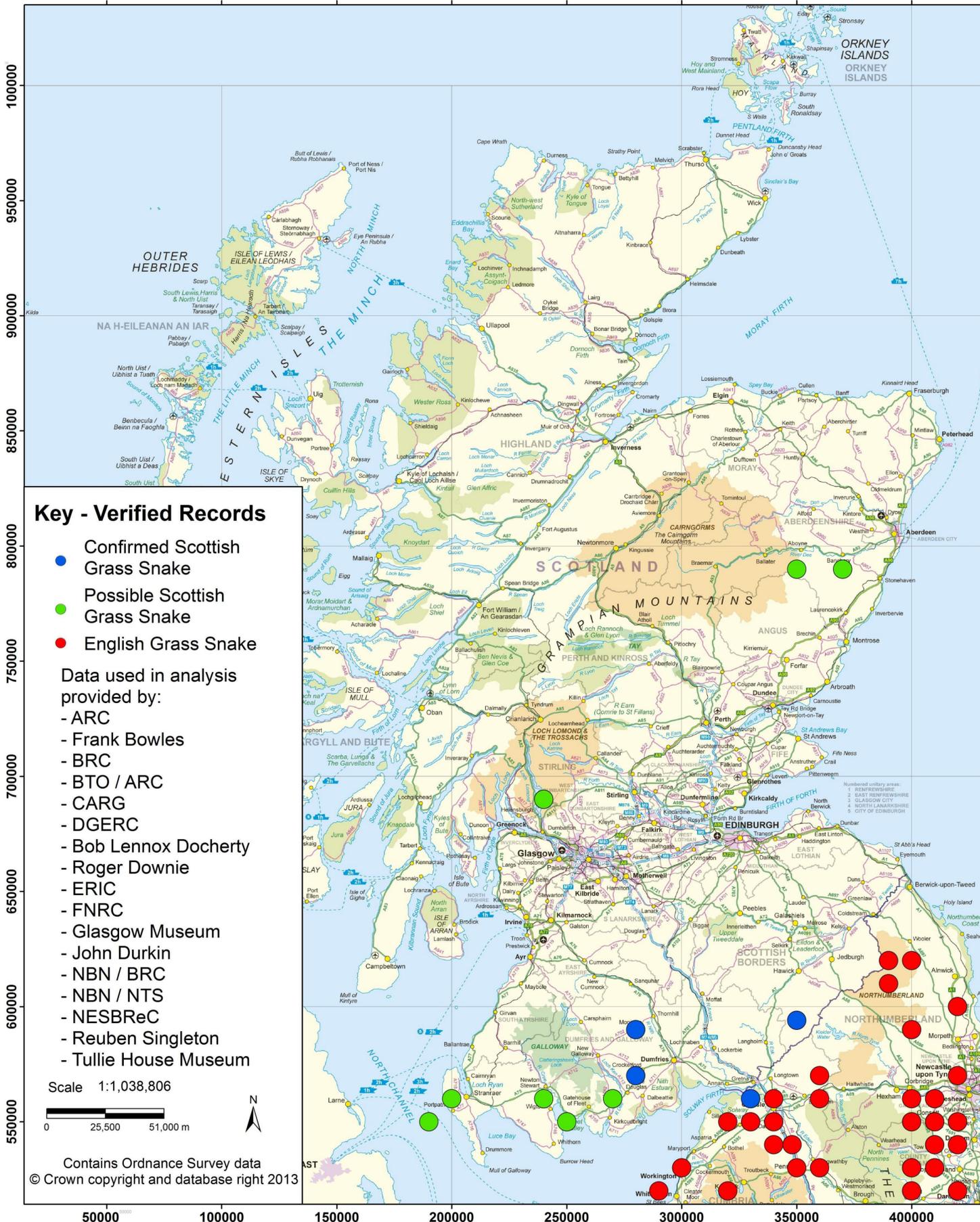


# Grass snakes in Scotland



## Revised Distribution – Update January 2013

A small number of new confirmed or possible grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) records has been received since the production of the first provisional Scottish distribution map in 2012. However, those that have been received offer interesting hints as to the historical situation for this species, as well as its likely core range (see map).

While many new records have been received after raising awareness of Scottish grass snakes through media, publications and public talks, the vast majority of these proved to be erroneous. The primary cause of error with records received in 2012 was misidentification. Interestingly, while some records actually referred to adders, several were of escaped exotic species (usually found dead). In contrast, all misidentifications identified while verifying the original dataset (recorded prior to 2012) were found to refer to British reptile species – namely adders (*Vipera berus*) and slow-worms (*Anguis fragilis*). This may reflect the wider popularity of exotic reptile keeping in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, compared with British reptiles in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century prior to the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Most new possible records received were from the south of Dumfries & Galloway, supporting the interpretation that this is the core region for grass snakes in Scotland.

A single possible record from Loch Lomond has also

been submitted, but full details were not yet available at time of printing. However, this record may help disentangle the confusing picture for this area which has arisen due to the release of 200 baby grass snakes into Loch Lomond in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The only confirmed record to have been received since the printing of the first provisional distribution map was from the Scottish Borders. This record is the first for this region, although grass snakes are found up to the edge on the English side of the border. This also extends the known Scottish range for the species, although only in a historical context. As the record(s) date from 1942 to 1945, it is not possible to confirm that grass snakes are presently found in the Scottish Borders. However, this record does suggest that grass snakes have been present in Scotland in rural areas for longer than could be ascertained from the previous dataset. This supports the possibility that at least some grass snake populations may have colonised Scotland naturally, and without recent human intervention (via the pet trade or movements of hay or other agricultural materials).

Further work is clearly needed to clarify the status – both historical and current – of Scotland’s rarest native reptile. It is hoped that surveys in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway will be undertaken in 2013 to gain a better understanding of the current Scottish range of the grass snake.

## Scottish Grass Snake Recording Project

A national Scottish grass snake recording scheme has been launched. All records are needed: new records help us understand the current status for this species, while old records shed light on the origins of grass snakes in Scotland.

Enter your records at:  
[www.scottishgrasssnakes.org](http://www.scottishgrasssnakes.org)



Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK  
VOLUNTEERS WORKING FOR THE CONSERVATION OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES



Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) © John Baker

## Chris Cathrine

e-mail: [chris.cathrine@caledonianconservation.co.uk](mailto:chris.cathrine@caledonianconservation.co.uk)  
Tel: 07789 77 11 66

Electronic copies of this poster are available on request.