



# Great crested Newt

## Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Species English Name,(Scientific name)

GREAT CRESTED NEWT (TRITURUS CRISTATUS)



### Ecology

#### Appearance

Great crested newts are the largest newt found in Great Britain reaching lengths of 17cm. They have dark grey-brown backs and flanks that are covered in darker spots making them appear black. The undersides of great crested newts are yellow-orange (often a very bright orange) and have large dark spots. Males have a jagged crest running along their backs, which is more pronounced during the breeding season and lies flat against their bodies when they are out of the water. Females do not have a crest but instead have a yellow-orange stripe running along the lower edge of their tails.

#### Habitat

Great crested newts are found in marl pits and other small water bodies.

#### Food

Adult newts hunt for other newts, tadpoles, young froglets, worms, insect larvae and water snails in ponds but also hunt on land for insects, worms and other invertebrates. The larval newts tend to prey on tadpoles, worms, insects and insect larvae.



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### Predators

Adult great crested newts have few predators, however they are susceptible to predation by herons and other birds. The loss of eggs has now been linked to the incidental browsing of vegetarian species such as mallards and moorhens that graze the leaf-tips of aquatic plants and thus predate the eggs that are folded into the leaves. It is also possible that pond snails, flatworms and sticklebacks predate the newt eggs. Fish, beetles, dragonfly larvae, herons and kingfishers predate the newt larvae.

### Life Style

- \* Great crested newts are nocturnal, hiding on land during the day in burrows or under hibernacula like logs.
- \* They hibernate between October and late February, usually on land under piles of leaves or logs or inside tree stumps or stone walls, but occasionally they will hibernate in the mud of the pond bed.
- \* The female lays two or three eggs a day between March and mid July, until 200-300 eggs have been laid.
- \* Yellowish greenish white eggs are laid into folded leaves of aquatic plants.

### Current status

An internationally important species of conservation concern. Since the late 1940's great crested newt (GCN) populations have experienced drastic declines throughout much of Europe, although populations are still found in many parts of the country.

Distribution is widespread throughout the Cheshire region, probably due to relative abundance of farm ponds and suitable terrestrial habitat throughout the region. A three year survey (1995/6/7) of 370 ponds in Cheshire found that 32.9% of those ponds surveyed supported populations of GCN and almost half the ponds which contained amphibians held Great Crested Newts (Pond Life Project, Critical Pond Biodiversity Survey, 1997).

The GCN is protected under Annex IIa and IVa of the EU Habitats and species Directive, Appendix II of the Bern Convention (SI 1994 No. 2716) and by Schedules 5 and 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

### Threats

- \* Loss and fragmentation of suitable aquatic and terrestrial habitat due to natural succession, construction developments, recreational usage, land drainage, water abstraction and the in-filling of ponds and ditches as a result of agricultural intensification/diversification



- \* Introduction of predators, e.g. stocking of fish, wildfowl, etc.
- \* Decline in the water quality of ponds due to eutrophication and pollution from agricultural and Industrial chemicals and waste
- \* Inappropriate management of known GCN sites
- \* Poor quality mitigation schemes e.g. insufficient provision of terrestrial habitat and inappropriate pond designs (which favour fish introduction)

## How are we helping to conserve great crested newts in the Cheshire region?

- \* Great crested newt mitigation projects have taken place where construction development has impacted upon existing populations of GCN and their habitat.
- \* The Local Records Centre, rECOrd, is compiling records for this species. Please send details of all sightings to rECOrd.
- \* Cheshire and Wirral Amphibian and Reptile Group respond to calls from the general public.

## Objectives, targets and actions

Objectives, targets and actions to help conserve great crested newts in the Cheshire region can be found on the [Biodiversity Action Reporting System \(BARS\)](#) along with full details of our progress so far.

## How to find out more about great crested newts

Vale Royal Borough Council Great Crested Newt Species Recording card.

Herpetological Conservation Trust - [www.herpconstrust.org.uk/index.php](http://www.herpconstrust.org.uk/index.php)

UK BAP for Great Crested Newts - [www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=619](http://www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=619) Atlas of the Amphibians of Cheshire and Wirral - available from rECOrd

## How can you get involved?

Join the Cheshire and Wirral Amphibian and Reptile Group

## Contact details

LBAP Chair: Cheshire Wildlife Trust

Phone: 01948 820 728



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National Lead Partner Herpetological Conservation Trust

Froglife

British Herpetological Society National Contact Jim Foster, Natural England

Phone: 0300 060 1163

## References and Glossary

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[http://www.arkive.org/species/ARK/amphibians/Triturus\\_cristatus/](http://www.arkive.org/species/ARK/amphibians/Triturus_cristatus/) Guest, J. and Harmer, A. (2006): Atlas of the Amphibians of Cheshire and Wirral. rECOrd, Chester.

