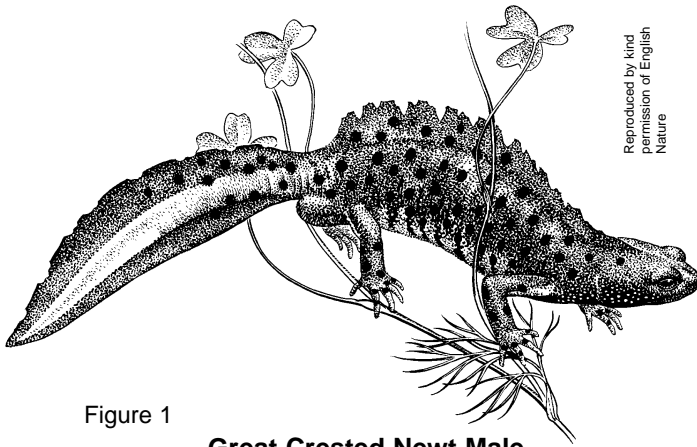


Great Crested Newts



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Figure 1
Great Crested Newt Male

Life Cycle

The life cycle of great crested newts is shown in figure 2. This is only a general picture as newt behaviour can be influenced by the weather, the habitat and any management or development work around the breeding pond.

Females lay several hundred eggs which are:

- laid inside a folded leaf to protect the egg from predators
- less than half a cm across and have yellowish-white centres
- hatch after 3 - 4 weeks

The hatched tadpoles remain in the pond for about 3-4 months, until they reach 4-8cm in length. Some tadpoles overwinter in the pond and emerge the following spring.

Once emerged from the pond the juvenile newts migrate up to 1Km away from the pond. Juveniles mature and are ready to breed at approximately three years. Adults are mainly nocturnal and spend most of their lives within 200-500m of the breeding site. The adults and larvae are voracious predators feeding on small worms, insects and invertebrate larvae. Great crested newt adults will also eat larvae of the other amphibians and may even take adults of the other newt species.

The land up to 500m around the pond should be considered as potential terrestrial habitat. Newt populations will not survive unless there is suitable terrestrial habitat around the breeding pond.

Description

The largest of our native newts, the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) grows to about 15cm-16cm long. The species has a dark brown to black body, patterned with small white speckles and larger black spots on the flanks. The bellies are a particularly striking bright orange with darker markings. The males are distinctive during the breeding season with high, serrated crests and a white tail flash.

The Breeding Pond

Ideal great crested newt breeding ponds:

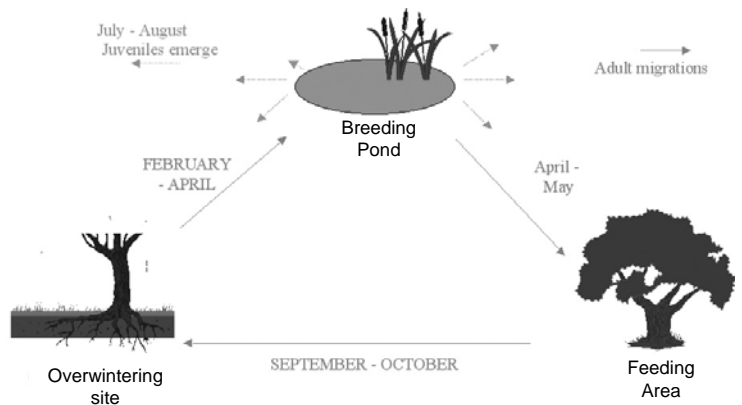
- are small, still waters (10-20m diameter)
- form a part of a complex of waterbodies no more than 300m apart
- are fish-free and have few or no waterfowl
- variable in depth
- vegetated with floating, emergent and submerged vegetation with some open water

Terrestrial Habitat

The ideal great crested newt terrestrial habitat has:

- at least one hectare of habitat to allow a viable population to survive
- a mosaic of extensively managed grasslands with scrub and trees
- log or rubble piles, dry stone and other areas for overwintering and feeding

Figure 2



Adult great crested newts leave overwintering sites in late spring and migrate to the breeding site. After breeding, adults leave the water in July/August to feed on land. About 3-4 months after hatching, juvenile newts emerge from the breeding pond. In autumn the adults migrate to an overwintering site which is often a log pile, tree roots or in a dry stone-wall.

Habitat Restoration and Management for Great Crested Newts

DO

- Plant/encourage growth of marginal and emergent vegetation.
- Keep existing fish populations low.
- Manage waterside vegetation to prevent shading of the waterbody.
- Coppice trees, especially on the south side of the pond.
- Cut tall reeds/vegetation in winter.



- Leave piles of logs/rubble for feeding and overwintering sites.
- Plan work on/around the pond for winter, after most newts have left the pond.
- Allow any grass around the pond to grow long in summer.
- Plant/manage a buffer strip between arable fields and the pond to allow for a reduction in polluting runoff.

DO NOT

- Allow the pond to become completely overgrown.
- Allow pond to become completely shaded by trees and scrub.
- Introduce fish into fish-free ponds.
- Allow chemical or fertiliser runoff to pollute the waterbody.



- Remove more than 1/3 of pond vegetation in any one year.
- Allow the pond to dry out permanently.
- Encourage waterfowl.
- Manage the pond vegetation in the spring or summer.
- Plant exotic species.

Legal Protection

Great crested newts are protected under Schedule 5, Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. To reflect the importance of the British populations in European terms, great crested newts are also protected under Schedule 2 Regulations 38/39 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994. In addition, a biodiversity action plan has been written for the great crested newt.

Together, these laws make it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure, trade or capture a great crested newt
- intentionally disturb great crested newts
- damage, destroy or obstruct habitats where they live and breed

Protection applies to all stages of the life cycle: adults, eggs, tadpoles and juveniles.

Photos - Great crested newt ©English Nature; Newt pond ©Wiltshire Wildlife Trust/Steve Day; River drawing ©Hampshire Wildlife Trust

Major Threats

The great crested newt is still widespread in Britain though distribution is sparse in Scotland, Wales and south-west England. Since the 1940s populations have undergone a severe decline throughout much of Europe including the UK.

Factors contributing to population declines include:

- urbanisation
- intensification of farming
- loss of ponds
- lack of pond management (ponds have been allowed to dry out and become overgrown with weeds, reeds and rushes)
- stocking of fish into formerly fish-free ponds

Information & Advice

Further information on great crested newts can be found in:

English Nature (1996). *Great crested newts - guidelines for developers*

English Nature (1997) - *Facts about great crested newts*

Froglife (2001) *Great crested newts*.



Severn Trent Water

For further information on the conservation of water and wetlands species and habitats please visit:

www.wildlifetrusts.org