

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

Chalk downland is not the best habitat for many of Britain's reptiles and amphibians, as they prefer damper environments with more low cover. But the Victorian water features on the Cholderton Estate and the winterbourne that flows through the village have attracted a surprising variety of species.

Adder This species has been seen only once at Cholderton.

Common Lizard These are widespread in areas of rough grass at Cholderton, particularly where this is protected from grazing and the trampling of animals. Common lizards are also found around Cholderton Park, the waterworks, Bulford Barn and in other areas.

Frog Cholderton is a very dry landscape with little permanent water, but frogs do breed in the winterbourne that runs through the village. They find places where the water remains long enough for the tadpoles to develop. From here the tiny froglets spread out and move over a huge area in the five or more years that they take to become sexually mature. The restored Victorian pond at Cholderton Park has become an important breeding site for them.

Grass Snake There is evidence that numbers of this reptile are increasing with individuals being seen at Cholderton Park, the waterworks and Cholderton Village.

Great Crested Newt A few of these, the largest and rarest of UK newts, used to share the soft water tanks at the waterworks with the smooth newts. They are occasionally found under stones and logs in the winter and are now breeding in the restored Victorian pond in the park.

Slow Worm Slow worms inhabit a wide range of grassy, scrubby areas, and are also occasionally found in Cholderton's water inspection pits.

Smooth Newt Common in the old soft water tanks near the waterworks, smooth newts are also found in the Victorian bathing pool at Cholderton Park.

Toad The nearest breeding site for this species was several miles away, but individuals do turn up and are now breeding in the pond at Cholderton Park. In February 2009, 85 toads were picked off the road at Cholderton Park and placed in the area near the pond so they were able to complete their journey for spawning.