

Great crested newt

Great crested newts are Britain's largest native newt species. They appear almost black on top with bright yellow or orange undersides spotted with large dark blotches.

Males can be distinguished from females by the presence of a jagged crest that runs the length of their backs.



Current status

Great crested newts are widespread, but extremely local in mainland Britain. They have declined within the UK over recent years, due to the destruction, fragmentation and pollution of their breeding sites and terrestrial habitat. They are not found in Ireland. The British population is amongst the largest in Europe, where it is threatened in several countries.

In the north west of England great crested newt strongholds are found in the Greater Manchester area, North Cheshire and the Coastal Plain of Lancashire. They are scattered throughout the lowland areas of Cumbria.

Wigan has one of the largest populations of great crested newts in Greater Manchester. The significant population in Wigan makes the continued local protection of great crested newts imperative.

Legal protection

The great crested newt is an internationally important species.

It is listed in:

- Annexes II and IV of the EC Habitats Directive;
- Appendix II of the Bern Convention;
- Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 8);
- Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The law protects great crested newts from trade, transport, possession, capture, injury, killing or disturbance. Their habitat also receives legal protection from disturbance.

Current Issues

One of the main factors in the decline of the great crested newt has been the loss of suitable habitat. This includes:

- Loss of ponds due to development, pollution, neglect and infilling
- Loss and fragmentation of terrestrial habitats
- Fish introduction to breeding ponds
- Decline of water quality due to pollution

Species needs/management requirements

Great crested newts need water bodies for breeding. Eggs are laid singly on pond vegetation in spring, and larvae develop over summer to emerge between August and October, normally taking 2–4 years to reach maturity. Juveniles spend most time on land and like adults may be found a considerable distance from breeding sites.

Breeding sites are usually medium-sized ponds, although ditches and other waterbodies may be used less frequently. Ponds with good amounts of both marginal and submerged aquatic vegetation (which is used for egg-laying) seem to be favoured. Great crested newts do not require very high water quality, but are normally found in ponds with a neutral pH. The linkages between habitats are important, since great crested newts often occur in metapopulations that include clusters of several or many ponds.

Ideal great crested newt habitat should include a range of terrestrial features such as rough grassland, hedgerows, woodland and scrub within 500 metres of the breeding pond.

Any management works proposed to a great crested newt pond needs to be licensed by either English Nature or DEFRA

Current Action

Assessment of individual development proposals for their impact on great crested newts and their habitats.

Collating records of GCN and mapping known GCN ponds.

Investigating opportunities with Ponds for People/Pond Conservation Trust for pond creation and community involvement.

A working group will oversee the development and implementation of the BAP. This partnership is formed by: Amphibian and Reptile Group South Lancashire, English Nature, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Wigan Council and Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust

Related Action Plans

UKBAPs:

Great crested newt

Wigan BAPs:

Ponds

GMBAPs:

Great crested newt

Objectives, actions and targets

Strategic Objective: Protect, encourage and monitor great crested newts in Wigan		
Operational objective	Action Required	Timescale
1. Determine the current distribution of great crested newts in Wigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and collate records of GCN and produce distribution map to establish accurate baseline 	2006 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a database accessible by all relevant partners. Develop system for updating records of GCN 	2006
2. Protect great crested newts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise and protect GCN and their habitats through policies in plans and strategies e.g. UDP/Local Development Framework, SPD, Nature Conservation Strategy 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess all relevant planning applications for their impact on GCN and their habitat 	Continuous process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce guidance notes for developers on Protected Species 	2006
3. Investigate opportunities for enhancement of great crested newt habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage landowners to implement good management practises on existing GCN habitats 	Continuous process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess quality of existing GCN habitat and seek opportunities for enhancement 	2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sources of funding for habitat enhancement works 	Ongoing
4. Monitor and record great crested newts in Wigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement monitoring system 	2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop links with universities and encourage research on GCN and their associated habitats 	Annual review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop relationships with specialist interest groups to undertake survey/research 	Ongoing

Management Objective: Increase opportunities for GCN population growth in Wigan		
Management Objective	Action Required	Timescale
1. Manage existing GCN habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify funding opportunities for habitat management and development 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce generic pond management framework 	2007
2. Develop new habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities for habitat creation initiatives 	2008
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding for habitat creation 	Ongoing
3. Monitor and record key GCN populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement recording system 	2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement ecosystem monitoring programme 	2007
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish database accessible by all relevant partners 	2006
4. Promote conservation value of GCN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to raise the profile of GCN and improve community awareness of their importance 	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with local communities in GCN habitat conservation 	Ongoing