



Great Crested Newt © Northumberland Wildlife Trust



Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) Species Action Plan

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Description

The great crested newt is the UK's largest and rarest newt, reaching an adult size of between 140 and 170mm. This particular species is one of three species of newt native to the UK and requires both terrestrial and aquatic habitats for survival. A good quality terrestrial habitat surrounding the pond, including rough grassland, scrub and woodland, is vital for hibernation throughout the winter. The habitat requirements of the species indicate a preference to small to medium sized ponds of 50 to 250 metres square with a dense submerged vegetation cover of two thirds.

Adult great crested newts are easily distinguished from the Palmate and Smooth newt, which are the two other native species of newt, by size and colouring. The skin of the adult great crested newt is granular in appearance; it has a black or dark brown background colour with darker spots which extend on to the crest of the male. The lower flank is peppered with very fine white spots. Females are without a crest and white tail stripe but do possess a yellow orange stripe running along the tail, both sexes possess a vivid orange underbelly with an irregular pattern of dark black spots.

The species breeds in still or slow moving water in late March to early April, laying eggs on submerged vegetation. They leave the water in late summer and spend the rest of the year in cover or hiding under stones or logs. Tadpoles leave the water as young newts in late summer or sometimes next spring, holing up for several years until they are big enough to breed. Great crested newts can be found in terrestrial habitat up to 1 kilometre from breeding sites.

The great crested newt is still quite widespread in Britain, making the population one of the largest in Europe. The south east of England is the newt's stronghold.

Conservation Status

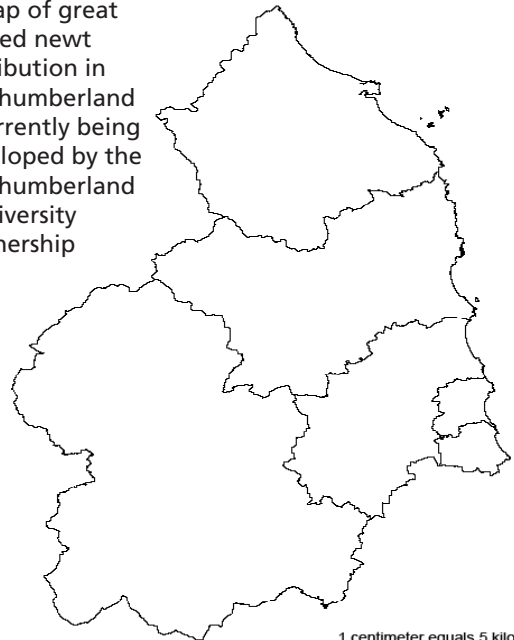
EC Habitats Directive, Annexes II and IV
Bern Convention, Appendix II
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 5
UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species
North East Biodiversity Action Plan Species

Current Extent in Northumberland

A study of great crested newt distribution in Northumberland was undertaken by Northumberland Wildlife Trust in 2006.

The study shows a distribution in Northumberland concentrated within the large numbers of ponds in the eastern lowlands.

A map of great crested newt distribution in Northumberland is currently being developed by the Northumberland Biodiversity Partnership



1 centimeter equals 5 kilometers

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Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Loss of suitable breeding ponds from deliberate infilling and drainage
- Loss of terrestrial habitat for foraging and hibernation by human activity
- Habitat fragmentation caused by development leading to reduction in population size and flow of newts between sites
- Introduction of fish which consume larvae
- Release of exotic species that compete with or eat newts
- Pollution, reducing the amount of submerged vegetation
- Pond deterioration through neglect or misuse – excessive removal of vegetation during breeding season, overgrazing of surrounding vegetation, natural silting, park style management, reclamation of derelict land

Associated Action Plans

Ponds, Lakes and Reservoirs

Further Information

This great crested newt plan links to the great crested newt UK BAP action plan, whose lead partners are the Herpetological Conservation Trust, British Herpetological Society and Froglife.

The Herpetological Conservation Trust website - <http://www.herpconstrust.org.uk/index.php>

Targets

Maintain the current range of the Great Crested Newt in Northumberland of 41 sites by 2015

Increase the current range of the Great Crested Newt in Northumberland to 66 sites by 2015

Code	Priority Actions	Date
GCN A01	Collate great crested newt data held by consultancies	2008
GCN A02	Prioritise areas for further survey where there are gaps in the current baseline dataset	2008
GCN A03	Carry out further surveys based on gaps identified in the baseline dataset	2009
GCN A04	Organise training in identification skills and survey techniques	2009
GCN A05	Seek to increase breeding success at sites using shallow pond features. Identify sites where fish stocking has taken place and create adjacent habitat for great crested newt breeding.	2009
GCN A06	Create a network of appropriate habitats for the species through strategic pond creation and associated terrestrial habitat	2015
GCN A07	Ensure compliance with Environment Agency policy to prevent impact on species populations from fish stocking through section 30 licences	ongoing
GCN A08	Monitor known populations of great crested newt	ongoing