THE NATIONAL TRUST

INFORMATION SHEET

MANAGING RISK – European Protected Species
Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

Status and distribution

UK	Widespread but declining at 2% every 5 years. Widespread and locally common in parts of lowland England and Wales but is absent /rare in Cornwall and Devon. The British population is amongst the largest in Europe, where it is threatened in several countries. Absent in Ireland, Scottish population may have been introduced. Priority Species in UKBAP. Protected Species under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and CroW Act 2000.
EU	Annexes II and IV of the EC Habitats Directive, Appendix II of the Bern Convention.
IUCN	Low risk, Conservation dependent.

The great crested newt declined rapidly in the last century due to reduction in suitable ponds and terrestrial sites. It relies on ponds that are free of fish, for breeding and development of the tadpoles. Otherwise this species spends a lot of time on land in woodlands (coniferous, mixed and deciduous) and woodland edges. It is a typical forest amphibian.

Presence within NT properties

In the last decade the great crested newt has been recorded from NT properties in Yorkshire, Sussex, Kent, Devon, Norfolk, Northumberland, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Derbyshire, Dorset, Berkshire, North Lancashire, Suffolk, Glamorgan, Middlesex, Gloucestershire, Essex, Durham, Hampshire, Denbighshire and Surrey. (Cirencester Recorder Database, 2002).

Threats and Risks

There is a high possibility of encountering great crested newts on NT land in England and eastern Wales and properties should be aware of this species. Any works that may disturb great crested newts must only proceed under licence or with advice from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (EN, CCW). Not only must the Trust abide by the law, but as a partner to the UKBAP, the Trust should also ensure that it maintains all breeding populations and habitats occurring on its land. Maintenance of all breeding populations and habitats is a target within the UK Species Action Plan for the great crested newt.

Examples of works likely to affect newts and their habitat which may require safeguards such as licensing include:

- Substantially lowering the water level or draining of ponds. Or using ponds as a water source.
- Introducing fish.
- Deepening ponds, or altering their size.
- Infilling ponds or wet places.
- Altering drainage.
- Clearing land or rough grassland, scrub or woodland around ponds (to a distance of up to 500m).
- Chemical or agri-chemical pollution.
- Mowing/cutting dense grass swards.
- Dead wood removal.
- Buildings work such as wall/dam restoration.

References and further information

DEFRA (2002). *European Protected Species Guidance Note. (WLF 11 (5/02)*. DEFRA, Bristol. www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/regulat/forms/cons_man/wlf11.htm

English Nature (2001) *Great Crested Newts Mitigation Guidelines. Peterborough*
English Nature (1996) *Great Crested Newts - Guidelines for developers,* Peterborough.
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Froglife et.al (2002) *Guide to the reptiles and amphibians of Britain and Ireland* Field Studies Council. Suffolk.

Langton, T. et al (2001) *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook* . Froglife, Suffolk.

The National Trust (2001) *Wildlife and Buildings Technical Guidance for Architects, Builders, Building Managers and Others*: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wildbuildings

The Water Policy Team (2001) *Fact Sheet 2 - Great Crested Newts*. The Wildlife Trusts.

Action Plan for Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*): www.ukbap.org.uk

Great crested newt

NT Conservation Directorate, Nature Conservation Section, Cirencester, 12/2002

Annex 1 -Biology lifestyle and needs

- Rely on water for breeding and development of tadpoles. Otherwise spend a lot of their time on land.
- Need a variety of different features to provide food, shelter and places to spend the winter.
- Adult newts return to breeding pools from late January onwards (most turn up between April and June).
- During this time the newts mate and each female lays several hundred eggs, one at a time, on pond weed or other submerged plants.
- Most adults have left the water by July and actively hunt for food before hibernating in late autumn.
- By late autumn most of the hatched tadpoles have developed legs and lungs and will have left the water to live on land; however a few will probably remain in the water over winter.
- Immature newts can disperse up to 500m away from the pond and will grow into adult newts over the next couple of years. They will then find a pond to breed in themselves (sometimes the one they hatched in).
- Behaviour can be influenced by factors such as altitude, weather, soil, vegetation and disturbance.

Annex 2 – Ideal GCN habitat

Pond

Free of fish with no, or few, waterfowl present. Ideally 10-20 metres diameter and a surface area between 100 to 300 square metres; variable depth and preferably one of a number of ponds within 250 metres of each other which provide a range of conditions.

Support a wide range of invertebrates, with floating and submerged vegetation, with areas of open water.

High levels of human or animal disturbance, agricultural or chemical pollution and shading from surrounding scrub and trees, can cause considerable damage, but light grazing can prevent trees and reeds invading and shading the pond.

Newts can survive infrequent drying out of the pond.

Surrounding land

Area up to 500 metres should be considered as possible newt habitat. There should be some scrub or woodland nearby and it should ideally contain a variety of vegetation with different management regimes, especially lightly grazed pasture.

Piles of rubble or rock, compost heaps, log piles, and ground fissures provide shelter and frost-free hibernation sites.

A variety of insects and other invertebrates is essential food so where possible the use of herbicides and pesticides use should be avoided. Mown grass should be kept fairly long.