

## The Smooth Snake

**Check out the smooth snake.**

*By Mark O'Shea*

Distribution: British Isles to southern Asia.

Habitat: Southern heathlands in Dorset.

Diet: Small mammals and lizards.

Max. length: 400-600mm SVL (500-800mm TL).

Reproductive strategy: Viviparous with litters of four to 15 neonates.

Although not rare on the European mainland, the smooth snake is very rare in Britain because the southern heathland that it inhabits in southern England is at the northwestern extreme of its range. The species was not even known to occur in Britain prior to the mid-19th Century, and the famous New Forest snake catcher Brusher Mills never claimed to have seen a specimen, even though he must have encountered them. Perhaps he mistook them for adders. The smooth snake was never widely distributed in Britain, being confined to the southern counties, but it has been steadily disappearing from its known haunts and is now only known to occur in Dorset, Hampshire and possibly Surrey. This is Britain's rarest indigenous reptile and is supposedly protected by law. Even so, it is still subjected to habitat destruction and active persecution.

Sources for more information:

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