



Great Crested Newt Biodiversity Action Plan

A Wildthings Species Action Plan
2006–2010

Introduction

The great crested newt is still quite widespread in Britain. The species may be numerous locally in parts of lowland England and Wales but is 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.

At a local level the Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group was re-launched in 1999. One of the main projects has been to survey ponds in Avon as we need to know where Great Crested Newts are to protect them through planning and land management functions. Good Great Crested Newt sites can be designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Importance or even SSSI's.





Current status and distribution

Current knowledge of the distribution of Great Crested Newts in Bath and North East Somerset is poor and out of date. The main concentration of records is in the Keynsham area. No known population studies have been carried out.

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
- Degradation, loss and fragmentation of terrestrial habitats through development around villages and towns and intensification of farming methods. Great Crested Newts are more vulnerable to land use change compared to other amphibians
- Pollution and toxic effects of agrochemicals
- Ignorance of the location of populations of Great Crested Newts leading to unintentional loss/damage

Current Action in Bath and North East Somerset

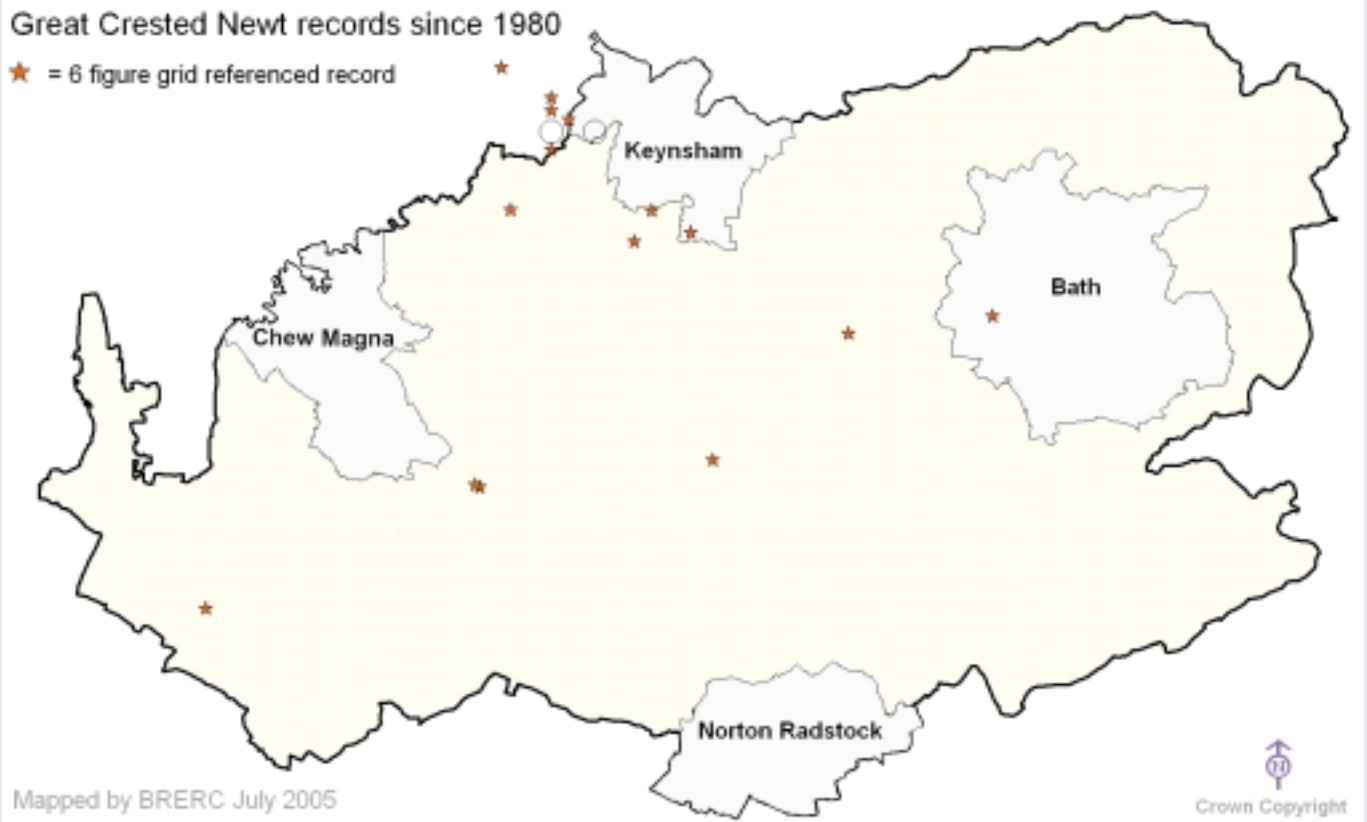
- In 1999 there was a pilot Council project on Great Crested Newts which trained some surveyors and found two more Great Crested Newt records. A pond density map was produced by BRERC
- 2004 survey by BRERC and the Avon Reptile and Amphibian Group of Avon, including many sites in Bath and North East Somerset area. The final report is yet to be produced but at least two new sites have been discovered in the Bath area
- Biodiversity Action Grants are available for projects to conserve Great Crested Newts
- Local Plan policy protects this species from development threats (when Great Crested Newt are known to be present)
- Development of an Avon Newt & Pond Project through the Avon Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership



Distribution map

Great Crested Newt records since 1980

★ = 6 figure grid referenced record



Action plan objectives and targets

1. Identify all populations within the Bath and North East Somerset area
2. Maintain the viability of existing great crested newt populations
3. Halt the further loss of the Great Crested Newt sites through development, pond deterioration/loss, loss of terrestrial habitat
4. Halt the decline of the Great Crested Newt in Bath and North East Somerset
5. Enhance, restore and create Great Crested Newt habitat
6. Encourage sympathetic habitat management
7. Inform and involve local communities in understanding Great Crested Newts – by carrying out training days and providing information for pond owners



Proposed actions with lead agencies

Action	Lead	Measurable Outputs	Objectives	Target Date
A. Complete survey of B&NES for Great Crested Newt (GCN)	BRERC ARAG	Up to date survey & records	1	2006
B. Seek to ensure all ponds known to hold viable populations are designated as SNCI's/SSSI's	B&NES	New SNCI's/SSSI's designated	2,4,6	2007
C. Promote favourable management on all key sites where this species is known to occur	FWAG AWT B&NES	GCN sites under favourable management	2,6,7	2008
D. 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	B&NES AWT	Secure and viable CGN sites	2,5	2008
E. 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	B&NES	Guidance produced	3,6,7	2006
F. Achieve & implement local development framework policies to protect & enhance CGN sites	B&NES	GCN site protection	3,4	2006 onwards
G. Promote training of professional and volunteer surveyors and those involved in the management and conservation of the great crested newt	BRERC	New trained surveyors	1,7	2007 and ongoing
H. Promote, through publicity and media opportunities, a wider and more sympathetic understanding of amphibian conservation	Avon BAP	Publicity	7	2006 and ongoing
I. Target Biodiversity Action Grants to GCN projects	B&NES	Number of GCN projects given BAP Grants	5,6	2006
J. Fish Free campaign for ponds	Wildthings	Better newt sites	6,7	2008
K. Support Avon BAP Newt & Pond project	B&NES Wildthings	Involvement with strategic projects	All	2006 onwards

ABG – Avon Bat group

ARAG – Avon Reptile & Amphibian Group

AWT – Avon Wildlife Trust

B&NES – Bath & north East Somerset Council

BRERC – Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre

DEFRA – Dept Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs

FWAG – Farming Wildlife Advisory Group

Wildthings – Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership for the B&NES area