

## Reptile Report 2019

As a method of establishing records of what reptiles were to be found on Thornhope volunteers from the Durham Wildlife Trust joined our own volunteers to lay corrugated sheets known as 'tins' on chosen spots as a way of establishing records of what reptiles were to be found. Black corrugated sheeting is used as it absorbs more heat from the sun and the shape makes it easier for creatures such as adders or slow worms to hide underneath, being both warm in the spring sun and out of harms way from any predators. Each tin was about two feet square and would lie in situ for a number of months, checked periodically for any reptile seeking refuge. Reptiles do not generate their own heat so if they can gain it elsewhere, they will.

As the ghyll at Thornhope was felt to be the most likely area to find any reptiles and was out of harms way from grazing stock about thirty tins were placed in groups of four to five. Periodically over the next few months volunteers would check underneath the tins. The first reptile found was a young slow worm followed by an adult slow worm. This was followed by two toads, two common lizards and a possible tail end of a young adder just spotted retreating into the denser undergrowth around one of the tins. Each time the tin would be gently replaced so as not to cause too much stress to the reptile.

On one visit in June a volunteer watched an adder basking in the sun near one of the groups of tins. It was identified as a female from its markings which tend to be more of a brown colour than males. A further visit in July to the bottom of the ghyll revealed a female slow worm plus one which must have heard the disturbance as it moved off to thicker ground cover.

The Trust has run a similar scheme in the cleugh on Lintzgarth but to date nothing has been seen despite the fact that adders are seen there regularly. Both sites will continue to be monitored.