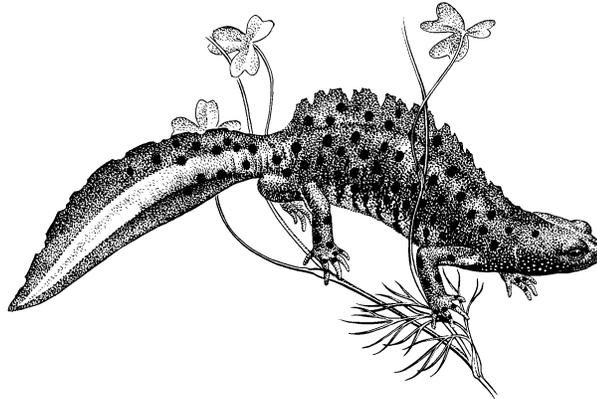


## Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

*This amphibian lives during the spring and early summer in ponds with clear water where there is a variety of aquatic vegetation. In late summer and autumn it leaves water to live under stones or in soil, feeding on invertebrates before hibernating.*



### 1 Definition

The Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is the largest of the three newt species native to Britain, with adult males reaching on average 140-150mm and females being slightly larger. Both males and females have dark, often black, warty skin speckled with tiny white spots. The belly is bright orange or yellow with black blotches. Males have a high jagged crest along the back and another down the tail, and a silvery blue streak along each side of the tail. Both crest and colouration become more pronounced during the breeding season. Females lack the crest but have the orange-yellow strip running along the underside of their tail.

### 2 Current status

#### 2.1 National

A species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe. The British population is thought to be amongst the largest in Europe. Although still widespread, studies indicate a colony loss of 2% over five years in the 1980s. Great Crested Newts are believed to be present in c.18,000 ponds, although only 3,000 have been identified.

#### 2.2 Local

Suffolk is believed to be a stronghold for the Great Crested Newt, particularly in the north-east of the county where there is a higher percentage of ponds. At least 115 ponds in Suffolk have populations of Great Crested Newts but survey data is inadequate and the figure is likely to be much higher.

#### 2.3 Natural Areas

Particularly associated with the East Anglian Plain (Claylands) where there is a higher density of ponds than elsewhere in the county.

### **3 Current factors affecting Great Crested Newts in Suffolk**

- Loss of suitable breeding ponds largely caused by in-filling as a result of agricultural intensification, scrub encroachment, shading and gradual silting up.
- Decline in the quality of ponds through pollution and toxic effects of agro-chemicals and lowering of the water table.
- Introduction of fish to ponds; Great Crested Newt larvae are vulnerable to predation.
- The loss and fragmentation of terrestrial semi-natural habitat around ponds often as a result of building.

### **4 Current action**

#### **4.1 Legal Status**

- Great Crested Newts are protected by both national and international law under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Annex 2 and 4 of EC Species and Habitats Directive, the Bern Convention and Schedule 2 of the Conservation Regulations (Natural Habitats etc) 1994.
- A list of known sites is maintained by SBRC and supplied on a regular basis to Local Authorities and conservation organisations.
- Developers are often advised to undertake Great crested newt surveys where land use changes are proposed.
- Surveys for Great Crested Newts were undertaken in 1997 and 1998 by the Suffolk Amphibian and Reptile Group (SARG). SARG is involved in obtaining landowner information for sites and advising on habitat management.
- Several local parishes have undertaken survey for great crested newt during 2001-3. These include Stanton and Parham.

#### **4 Action plan objectives and targets**

- 1 *Maintain the range, distribution and viability of existing Great Crested Newt populations.*
- 2 *Establish approximate population size within the county and number of breeding sites to give baseline for further restoration and management work.*
- 3 *Restore or create populations on three sites per year to compensate for sites previously lost to development or through neglect.*
- 4 *Encourage parish groups to record presence of great crested newts in village ponds and also to undertake pond restoration projects.*

**6 Great Crested Newt: Proposed local action with lead agencies**

| <b>Action</b>  | <b>Date</b>                  | <b>Partners</b>  |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| <b>POLICY AND LEGISLATION</b>  |                              |  |
| Update SBRC site Register annually to include new Great Crested Newt sites.  | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>SWT, SBRC, Local Authorities, SARG, County Recorder</b> |
| Ensure farmers and landowners are advised on Great Crested Newts when suitable habitats are entered for Countryside Stewardship and ESA schemes, especially in Claylands Natural Area. | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>FWAG, SWT, Defra</b>                                    |
| Ensure enforcement of WCA (1981) to prevent loss of breeding sites and Great Crested Newt populations.   | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>EN, Local Authorities</b>                               |
| Ensure that Local Authorities and Highways Agency are informed of methods for assessing mitigation schemes.  | 2005                         | <b>EN</b>  |
| <b>SITE SAFEGUARD AND MANAGEMENT</b>   |                              |  |
| Monitor and survey all Great Crested Newt breeding sites on a five year rolling programme.   | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>SARG, SWT, EA</b>                                       |
| Promote favourable management of known sites by offering management advice to land owners and parish groups (5-10 areas annually).   | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>SARG, SWT, FWAG, Defra</b>                              |
| Consider suitable sites for SSSI and designate where appropriate.  | 2004<br>2006                 | <b>EN, SWT</b>   |
| <b>SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION</b>   |                              |  |
| Draw up a list of sites for restoration and indicate the 10 most important ones.   | 2004                         | <b>SARG, SWT, SBRC</b>                                     |
| Maintain number and distribution of sites through restoration of population and/or key habitat on 20 sites.  | 2007                         | <b>SWT, SARG, LAs</b>                                      |

|  |                              |   |
|--|------------------------------|---|
| Identify 10 parishes with potential Great Crested Newt habitat and encourage groups to undertake restoration work and make annual population counts. | 2007                         | <b>SWT, SARG</b>                                  |
| <b>RESEARCH AND MONITORING</b>   |                              |   |
| Undertake surveys of least recorded areas of the county eg; west Suffolk.  | 2004                         | <b>SARG, SWT</b>                                  |
| Compile all Great Crested Newt records and send to SBRC annually.  | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>SBRC, SWT, EN, SARG, FWAG, Highways Agency</b> |
| Produce distribution maps showing all recent (last 5 years) records, every 6 months.   | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>SBRC</b>                                       |
| <b>ADVISORY</b>  |                              |   |
| Develop a trained volunteer survey team to provide management advice and to undertake survey work. Visit at least 10 sites per year.                 | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>SARG, SWT</b>                                  |
| <b>COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY</b>  |                              |   |
| Ensure distribution of EN/Farmland Habitat Working Group Great Crested Newt leaflet to farmers, landowners and other interested parties.             | 2004<br>2005<br>2006<br>2007 | <b>EN, FWAG, SWT, SCC, SARG</b>                   |