

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group

Nigel Hand 7.3.19

### The Secret Life of the Adder

Adders are non-aggressive creatures of considerable beauty and they are an integral part of our countryside. Some people may find this hard to understand as all snakes are traditionally viewed in a negative light, encouraged by literature and the media. Adders were heavily persecuted in the past but it is now illegal to kill or injure them and there is a greater appreciation of the importance of preserving their habitat. As an indicator species, they reflect the health of our diminishing wilder areas. Across the UK adders are widespread but there are not many of them and the places where they live are small and too isolated.

Nigel Hand, a well-known reptile and amphibian ecologist, presented a fascinating talk to the Malvern Group with many excellent and unusual photographs of adders and other reptiles including slow-worms, grass snakes and common lizards, all of which occur (in small numbers) on the Malvern Hills. Some have already been seen basking in the warm sun we had at the end of February. Male adders will shed their skin in early April and female adders give birth in September, all being well. Unfortunately the release of high numbers of pheasants seriously affects all reptiles and amphibians on the Hills, as the birds attack and predate them. In the future, further protection will be necessary across the UK to ensure the survival of these species and indeed many other beautiful creatures.

Photos by Nigel Hand

Grass snake



Male adder

