

Great Crested Newt

Triturus cristatus



Description

The Great Crested Newt is an impressive animal, considerably larger than our other two species of Newt. Appearing almost black above, it has a bright orange belly with black spots. In the breeding season the male has a crest along its back.

Great Crested Newts have a requirement for large deep pools, with an abundance of floating and submerged vegetation during the breeding season (April to August). They prefer ponds with no fish. Most of the year they are terrestrial and they require tall grassland and woodland to hunt and over-winter. This surrounding terrestrial habitat is particularly important and the Newts are more likely to survive if there are a number of suitable ponds within a small area.

Winter hibernation is usually in old walls, under log-piles or holes in bankings. They emerge in March when the weather is favourable and head for the same pond they left the previous September/October.

National Status

The Great Crested Newt is still quite widespread in Britain.

The species may be numerous locally in parts of lowland England and Wales but is absent or rare in parts of Cornwall and Devon. It has a more restricted distribution in Scotland and it is absent from Northern Ireland.

The species has suffered a decline in recent years, with studies in the 1980s indicating a national rate of colony loss of approximately 2% over five years. It is estimated that there are a total of 18,000 breeding sites within Britain which may contain Great Crested Newts, although only 3,000 of these have been identified. The British population is amongst the largest in Europe, where it is threatened in several countries.

Local Status

Barnsley currently has identified eight separate sites for this species and a further survey would complete the full picture of status.

Legal Status

The Great Crested Newt is listed on Annexes 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, etc.) Regulations, 1994, (Regulation 38) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

Links with other Action Plans

- HAP3 Wet Woodland
- HAP4 Wood Pasture and Parkland
- HAP5 Hedgerows
- HAP7 Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- HAPI5 Ponds
- HAPI7 Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land

Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Loss of suitable breeding ponds caused by water table reduction, in-filling for development, intensive farming, waste disposal, neglect or fish stocking and the degradation, loss and fragmentation of terrestrial habitats.
- Pollution and toxic effects of agrochemicals.

Current Local Action

- There is currently no local action specifically for Great Crested Newts. However, they will benefit from wetland creation schemes and from the creation and restoration of farm ponds under schemes such as the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. There have been past actions to conserve this species when affected by new developments.

Proposed Local Action

- Survey and monitor all known sites and survey potential new locations.
- Ensure that Great Crested Newt is included in the management plan for Wilthorpe Marsh under HAP7.
- Prepare a costed plan and implement works at Keepers Pond, Wentworth Castle.
- In partnership with Wentworth Castle Trust, assess the restoration plans for the Serpentine to benefit Great Crested Newt conservation.
- Prepare costed plans and support works at Wentworth Castle Serpentine, Cudworth Common and Wilthorpe Marsh.
- Produce management plans for all Great Crested Newt sites.
- Ensure that the best sites, including Cudworth Common, are on the Natural Heritage Sites (NHS) Register. The site boundaries should contain appropriate terrestrial habitat requirements.

BMBC Planning Policy Actions

- Ensure that all developments near known sites take full account of Great Crested Newt requirements.
- Include habitat and species protection policies in development plans and/or supplementary guidance.
- Identify all Great Crested Newt occupied ponds in Local Development Framework (LDF).

- Seek to ensure that Great Crested Newt sites are protected from development. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, seek adequate mitigation through the planning process.
- Designate all Great Crested Newt sites as Natural Heritage Sites (NHS).
- Ensure that the Council is aware of all sites holding this species.

BMBC Development Control Actions

- On land owned by public or conservation bodies, ensure that management maintains and, where possible, enhances Great Crested Newt breeding and feeding habitats.
- Consider the impact on Great Crested Newt breeding/feeding sites when assessing planning applications.

BMBC Land Ownership and Management Actions

- Advise owners and tenants of the location of, and their responsibility towards, Great Crested Newt sites on their property.
- Have regard to Great Crested Newt legislation when altering Barnsley MBC managed ponds and work with SY Ponds Project to develop new habitat opportunities on some sites.