

great crested newt

Description of Species

The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is the largest of the three species of newt that are native to Britain. The other two species are the smooth newt (*Triturus vulgaris*) and palmate newt (*Triturus helveticus*).

Great crested are usually seen in ponds, but surrounding land is of equal importance. Ponds are used for breeding and the development of eggs and larvae, and may be occupied between February and October. The surrounding terrestrial land will be used by newts throughout the year, for foraging, sheltering and hibernation purposes.

The great crested newt breeds in relatively large ponds (50-750m²). It has not benefited from the creation of garden ponds, and remains largely dependant on ponds associated with farmland and quarrying activity.



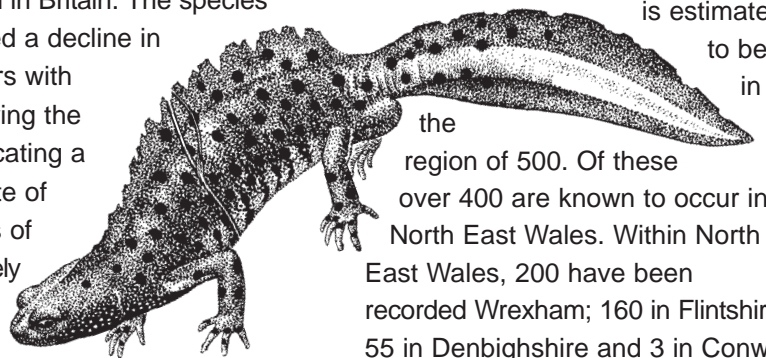
A breeding pond for great crested newts

Populations require suitable terrestrial habitat (woodland, scrub, rough grassland) adjacent to the breeding ponds, and their long-term survival may depend on the existence of a network of ponds (within 500m of each other) linked by suitable terrestrial habitat.

Current Status

The great crested newt is still quite widespread in Britain. The species has suffered a decline in recent years with studies during the 1980s indicating a national rate of colony loss of approximately 2% over five years.

It is estimated that there are a total of 18-19,000 ponds within Britain, although only 4,000 of these have been identified.



The disappearance of this newt is closely linked to the disappearance of ponds. The British population is amongst the largest in Europe, where it is threatened in several countries.

Distribution

Distribution within Wales

The number of ponds known to have great crested newts in Wales is estimated to be in the region of 500. Of these over 400 are known to occur in North East Wales. Within North East Wales, 200 have been recorded Wrexham; 160 in Flintshire; 55 in Denbighshire and 3 in Conwy. Pond distribution data suggest that many additional sites suitable for the great crested newt exist within Wrexham and Flintshire.



Distribution (continued)

Distribution within WCB

Over 2000 ponds have been identified from a desk study (Meilleur 1999 unpublished) predominantly in the lowland area at a density of 4- 31 per km². Of these about 50% were identified as heavily shaded or overgrown so are likely to be declining as a habitat for great crested newts. Few of these ponds have been surveyed, but a recent biodiversity pilot study of agricultural ponds found great crested newts in 30% of the ponds surveyed, (Guest & Harmer 2002), which is comparable to other studies (Pond Life Cheshire).



Great crested newt

Legislation

The great crested newt is listed on Annex II and IV of the EC Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. It is protected under schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 38) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). The legislation protects the species from reckless or intentional disturbance, intentional killing, capture, injury and taking or destroying the eggs. It is also an offence to damage or destroy its habitat. Section 30 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act (1975) can ensure that fish are not introduced into GCN ponds. The species is listed as "Priority" in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Current factors causing loss or decline

- *Loss, degradation, isolation and fragmentation of aquatic breeding sites (ponds) and terrestrial habitats, especially within 250m of ponds, through deliberate infilling, natural succession, and development.*
- *Introduction of fish, waterfowl or non-native amphibians.*
- *Pollution and toxic effects of agrochemicals.*
- *Highways including presence of roadside gullypots along migration routes and application of salt on roads.*
- *Agricultural intensification and inappropriate management, causing loss of suitable habitats such as ponds, pasture, woodlands, and hedgerows.*
- *In reality, the loss of a great crested newt population is usually down to a combination of a number of these factors. It may also be the case that the gradual degradation and fragmentation of habitat over previous years has made the metapopulations smaller and consequently less viable, and therefore more vulnerable to a single damaging event.*



Pond vegetation

Current Action

National

- A national Great Crested Newt Conservation Co-ordinator based at Froglife has been appointed to assist delivery of the UK Species Action Plan.
- A Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook has been published by Froglife.

North East Wales

- CCW has compiled an inventory of known sites in North East Wales.
- North East Wales Amphibian and Reptile Network (NEWARN) co-ordinates survey, surveillance and monitoring in Flintshire, Denbighshire and Wrexham as well as disseminating the latest research and up-to-date advice.
- CCW commissioned field studies on the distribution and status of the species in North East Wales between 1991 and 1993. Annual surveillance and monitoring have been carried out on selected key sites since 1993.
- The presence of protected species, including the great crested newt, is a material consideration which must be addressed by local planning authorities when considering a development proposal which would be likely to result in harm to a species or its habitat.

Wrexham County Borough

- Pilot Pond Biodiversity Survey of 60 WCB ponds undertaken in July 2002 which included records of great crested newts.
- One site, Stryt Las a'r Hafod, in Wrexham County Borough, which has already been designated as an SSSI, has been submitted to the European Commission as a candidate Special Areas of Conservation. (cSAC) for great crested newts. Much of this site is managed by WCBC Countryside Service as a Country Park.

Objectives and Targets

- 1** *To maintain existing populations of great crested newt in Wrexham. Ensure that the current range does not decline from its extent.*
- 2** *Maintain and establish extensive networks of suitable habitat within pond clusters and associated pond landscapes (pondscapes) in Wrexham.*
- 3** *Increase populations in areas where numbers are not viable in the long term.*
- 4** *Establish the true status of the species within Wrexham.*
- 5** *Promote greater awareness, understanding and support for great crested newt conservation.*

Links to Other Action Plans

Pond Action Plan - Wrexham BAP 2002; **Woodland Action Plan** - Wrexham BAP 2002; **Derelict & Industrial Land Action Plan** - Wrexham BAP 2003; **Hedgerow Action Plan*** - Wrexham BAP 2004 (*not yet published).

Proposed Action with Lead Agencies

Action	Objectives	Partners	Target
Policy & Legislation			
Seek to notify exceptional sites as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Local Nature Reserves (LNR).	1, 2, 3	CCW	Ongoing
Seek to ensure all key sites, with populations of 30+, are designated as non-statutory Wildlife Sites and identified in unitary development plans.	1, 2, 3	DUWG, NEWARN, NWWT, WCBC	2013
Encourage the inclusion of appropriate species protection policies within Development Plans.	1, 2, 3	CCW, WCBC	2008
Species Management and Protection			
Ensure that Tir Gofal, Woodland and other grant schemes include appropriate habitat management prescriptions for great crested newts.	1, 2, 3, 5	CCW, FC, FWAG, ARAD, NWWT, WCBC	Initiate 2004
Restore 20 ponds with unsuitable habitat to encourage re-population by natural dispersal.	1, 2, 3, 5	CCW, DUWG, FWAG, NWWT, WCBC, Land Managers	Over next 5 years
Seek to create 10 new sites per year to link existing populations, to diversify pond seral states within pondscapes; to encourage natural dispersal into suitable adjacent areas; and/or just to increase the number, size and viability of populations.	1, 2, 3, 5	CCW, DUWG, EAW, FWAG, NWWT, WCBC, Land Managers	Resource dependant
Consider the re-establishment of the species at sites where populations have become extinct.		CCW, DUWG, EAW, FWAG, NWWT, WCBC	As required
Promote use of amphibian friendly surface water drainage schemes where new developments are in close proximity to known sites.	1, 5	CCW, DUWG, EAW, WCBC	Ongoing
Seek funding for management of priority sites and creation of new ponds.	2, 5	All partners	Ongoing



<i>Proposed Action with Lead Agencies</i>			
Action	Objectives	Partners	Target
Advisory Distribute (and/or produce) existing best practice guidance on the legal obligations of the species.	1, 2, 3, 5	CCW, DUWG, NWWT, NEWARN, WCBC, NWP	2004 (or as resources permit)
Promote favourable aquatic and terrestrial habitat management for all sites supporting the species by offering appropriate advice to land managers.	1, 2, 3, 5	CCW, DUWG, NWWT, NEWARN, WCBC	Ongoing
Future Research and Monitoring Initiate and undertake systematic surveys of pond sites to obtain a more accurate understanding of great crested newt distribution.	4	CCW, DUWG, NEWARN, NWWT, WCBC	2008
Compile inventory of great crested newt sites and distribute to local authorities.	2, 4, 5	CCW	2005
Establish monitoring and surveillance programmes for all key great crested newt population sites within WCB.	4	CCW, DUWG, FCC, NEWARN, WCBC	2008
Facilitate training of professional and volunteer surveyors to develop a WCB based amphibian surveying team.	4, 5	CCW, DUWG, WCBC	2005
Continue to monitor impacts of highways including roadside gullypots.	1, 2, 4, 5	CCW, DUWG, NEWARN, WCBC	Ongoing
Identify areas which have potential for restoration or creation of new habitats to maintain meta populations within pond clusters or to link existing populations and pond clusters.	2, 3	CCW, DUWG, NWWT, WCBC, Land Managers	2013
Communications and Publicity Continue the North East Wales Amphibian and Reptile Network, NEWARN, as a means of communication and a source of up-to-date information.	5	All partners	2004
Promote better public understanding of the value of ponds, for great crested newts through a range of publicity measures.	5	CCW, DUWG, Froglife, NEWARN, WCBC	Ongoing
Develop awareness of the value of ponds through environmental education programmes within WCB schools and community events.	5	WCBC Groundwork W & F	Ongoing

Abbreviations for table ARAD - Agriculture and Rural Affairs Department; CCW - Countryside Council for Wales; DUAG - Deeside Urban Wildlife Group; EAW - Environment Agency Wales; FC - Forestry Commission; FWAG - Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group; NEWARN - North East Wales Amphibian and Reptile Network; NWP - North Wales Police; NWWT - North Wales Wildlife Trust; WCBC - Wrexham County Borough Council.

Further information

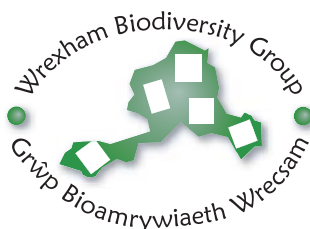
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**A large print version of this Plan is available.
Please call 01978 292019.**



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