

SAND LIZARD

The sand lizard is the most endangered of British reptiles. In Britain it is found in sandy heaths of the central southern counties of Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire. There is also a small population found on the coastal dunes of Merseyside. Loss of heathland (areas of moorland on which heather grow) and fires on heathlands are the main threats to the survival of the sand lizard.

The lizard likes open patches of sand surrounded by heathland. The lizards' prefer these sandy patches to face south and get exposure to sun for the maximum amount of time in a day. This is because the lizard lays its eggs in the sand. The eggs are kept warm by the sand, which is heated by the sun. Just like a chicken sitting on its eggs keeps them warm, the lizard uses the warmth of the sun to do the same. The process of keeping eggs warm is called incubation. A lizard usually lays six eggs.

Sand lizards are cold-blooded so they are dependent on the sun to keep them warm. Lizards can be seen basking in the morning sun, once they've warmed up they can then go and hunt spiders or insects. By late afternoon, when the air temperature drops, the lizard slows down and returns to its burrow to sleep. Sand lizards like other cold-blooded animals such as grass snakes and frogs hibernate to avoid the cold weather in late autumn, winter and early spring.

