

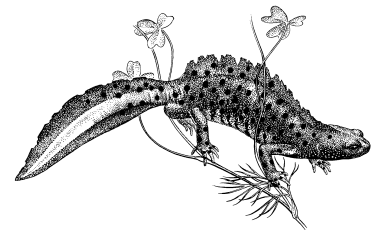


GREAT CRESTED NEWT

Triturus cristatus

1. INTRODUCTION

The great crested newt is the largest of our three newt species (up to 18cm long) and males in breeding condition have a well developed, jagged crest along the back which is indented at the base of the tail; this is more jagged and less continuously formed than in the commoner smooth newt. The skin is also much wartier than the smooth newt and often appears black. Most of the life cycle is spent on land, adults returning to their breeding sites, typically ponds (but occasionally canals and large water bodies) in early spring. Eggs are laid singly on submergent leaves, which the female folds up around the eggs like a concertina. During the winter, adult and immature newts hibernate in frost-free areas such as well-drained soil, hedgerow bases and piles of rubble. This species prefers relatively large ponds (50-750m²) with a variety of aquatic plants. Closely-spaced ponds, or pond clusters (ponds within 500m of each other), supporting metapopulations can result in greater population viability in an area.



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Populations require suitable terrestrial habitat adjacent to their breeding ponds and long-term survival in an area may depend on movement between neighbouring populations (or breeding ponds). Great crested newt dispersal abilities are limited, the maximum dispersal distance is estimated to be up to 1km. Rough grassland, tall herb, scrub and hedgerows around breeding ponds are very important, especially where these create patches or corridors of continuous habitat. They do not cope well in the built environment, intensively farmed countryside or areas subject to regular mowing. Tadpoles and very young newtlets are sensitive to fish predation and so ponds lacking fish or that are seasonally ephemeral (and therefore inhospitable to fish) can provide especially suitable breeding habitat. The great crested newt has not benefited from the creation of garden ponds and remains largely dependent on ponds associated with farmland and those created by quarrying activity.

2. OUR OBJECTIVES & TARGETS	Target
A. Determine the distribution and status of the great crested newt within the county and designate known breeding sites as SINC as minimum.	2010
B. Maintain the range, distribution and size of existing great crested newt populations within the sub-region.	2005-2015
C. Restore 10 degraded sites within the sub-region.	2010
D. Increase population size and range by encouraging new populations through the creation of new ponds/pond clusters and restoration of neglected ones wherever opportunities arise.	2005-2015
E. Maximise the quality of terrestrial habitats around breeding ponds	2005-2015
F. Raise awareness of the great crested newt, its life cycle and habitat requirements	2005-2015

ASSOCIATED HABITAT PLANS

- Ponds, Lakes & Reservoirs
- Quarries & Gravel Pits
- Parks & Public Open Spaces
- School Grounds
- Wood Pasture & Parkland
- Lowland Grassland (all types)

ASSOCIATED SPECIES PLANS

- White-clawed Crayfish
- Water Vole

3. NATIONAL BAP OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

- *Establish populations in 100 appropriate unoccupied sites each year from 1995 to 2005, ensuring that the species is found in sites that are representative of the range of habitats used and the geographic distribution.*
- *Maintain the geographical range and viability of existing great crested newt populations.*

4. CURRENT STATUS

The great crested newt remains widespread in lowland parts of England and Wales, becoming scarcer in the north and west (very rare in Scotland). It has shown a marked decline during the latter part of the twentieth century, primarily as a result of agricultural intensification. It is estimated that there are currently about 18000 ponds supporting great crested newts within Britain although only 3000 of these have been identified. The national decline continues, with recent studies suggesting between 72 and 360 populations are being lost each year. The British population is amongst the largest in Europe where it is threatened in several countries

The great crested newt is widespread in the sub-region, but there are areas in the extreme south, north-west and north-east where few pond surveys have been carried out. A recent survey in the north of the sub-region, which had previously been under-recorded revealed nearly a quarter of the ponds visited contained great crested newt populations, and there appear to be several significant metapopulations. But recent studies in Coventry reveal that a high proportion of ponds there have either been lost or become highly degraded in recent decades, with evidence of significant losses of newt breeding ponds.

4.1 Legal and Policy Status

Strictly protected under European law (annexes II & IV of the EC Habitats Directive & Appendix II of the Bern Convention) from injury / killing / capture and destruction or deterioration of their habitat. Strictly protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations 1994 (regulation 38) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Schedule 5) from trade, injury / killing, capture, disturbance and damage / destruction to their habitat. A licence is needed to handle them.

4.2 Current Factors Affecting The Species

- **Infilling of ponds** for development, farming and waste disposal.
- **Changes in farming practice**
- **Water table reduction** especially through excessive water extraction and the effects of droughts
- **Introduction of fish**, much of which takes place without a licence
- **Pond loss and deterioration** through successional changes and neglect
- **Chemical pollution and nutrient enrichment** of breeding sites
- **Degradation, loss and fragmentation of terrestrial habitat** e.g. through removal of hedges, scrub and tall herbage
- **Creation of new breeding ponds** - through quarrying and the creation of ponds in business parks and in nature reserves
- **Ongoing pond management and the increasing use of funded pond plans**
- **Legal protection** - which results in much newt survey and protection work via the planning system and subsequent construction work

5. CURRENT LOCAL ACTION

- All known records are stored electronically in the WART database and are passed to Warwickshire Museum
- Planning applications are checked for potential impact on great crested newt colonies.
- Three surveys within the past six years have helped to clarify distribution & status of great crested newt populations within the City of Coventry and between Bedworth & Coventry (SP38). There are still big gaps in the county distribution where ponds have yet to be surveyed.

6. PROPOSED LOCAL ACTIONS (some dates amended - Core Steering Group - Feb 2008)

ACTION	Lead	Partners	By	Meets objective
Policy & Legislation				
PL1. Ensure that all relevant species policy is included in Local Planning Documents (see ODPM Planning Policy Statement PPS9).	LBAPSG	WWT NE WART EA DEFRA LAs	2010	A,B
PL2. Ensure all known great-crested newt breeding sites are considered for designation as SINC's or SSSIs	WBRC	WWT NE WART WM LAs WSP	2010	A
PL3. Actively encourage Local Authorities to act in line with best practice guidelines throughout the planning process.	LBAPSG	WWT NE WART EA LAs	2005- 2015	A,B
PL4. Consider incentives for pond creation and management (also including adjacent terrestrial areas) on farmland under the agri-environment schemes.	NE	WWT WART BTCV FWAG	2010	C, D
Site / Species Safeguard & Management				
SM1. Review all great crested newt breeding site records and re-survey all records over ten years old.	WART	WWT WM NE	2010	A
SM2. Locate further great crested newt sites, aiming to identify all breeding sites or to determine the number of site occupancies in 10-km squares.	WART	WWT NE WM	2010	A, E

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SM3. Seek to maintain the number and distribution of occupied sites.	LBAPSG	WWT EA WART LAs NE	2005- 2015	B
SM4. Always state the need for losses to be compensated for through pond creation and restoration, where site loss is unavoidable.	NE	WWT LAs EA WART	2005- 2015	B
SM5. Encourage the natural dispersal of the species to new sites through creation and restoration of habitat.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs WART NE	2005- 2015	D
SM6. Propose and strongly encourage that new ponds are created close to existing populations, to expand or restore the local range and to create robust populations.	LBAPSG	WWT NE LAs WART	2005- 2015	D
Advisory				
A1. Employ a protocol for informing landowners of the presence of great crested newts on a SINC, legal implications and management requirements.	WSP	LAs WWT WART NE LOs	2005- 2015	B, E
A2. Promote training of professional and volunteer surveyors and those involved in the management and conservation of the great crested newt.	WART	LAs WWT	2005- 2015	B
A3. Distribute management advice and information on grant schemes to site owners/managers.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs NE FWAG WART	2005- 2015	F
Research & Monitoring				
RM1. Encourage further surveys to identify important breeding sites.	WART	WWT WM NE	2005- 2015	A
RM2. Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC or BRC in order that it can be incorporated in a national database and contribute to the maintenance of an up-to-date Red List.	WBRC	WWT NE WART	2005- 2015	D
Communication & Publicity				
CP1. Develop links between statutory authorities and local conservation groups.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs WART NE BTCV	2005- 2015	A, B
CP2. Encourage liaison with landowners through local conservation groups.	LBAPSG	WWT LAs WART NE BTCV	2005- 2015	A, B
CP3. Promote, through publicity, media and environmental education, a wider and more sympathetic understanding of amphibian	WART	RINGS WWT HCT	2005- 2015	A, B

conservation.

ARG UK

Abbreviations: ARG UK – Amphibian & Reptile Groups of the UK, BRC – Biological Recording Centre, BTCV – British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, EA- Environment Agency, NE – Natural England, FWAG – Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, HCT – Herpetological Conservation Trust, LA – Local Authority, LBAPSG – Local Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group, LO – Landowner, RINGS – Warwickshire Research, Recording and Recreation in Nature Groups, WART – Warwickshire Amphibian Reptile Team, , WBRC – Warwickshire Biological Record Centre, WM – Warwickshire Museum, WSP – Wildlife Sites Project, WWT – Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

7. REFERENCES (see LBAP Bibliography web page)

8. FURTHER INFORMATION (see separate Links web page for links to web sites)

UK Biodiversity Action Plan no.619
 Natural England (NE)
 Joint Nature Conservation Council
 Warwickshire Amphibian and Reptile Team (WART)

Dewpond restoration for assisting dispersal of great crested newts. A joint project between English Nature and the Peak District National Park.

Email: philip.bowler@english-nature.org.uk

Herpetological Conservation Trust , 655A Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset BH1 4AP. Tel. 01202 391319. Website: www.herpconstrust.org.uk

Amphibian & Reptile Groups of the UK: www.arg-uk.org.uk

Management of Great Crested Newt Sites – a new Environmental Stewardship leaflet, available from the Great Crested Newt Conservation Officer at HCT.

Email: Dorothy.wright@herpconstrust.org.uk

Natural England - '*Great Crested Newts on Your Farm*' – booklet available in pdf format from the NE Suffolk Team. Tel. 01733 455000 or email:

enquiries@english-nature.org.uk

RSPB (2007) '*Farm Wildlife Handbook*' from Publications, RSPB, Unit 17, St Martin's Business Centre, St Martin's Way, Bedford MK42 0LF, tel. 01234 263616 or email:

publications@rspb.org.uk .

9. CONTACTS

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