

# **UK Biodiversity Action Plan for Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)**

## **Current status**

The great crested newt is still quite widespread in Britain. It is widespread but local in Scotland, where there are fewer than 1000 individuals. The species may be numerous locally in parts of lowland England and Wales but is absent or rare in Cornwall and Devon. 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 ponds within Britain, 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.

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 WCA 1981.

## **Current factors causing loss or decline**

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

Pollution and toxic effects of agrochemicals.

## **Current action**

JNCC have published a five-year framework (1994 - 1999) for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in the UK, in collaboration with the statutory nature conservation agencies and voluntary bodies.

SNH commissioned a study on the distribution and status of this species in Scotland in 1994 and followed up with site surveys in 1995.

CCW, EN and SNH support a post within the NGOs to develop further local Amphibian and Reptile Groups, and support surveys and conservation initiatives. EN recently published the results of a symposium on the species, and leaflets have been published by EN and CCW, and by British Coal.

## **Action plan objectives and targets**

Establish populations in 100 appropriate unoccupied sites each year from 1995 to 2005, ensuring that the species is found in sites that are representative of the range of habitats used and the geographic distribution.

Maintain the geographical range of the great crested newt.

Maintain the viability of existing great crested newt populations.

## **Proposed actions with lead agencies**

### **Policy and legislation**

Seek to ensure all ponds known to hold viable populations are identified in Local plans or Part II of unitary development plans, and that the protection and enhancement of the ponds is taken into account in accordance with paragraph 24 of DOE's Planning Policy Guidance note: PPG9. (ACTION: CCW, DoE, EN, LAs, SNH)

Consider expanding incentives for pond creation and management on farmland under the Countryside Stewardship and agri-environment schemes. (ACTION: MAFF, SOAEFD, WOAD)

Seek to create new pond protection measures to prevent deterioration and loss of great crested newt habitats. (ACTION: DoE, SOAEFD, WO)

### **Site safeguard and management**

Seek to ensure that key sites for the great crested newt in Wales are safeguarded, considering SSSI notification where necessary to secure appropriate management. (ACTION: CCW)

Promote favourable management on all key sites where this species is known to occur. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FA, FE, LAs, SNH)

Seek to maintain the number and distribution of occupied sites through habitat restoration or creation of sufficient new sites near existing ones to compensate for local losses. (ACTION: CCW, EN, FA, FE, LAs, SNH)

### **Species management and protection**

Encourage the natural dispersal of the species to new sites through habitat management and re-creation and, if necessary, consider establishing a translocation or re-introduction programme to restore populations to previously occupied or appropriate new sites. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)

### **Advisory**

Publish guidance for LAs, developers, land managers and others on legal obligations for the species, local management and, where appropriate, translocation techniques for the species. (ACTION: CCW, EN, JNCC, NRA, RPBs, SNH)

Promote training of professional and volunteer surveyors and those involved in the management and conservation of the great crested newt. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)

### **Future Research and Monitoring**

Develop further survey methods, recording, updating and data retrieval systems and surveillance systems to monitor the changes in status and the means of disseminating information. (ACTION: BRC, JNCC)

Encourage further surveys to identify important breeding sites. (ACTION: BRC, CCW, EN, JNCC, SNH)

Support research on habitat requirements, habitat use, population dynamics and species genetics to determine the favourable conservation status and underpin management advice. (ACTION: JNCC)

Expand the National Recording Scheme to ensure regular monitoring of known and potential sites. (ACTION: BRC, JNCC)

Pass information gathered during survey and monitoring of this species to JNCC or BRC in order that it can be incorporated in a national database and contribute to the maintenance of an up-to-date Red List. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)

### **Communications and Publicity**

Further develop communications between statutory authorities and local conservation groups. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)

Promote, through publicity and media opportunities, a wider and more sympathetic understanding of amphibian conservation. (ACTION: CCW, EN, SNH)