies were identified from online mapping within 500m; the closest being North Dock located 120m away. These waterbodies were assessed as unlikely to be suitable for GCN due to their coastal and built-up location with likely brackish or saline conditions. No records of GCN were returned from the data search. It is therefore assessed as unlikely that GCN will be present or will be impacted by the works.

4.7. There is potential for nesting birds within the vegetation on the structure and the banks of the watercourse. The nesting bird season extends from March to August inclusive. If vegetation clearance is carried out during the nesting season, there is potential for the works to have a negative impact on any active nests that may be present at that time. The wider watercourse may support kingfisher. However the banks within the survey area were largely comprised of rock armour and therefore unsuitable for nesting kingfisher.

4.8. The survey area provides limited opportunities for reptiles in terms of availability of basking, refugia, and foraging habitat, due to its urban and tidal location. The works are confined to the structure and immediate surroundings, adjacent to the track. No impact on reptiles is therefore anticipated from the works.

4.9. The habitats within the survey area are unsuitable for hazel dormouse. No records were received for hazel dormouse within a 2km search radius. Hazel dormouse is therefore not considered to be a constraint to these works.

4.10. The surveyed area was outside of the known UK range for red squirrel. Therefore, the works will not impact upon this species.

4.11. No non-native, invasive plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were found during the survey, therefore the works will not lead to the spread of these species.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The Afon Lliedi flows through the site and a commuting otter was sighted by AMCO at the structure in 2023. As works are planned at night and above/within the watercourse, it is recommended that the following precautions are adhered to during the works:

- All artificial lighting is directed towards the structure away from the wider river corridor to avoid lighting spill throughout the proposed works to avoid impacts on any commuting and foraging otter (and also bats (should the works be undertaken within the bat active period May-October as a guide)).
- No equipment is left within the watercourse between shifts that could lead to entrapment of an otter, with access through the structure maintained for otter to pass freely along the watercourse.
- Should an otter be encountered during the works, works should pause and the otter be allowed to pass through the site undisturbed.

5.2. The structure was assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats. However, individual bats can roost almost anywhere for the occasional day or during the night, therefore in the unlikely event that a bat is found the works must cease and Whitcher Wildlife contacted.

5.3. If the works are carried out within the nesting bird season, it is recommended that the works are immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey. Any active nests found must then be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.4. It is recommended that suitable precautions are put in place to ensure that there is no impact upon reptiles during the proposed works. The precautions should include:

- All personnel should be briefed on the identification of reptiles.
- A toolbox talk has been included at the end of this report to aid in this matter.
- If it is necessary to carry out any vegetation clearance to the adjacent banks, it is recommended that this is first cut to a minimum of 150mm to make the area less desirable to reptiles.
- Work must cease if multiple reptiles, or any hibernating reptiles, are identified within the worksite and further advice should be sought from Whitcher Wildlife.

5.5. It is recommended the works are conducted in line with industry standard best practice. This will avoid the risk of polluting the watercourse through chemical contamination or substrate run off. This includes:

- Any chemicals required will be stored offsite to prevent leakages;
- Spill kits present on site to deal with any leakage of fuel, or chemicals;
- Arisings and chippings to be either removed from site or retained within the railway corridor to avoid entering the watercourse.

Prepared by:	
Kate Hunt MSc MCIEEM	Date: 20th August 2024.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou. BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 6 th September 2024.

6. REFERENCES.

- Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the United Kingdom (2010) *ARG UK Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index*. ARGUK.
- Baker, J., Beebee T., Buckley, J., Gent, A. and Orchard, D. (2011). *Amphibian Habitat Management Handbook*. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.
- Bat Tree Habitat Key (2018) *Bat Roosts in Trees: a guide for identification and assessment for tree-care and ecology professionals*. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter
- Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group (2023). *Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts*, v.1.1.1. Available at <https://birdsurveyguidelines.org> (Accessed 15/04/2024)
- Bright, P., Morris, P. & Mitchell-Jones, T. (2006) *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook*. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Chanin, P. (2003) *Ecology of the European Otter*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Ecology Series No.10. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Chanin, P. (2003) *Monitoring the Otter Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No.10. English Nature, Peterborough.
- CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Cresswell, P., Cresswell, W.J., and Woods, M. (1993) *The Country Life Guide to Artificial Badger Setts*. Country Life, London.
- Collins J. (ed.) 2023. *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologist: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016) *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook* (Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. Mammal Society, London.
- Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010) *Reptile Habitat Management Handbook*. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.
- English Nature (2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Froglife (1999) *Froglife Advice Sheet 10: reptile survey*. Froglife, London.
- Gurnell, J., & Lurz, P. (2012) *Red Squirrel*. In: Cresswell, W.J., Birks, J.D.S., Dean, M., Pacheco, M., Trehwella, W.J., Wells, D. and Wray, S. (2012). *UK BAP Mammals: Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies, Impact Assessment and Mitigation*. The Mammal Society, Southampton.
- Harris, S., Cresswell, P. and Jefferies D. (1989) *Surveying Badgers*. Occasional Publication No 9, The Mammal Society, London.
- Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L., and Foster, J.P. (2001), *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*, Froglife, Halesworth.
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Natural England (2022) *Hazel Dormice: Advice for making planning decisions*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hazel-dormice-advice-for-making-planning-decisions> (Accessed: 12/05/2024)
- Peay, S. (2003) *Monitoring the White-clawed Crayfish Austropotamobius pallipes*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No. 1. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Stanbury, A. et al (2021) *The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain*. *British Birds* 114: 723-747. Available at <https://britishbirds.co.uk/content/status-our-bird-populations> (Accessed 15/04/2024)
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004). *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Birds*. 2004 ed. JNCC, Peterborough.
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019* Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/579/contents/made> (Accessed: 12/06/2024).
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992* Available at
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Available at
- UKHab Ltd (2023) *UK Habitat classification Version 2.0* Available at <https://www.ukhab.org>.
- JNCC, Peterborough.

Appendix I. REPTILE INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are five main species of reptile that reside in the UK; Common or Viviparous Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*); Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*); Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*); Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*) and Adder (*Vipera berus*). The Adder is the only native species that is venomous although this is rarely harmful to humans.

Reptiles occupy a wide range of habitats including woodland, marshes, heathland, moors, sand dunes, hedgerows and bogs. Sand Lizards are confined to moorland and coastal sand dunes where they lay their eggs in the warm sand. The range of the Sand Lizard in the UK is therefore very limited. Slow Worms can be found in a wide variety of habitats throughout Britain and is the most likely reptile to be found in urban and suburban environments.

Maintaining the right body temperature is vital to reptiles' survival. In the morning, they find a warm basking site to heat up their bodies, then later they may move back into the shade because they do not sweat and have to be careful not to overheat. During hot summers, Adders will try to move to damper, cooler sites.

Over winter reptiles will hibernate in burrows or under logs where they are protected from the cold and predators, emerging from February onwards as the weather warms up.

Reptiles generally begin to mate April to May with young born in late July to September. The Common Lizard gives birth to live young, hence the term viviparous, meaning live bearing.

Surveys

Reptile surveys involve the searching of refuge such as logs and stones for any animal sheltering below. Artificial refuge may be laid out on site for the purpose of reptile surveys.

Legislation

Reptiles are protected under Appendix II (sand lizards) and Appendix III (common lizard, slow worms, smooth snake, grass snake and adders) of the BERN Convention (1982), partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and are all listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities Act (2006) making them a species of principal importance.

This makes it an offence to disturb any reptile while it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection or to obstruct access to such a place.

Appendix II. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub, but others are ground nesting or prefer man-made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after “intentionally” the words “or recklessly”.

Appendix III. OTTER INFORMATION.

Ecology

Otters are nocturnal, are active all year around and live by undisturbed waters where there is plenty of cover; mostly by freshwater lakes, rivers and small streams as well as some coasts.

Fish are the otter's main source of food, especially eels and they therefore rely on good fish populations. They also eat amphibians and the occasional birds and small mammals.

An otter may use over 40km of river and needs many resting places throughout this range. A female otter will give birth to 1 to 3 cubs in a natal holt which is often away from the main river and must be completely undisturbed.

Surveys

Generally, the only evidence seen of the otter is its faeces or 'spraint', which are deposited along a watercourse in prominent positions. Surveys will look for the presence of these spraints, along with any tracks or potential holts or other resting places which may be used by otters.

Legislation

Otters are protected under Appendix II of the BERN Convention Act (1981), partly covered by Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex II and IV of the Habitats Directive, Annex II of the Conservation and Habitats Regulations (2010), Appendix I of the CRoW Act (2000) and are listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities Act (2006) making them a species of principal importance. Otters are considered to be 'Near Threatened' by the IUCN Red list.

This makes it an offence to disturb any animal while it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection or to obstruct access to such a place.

Toolbox Talk: Reptiles

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Ecological Consultants



Identification: Grass Snakes.

The grass snake can be up to 120cm long. It is generally dark green in colour but may occasionally appear grey with vertical black bars and spots that run along its sides. There is usually a yellow marking around the neck.



Other Reptiles.

In addition to the reptiles outlined on this document there are also two other reptile species in Great Britain, the smooth snakes and the sand lizard. These reptiles are a lot less common than the four species covered with the smooth snake being predominantly found on heathland in southern England and the sand lizard found throughout Great Britain in coastal dune areas.

These species are also afforded a higher level of protection because they are European Protected Species.

Identification: Adders.

The adder is the only native species that is venomous, but it is rarely harmful to humans. Adult adders are generally up to 66cm long. Background colouration is a light shade of grey or brown with a back zig-zag marking along the length of the back. As with all reptiles, colouration varies and becomes duller as sloughing (skin shedding) approaches.



Habitat.

Maintaining the right body temperature is vital to reptiles' survival. In the morning they find a warm basking site to heat up their bodies and then later they may move back into the shade so as not to overheat. Hence, reptiles require a habitat that provides a range of suitable refugia for shelter such as dense vegetation, rubble or log piles, or crevices and open areas for basking such as bare ground, rocks or railway ballast shoulders. During hot summers reptiles may be found in damper, cooler sites. Reptiles hibernate, spending the winter in burrows or under logs protected from the cold and predators.

Identification: Slow Worms.

Slow worms grow to around 45cm in length. The males and females display a marked difference in colour when fully grown. In general the species displays colouring that varies from light brown, dark brown, grey, bronze or brick red with the females often displaying a dark vertebral stripe and both males and females displaying occasional markings on the flanks.



Identification: Common Lizards.

Common lizards grow to around 16cm. They are grey brown to dark brown, often with a darker streak that may run the entire length of the spine. A continuous dark band bordered by light yellow or white spots is often seen on either side of the body. The underside of the males is egg yolk yellow to orange spotted with black. Females are yellowish grey.



When disturbed in their natural habitat reptiles will usually move away quickly.

Legislation.

Reptiles are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They received greater protection following reviews of the schedules published in 1988 and 1991. This means they are protected against intentional or recklessly killing and injuring and against sale or transporting for sale.

If reptiles are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk

Toolbox Talk: Otters

Once found throughout Britain, most of our otter populations crashed in the 1960's due to poisoning from agricultural pesticides, which drained into our river systems. Although this threat has passed and otter numbers are slowly beginning to recover, they are still subject to a number of serious pressures.

Identification

Otters have short legs with a flat broad head and small ears. The body fur is mid brown and is paler underneath. The tail is long and sleek. They are large with an adult male reaching 1.2m from nose to tail and weighing about 10kg.



Generally the only evidence seen of the otter is its faeces or 'spraint', which are deposited along a watercourse in prominent positions or footprints along the bank of the watercourse.



Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Ecological Consultants



Habitat

Otters live by undisturbed waters where there is plenty of cover, mostly by freshwater lakes, rivers and quiet small streams as well as some coasts.

Fish are the otter's main source of food, especially eels and they therefore rely on good fish populations. They also eat amphibians and the occasional bird and small mammal.

An otter may use over 40km of river and needs many resting places throughout this range. A female otter will give birth to 1 to 3 cubs in a natal holt, which is often away from the main river and must be completely undisturbed.



Legislation

The otter is listed on Appendix 1 of CITES, Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations, 1994 (Regulation 38). The European sub-species is also listed as globally threatened on the IUCN/WCMC RDL.

- 39.—(1)** It is an offence-
- (a) deliberately to capture or kill an otter;
 - (b) deliberately to disturb an otter;
 - (c) to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an otter.

If an otter holt is identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk