

A-A1 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*
SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. Current status

- 1.1 The great crested newt is the largest of the three newts found in Britain. It relies on networks of ponds and terrestrial foraging areas such as grassland and hedgerows and woodland to accommodate stages of its lifecycle. It prefers larger ponds free from fish and ducks where the males can perform elaborate courtship dances.
- 1.2 The great crested newt can be locally numerous in parts of lowland England and Wales. It has a limited range in Scotland and is absent from Northern Ireland. Of an estimated total of 18,000 breeding sites within Britain, little more than 3,000 of these have been identified.
- 1.3 The species has suffered a decline in recent years. Work in the 1980s indicated a national rate of colony loss of approximately 2% over five years. A more recent report suggests that 42% of great crested newt populations in the London area have been lost in 20 years. Assuming a 0.4-2% annual loss of ponds, and assuming 18,000 populations, then between 72 and 360 populations are being lost each year.
- 1.3 Great Crested Newts are found across north and south Wales with a gap in distribution across the middle of the Country. They are often associated with land that has been quarried although they are principally dependant on lowland farmland.
- 1.4 In Monmouthshire distribution reflects surveyor effort however it is considered to be widely distributed where suitable habitats occur. Areas that need more survey work to determine distribution include the wye valley to the south of Monmouth and farmland in the north of the county.
- 1.6 The great crested newt is protected under UK legislation through listing on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000), and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 38). It is also a priority species in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan (UK Steering Group Report, 1995) and is listed on the Wales Section 42 list (NERC Act 2006). The legislation protects the species from reckless or intentional disturbance, intentional killing, capture, taking or destroying the eggs or injury. It is also an offence to damage or destroy its habitat.

2. Current factors likely to affect Great Crested Newt (In rank order of importance)

- 2.1 Neglect of ponds leading to a decrease in habitat quality.
- 2.2 Habitat fragmentation caused by development (housing, commercial and Infrastructure) leading to a loss of habitat network.
- 2.3 Introduction of fish and ducks to ponds making conditions unsuitable.

3. Current action

- 3.1 The Gwent Amphibian and Reptile group undertake surveys voluntarily across Gwent Monmouthshire has several licensed volunteers that have surveyed for the species and offered landowner advice on management for the newts. This is continuation of work carried out in the past by local naturalists.
- 3.2 Screening of planning applications for the presence of Protected Species on or near to a site allows identification of potential conflict. Key hotspots for conflict with development are Llanfoist, Abergavenny and Caerwent. At Llanfoist mitigation measures are in place for several development sites.
- 3.3 In other parts of Gwent money has been secured by Local Authorities and the Gwent Amphibian and Reptile Group (GARG) through the CCW Species Challenge Fund to carry out pond management for Great Crested Newt.
- 3.4 Family events held by the Monmouthshire Countryside Service and open days organised by the Usk Conservation and Environment Group (e.g. Usk School event 2006) raise awareness of amphibians and the status of the great crested newt.
- 3.5 Local Agenda 21 Biodiversity Grants have been awarded to projects that will benefit great crested newts.
- 3.6 Training for new surveyors by the Herpetological Conservation Trust through groups like GARG and the Usk Conservation and Environment Group.

4. Proposed targets

- 4.1 Achieve an increase in the range of occupied 10 km squares by 2010.
- 4.2 Achieve an increase in the number of occupied ponds from by 2010.
- 4.3 Achieve an increase in the number of ponds with a Habitat Suitability Index of >0.7 by 2010

5. Proposed actions and key partners for great crested newt

Action	Key Partners		Timescale
	Lead	Partners	
1. Policy and legislation			
1.1 Ensure policies and strategies do not adversely affect Great Crested Newt breeding sites.	MCC	CCW	Ongoing
1.2 Ensure great crested newt is fully considered when assessing any development, which may impact upon breeding or foraging habitat.	MCC	CCW, GWT, MCS, MDC	Ongoing
1.3 When there is no alternative, ensure that appropriate mitigation measures for great crested newt are used during development.	MCC	CCW, MCS, MDC	Ongoing
1.4 Ensure opportunities for enhancing habitat for great crested newt are used during the planning process.	MCC	MCS, MDC	Ongoing
1.5 Continue to implement wildlife legislation.	Gwent Police	CCW, MCC	Ongoing
2. Funding and Incentives			
2.1 Continue to provide LA21 Biodiversity Grants and where appropriate Sustainable Development Funds to landowners and organisations to benefit great crested newt. Make site visits to inform work and support any licence application needed.	MCC, AONB	CCW, GARG	Ongoing
3. Site Protection and Designation			
3.1 Designate sites supporting 'good' populations (10 or more individuals counted by torchlight) as SINCS.	MCC	SINC panel, GWT	By 2009
4. Habitat and Site Management			
4.1 Identify ponds and terrestrial habitat including grassland, hedgerows and woodland for management as 'pondscapes'.	GARG	MCC, CCW, GWT	Start during 2007
4.2 Ensure Forest Design Plans fully consider and accommodate great crested newts.	FCW	GARG, MCC	Ongoing

5. Species management			
5.1 Safeguard known great crested newt territories within forestry during operations.	FCW	GARG	Ongoing
6. Survey and monitoring			
6.1 Continue to collect records of Great Crested Newt in Monmouthshire (6-figure grid references).	GARG	MCC, SEWBRcC	Ongoing
6.2 Undertake a strategic project to survey and assess Great Crested Newt distribution.	GARG	MCC, SEWBRcC	Ongoing
6.3 Through the Recorders Newsletter, encourage reporting of great crested newt records in Monmouthshire.	MCC, SEWBRcC	GARG	2005-09
7. Communication -Advisory			
7.1 Provide further advice to land managers/owners of land with appropriate ponds and foraging habitat within currently occupied 1km squares and a 500m radius from breeding ponds for great crested newt through:	GARG	GWT, MCC, CCW	2005-09
8. Communication - Publicity			
8.1 Through articles in the farming press (at least one per year), raise the profile, importance and requirements of great crested newts.	CCW		2005-09

6. Abbreviations

AONB	Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
FCW	Forestry Commission Wales
GWT	Gwent Wildlife Trust
MCC	Monmouthshire County Council
MCS	Monmouthshire Countryside Service
MDC	Monmouthshire Development Control
NAWAD	National Assembly for Wales Agricultural Department
SEWBRcC	South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

7. Links to other plans

This plan should be considered in conjunction with Habitat Action Plans for wetland habitats such as ponds and marshy habitats.

8. References

Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L., Foster, J.P. (2001), *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*
Froglife, Halesworth