

Great Crested Newts

Protected Species Guidance Note:
2014

Survey Season Calendar

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

■ Optimal
 ■ Sub-optimal
 ■ Inappropriate



Why Survey?

Any work undertaken within the vicinity of a waterbody (c.500 metres) may require a survey for amphibians, such as great crested newts. Even if waterbodies are not located within your site boundary, great crested newts may be using the terrestrial habitat on site for sheltering, foraging or hibernation. The local planning authority will be likely to request that a survey be completed to establish if great crested newts are present, prior to determining an application. This may also require gaining access to adjacent land.

SERVICES:

- Presence and absence surveys (by survey licence holders), following Natural England amphibian disease precaution guidance
- Population size class estimates, and health and distribution monitoring surveys
- Advice on legislation and best practice
- Bespoke method statements
- Development survey licence applications, including completion of Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment
- Habitat creation and enhancement (including installation of hibernacula)
- GCN capture and translocations
- Site supervision (Ecological Clerk of Works)

Methodology

Standard best practice methodology requires an initial four surveys, each including an evening visit, returning the following morning to check bottle traps. The aim of these surveys is to establish the presence or absence of great crested newts. The optimal time to conduct these surveys is between March and June, but is dependent on suitable weather conditions. Two of the initial four visits should be conducted between mid-April and mid-May (when peak numbers of newts should have arrived at the pond to breed).

Each visit will utilise a minimum of three survey methods from the following:

- bottle trapping (traps will be set in the early evening and checked early the next morning)
- egg-searching (searching submerged vegetation within the pond for newt eggs)
- netting (systematically searching the pond with a hand net)
- torching (night searching of waterbodies to count number of individual newts).

Mitigation

If great crested newts are recorded within the first four surveys, then an additional two visits will be required. The purpose of these is to allow an estimate of the population size to be established. This will direct the type and level of mitigation required. The cost of designing and implementing mitigation measures varies widely, depending on the size of the newt population and site and design restrictions. If great crested newts are present, then it is highly likely that a development licence will need to be obtained from Natural England (NE). This requires the completion of a detailed application form, including a Reasoned Statement, Method Statement and supporting drawings. This process may involve compensation, such as habitat enhancement or creation.