

Slow-worms at the Met Office

Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*)



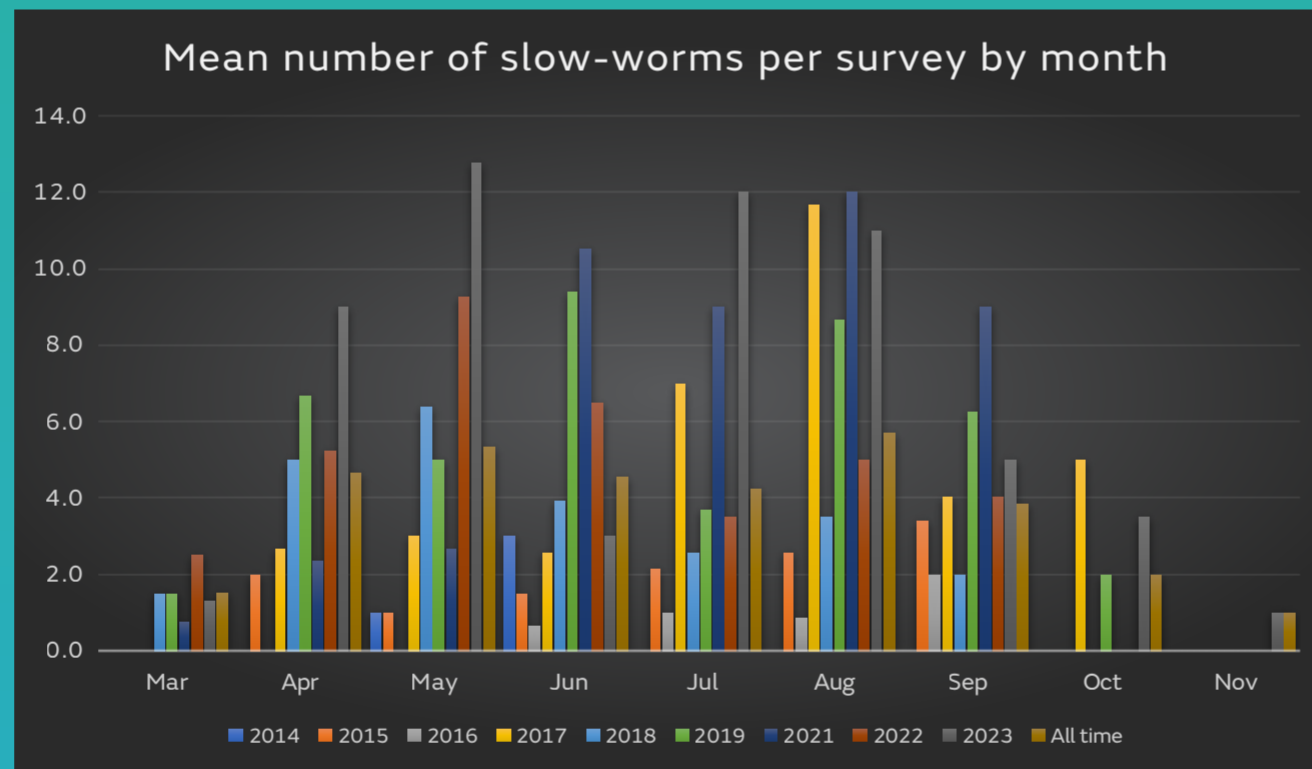
Male shedding skin

A long-term resident at the Met Office, the slow-worm is a native species to Eurasia and they are inhabitants of grasslands, scrub, woodlands and gardens. Slow-worms are one of six species of reptile found in the UK, and the only one regularly found at the Met Office. They can often be found under the reptile refugia that have been placed around the Met Office HQ site. The reptile mats provide a safe refuge for slow-worms to warm up along with providing shelter for amphibians and small mammals.



Female

Slow-worms are legless lizards that burrow underground. All the photos here are of slow-worm on site and show the wide variation in markings and colouration from golden-brown through to black. Males occasionally have blue spots. Females have darker colourations on their flanks and often a dark stripe down their back.



Our staff play a vital role in surveying and measuring biodiversity across our site and this includes our Reptile Check Group that conducts regular surveys. Slow-worm numbers have increased on site since 2014 and have been stable for the last few years, despite increased development around the site.

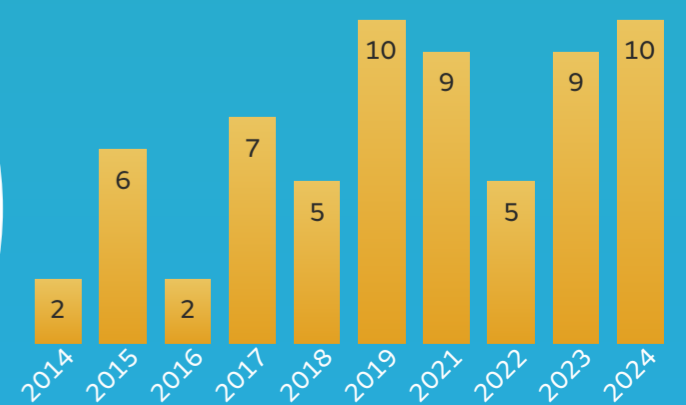


The north part of the site is ideal slow-worm habitat being a mosaic of habitats including hedgerows, coppice, scrub and perhaps most importantly long grass on south-facing slopes. In the past, we have received slow-worms moved from local development sites. Now they are well established and successfully breeding on site.



Juvenile slow-worm

Working with our groundsman, we are always looking for ways to enhance biodiversity, including improving the habitat for slow-worms. The grounds are managed to give coppiced woodland, hedgerows and long grass on south-facing slopes, creating a mosaic of interlinked habitats suitable for reptiles. In addition, basking and hibernation areas have been created for reptiles using rock piles, grass heaps and log piles like the one pictured above.



Max number of slow-worms under a single mat