

The English Grass Snake

Check out the English grass snake.

By Mark O'Shea

Distribution: British Isles to western Asia.

Habitat: Water meadows, lakes and pools, grassland and gardens with ponds and compost heaps.

Diet: Frogs, toads, newts and occasionally fish.

Max. length: 850-1200mm SVL (1200-1800mm TL).

Reproductive strategy: Oviparous with clutches of 5-30 eggs.

Eleven subspecies of grass snakes are recognized, the subspecies occurring in the British Isles (not Ireland), France and northern Italy being known as *Natrix natrix helvetica*. However, the central Italian populations, from which specimens imported into the UK as pets in the 1960s were probably drawn, is now separated from *N.n.helvetica* as *N.n.lanzai*. Grass snakes do not do well in captivity, although, the Italian specimens could at least be convinced to feed, unlike their British counterparts. The typical English grass snake has a yellow and black colour behind its head but this may be obscured or indistinct in some populations.

Sources for more information:

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