

great crested newts



A Great crested newt B Setting up bottle traps C Protective fencing D Surveying E Suitable newt habitat

Ecological Survey Seasons

■ Surveys optimal
■ Surveys cannot be undertaken/ result unreliable

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

Legal Protection

Great crested newts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The protection of great crested newts stems from the overall decline of the species throughout Europe over the last 50 years.

The protection that great crested newts receive makes it illegal to intentionally or recklessly disturb, harm or kill great crested newts. Therefore the presence of this species on a site is a material consideration where developments are proposed or when considering a change in land use.



Male great crested newt



Distinctive markings of a great crested newt



Comparison between male smooth newt (left) and male great crested newt (right)

Identification

The great crested newt is Britain's largest and most distinctive newt. Males may grow up to 150mm long with females reaching up to 130mm. Great crested newts are dark brown to black with darker spots and a yellow belly. This species also has fine white spots on its lower flanks. Males have a jagged crest along the back which dips towards the lower abdomen, and a smoother edged crest both above and below the tail.

They are distinct from smooth newts, the more common species of newt found in Britain, which are approximately 60mm to 100mm in length with a brown to olive-brown body and an orange belly. As the name suggests, the skin is smooth with dark circular markings.



Female great crested newt

Ecology

Great crested newts, like all other British amphibians, breed during the spring typically between March and June (although it can be as early as February in a mild spring) in ponds and other water bodies. On leaving the water, great crested newts move into terrestrial habitat within approximately 500m of the water body. Around the end of September to mid-October (when night temperatures fall below 5°C), great crested newts enter a period of low activity. Over-wintering sites for newts may include underground cracks and crevices, rotting tree stumps, and rock or log piles.



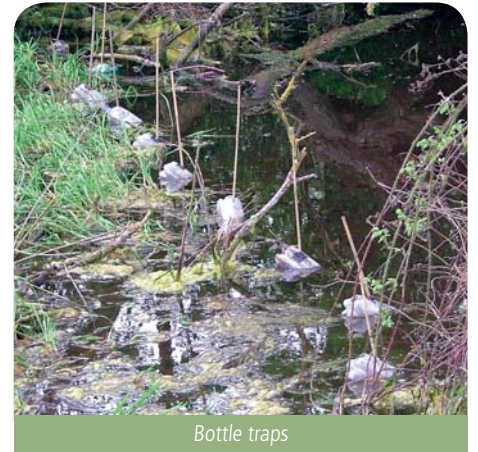
Great crested newt eggs

great crested newts

Are Great Crested Newts Likely to be Present?

If there is no pond within the site, it is unlikely that great crested newts will be present, although if there is a suitable water body situated within approximately 500m, great crested newts may use the site during the terrestrial and hibernation phases of the life cycle.

If there is a pond situated within the site, great crested newts may breed there. Where ponds are present within the site, the only way to determine whether great crested newts are present is to survey for them. Surveys can be undertaken between March and June (subject to suitable weather conditions) when adult newts are either in the water, entering it or leaving it. There are four methods of survey in common use including catching them in bottle traps or searching for their eggs on submerged vegetation. Six survey visits are required under English Nature's Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (2001) in order to make a population size class assessment.



Bottle traps



Habitat management

Implications for Development

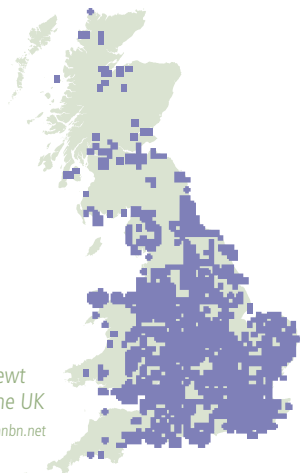
All developments situated within approximately 500m of a pond potentially result in adverse impacts on great crested newts, which should be assessed prior to development proposals being put in place.

Any developments which may result in compromising the protection of great crested newts will require a development licence issued by the relevant statutory body, such as Natural England. This will allow works that may otherwise be illegal to be undertaken legally. Licences can be granted to 'preserve public health or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment'. In order

to obtain a development licence, the following must be demonstrated:

- There is no satisfactory alternative; and
- There will not be a detrimental effect on the maintenance of the population of great crested newts at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

To ensure that the favourable conservation status of great crested newts is not compromised, a mitigation strategy must be produced in liaison with the relevant statutory body. This mitigation strategy may include habitat creation, restoration and management.



Great crested newt distribution in the UK
data from www.searchnbn.net

Distribution

In Britain great crested newts are widely distributed, although occurring less frequently in Scotland, the extreme south-west and in Wales. Britain is home to some of the largest known populations of great crested newts in the world.

