

Reptile Management on Forestry Commission land, 2016

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Last year I wrote about two areas of conifer which were going to be clearfelled on Wimperhill adjacent to existing small pockets of lowland heath. This was to create suitable habitat for reptiles, particularly Adders, which would be maintained as permanent open space in the future. This came about as a consequence of Sylvia Sheldon and Chris Bradley's telemetry work which showed that Adders don't move much more than half a kilometre from their hibernation sites to breed or feed. Therefore these areas of open space are less than this distance apart to allow for movement between the two. They were planned to be felled in the summer of 2016, but after some delay were finally worked in January 2017! The photos below show them just after felling. Once all the timber has been removed the brash (waste wood) will be 'wind rowed', which means there will be lines of brash across the site, but bare ground between them allowing any seed in the soil to regenerate. Some of this brash may also be mulched using a machine, and stumps removed for ease of management in the future. It is hoped that these areas will develop into a mixture of heather, bracken, grass



Courting Slowworms, male holding female Jane Scott

and scrub, which reptiles will appreciate! They look a bit raw now, but in a few years time they should be great habitats for a variety of wildlife as they are south and south east facing and will get plenty of sunshine.



Wimperhill, January 2017

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