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## NATURAL HISTORY NOTES

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*Natural History Notes* features shorter-style articles documenting original observations made of amphibians and reptiles mostly in the field. Articles should be concise and may consist of as little as two or three paragraphs, although ideally will be between 500 and 700 words. Preferred contributions should represent an observation made of a free-living animal with little human intrusion, and describe a specific aspect of natural history. Information based on a captive observation should be declared as such in the text and the precise geographical origin of the specimen stated. With few exceptions, an individual 'Note' should concern only one species, and authors are requested to choose a keyword or short phrase which best describes the nature of their observation (e.g., Diet, Reproduction). The use of photographs is encouraged, but should replace words rather than

embellish them. Contributions are accepted on the premise that they represent a previously unreported observation, and may be edited prior to acceptance. Standard format for this section is as follows:

**SCIENTIFIC NAME** (Common Name; the abbreviation NCN should be used where none is recognised); **KEYWORD**. **TEXT**; this should include date, time and locality (with full map co-ordinates if possible), precise details on the nature of the observation with some discussion of its significance, and references to pertinent literature. If the information relates to a preserved specimen, its catalogue number and place of deposition should also be given. **REFERENCES**. Then leave a line space and close with 'Submitted by:' (give name and address in full).

**NATRIX NATRIX (Grass Snake):**  
**UNSEASONAL ACTIVITY.** On 20 January 2001 I found a recently-killed female Grass Snake on the B-road between Farringdon and West Worldham, north Hampshire, UK, grid ref. SU 727364. At 12:45 h the carcass was largely flattened but a couple of sections were relatively undamaged and soft, despite a severe overnight frost that had left the ground in the area bone hard. This suggests that it had been killed that morning. I can offer no convincing explanation as to how this reptile had come to be there, but the adjacent field had been ploughed that morning. Prior to this it had been left fallow with the previous year's stubble etc. intact, but appeared unpromising ground in which to hibernate. It was, however, bathed in sunlight, unlike the fields on the other side of the road, which were still frosted. Indeed the whole district had been gripped by icy conditions for nearly a fortnight. I had last seen a Grass Snake active on 26 October 2000, near Reading in Berkshire, which as in itself a very late date, and Spring encounters are rarely made before April.

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