

### Finding exotic amphibian species:

Unfortunately some exotic species have made their way in to our countryside and are causing problems for native species. Such species can often beat British species to important food and breeding sites. The Italian Crested and Alpine newts are known to live and breed in the UK. The impact of these species is not yet clear so it is essential that any sightings are reported to Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (see contacts below). It is useful if you can provide them with a photo of the animal and location details.

### How your local Wildlife Trust helps newts:

Many of the reserves we manage feature a pond or other wet habitat. These areas are monitored and managed according to the species present. Surveys for Great Crested newts are carried out to monitor numbers and breeding success. Where a reserve has a pond, the terrestrial habitat is also managed to benefit the amphibians. This includes setting aside areas of rough grassland and dense cover and maintaining hedgerows.

### Other sources of information about newts:

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust  
2A Flag Business Exchange, Vicarage Farm Road, Fengate,  
Peterborough PE7 8GX.  
Tel: 01733 558844      [www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org)

#### Or read

Wisniewski, P.J. (1999) Newts of the British Isles Shire Natural History  
ISBN 0747800294

### We need your support!

Your local Wildlife Trust is a charity that brings people together to protect wildlife close to home. To support us or to get involved in our work, please visit our website or get in touch on:

The Wildlife Trust, Eco Innovation Centre, Peterscourt, City Road,  
Peterborough PE1 1SA  
Tel: 01733 294543  
E-mail: [Peterborough@wildlifebcnp.org](mailto:Peterborough@wildlifebcnp.org)

[www.wildlifebcnp.org](http://www.wildlifebcnp.org)

Registered charity number 1000412

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# Newts

Newts belong to the group **amphibians**, which also includes frogs and toads. They can live on land and in water, in which they will breed. They are able to absorb the moisture they need through their skin so do not need to drink. When they are on land, amphibians absorb dew, or burrow in to damp soil.

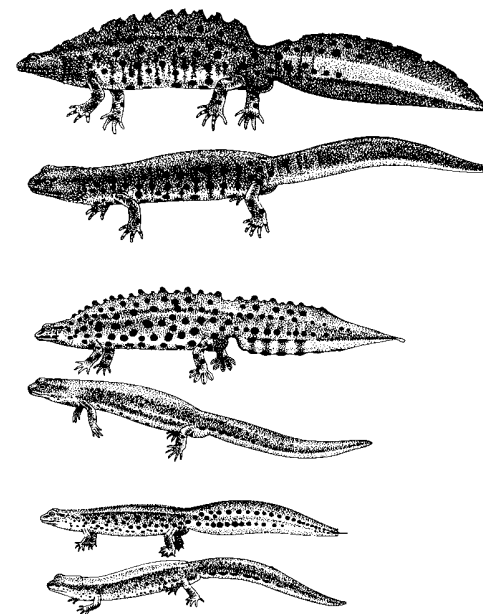
### Identification:

#### **Great Crested Newt**

(*Triturus cristatus*)

This is our largest and least common newt species, growing up to 16cm in length. They are almost black in colour with warty skin (sometimes with white tips to the warts). The belly is vivid orange/yellow with black blotches.

During the breeding season the males develop a crest along their back and tail and a white stripe through the tail. This crest has an obvious gap at the base. Outside of the season, males look similar to females. Young individuals can look like adult females.



#### **Smooth Newt** (*Lissotriton vulgaris*)

This is the UK's most common newt species and grows up to 10cm long. Both sexes have green/brown coloured skin with black blotches. Their bellies are orange with obvious black spots and their throats are white with spots. In the breeding season, the males develop a continuous crest along their back and tail and an orange and blue stripe along the lower edge of the tail. Females have an orange stripe on their tails.

#### **Palmate Newt** (*Lissotriton helveticus*)

This is the UK's smallest newt, growing to 9cm in length. Their skin is green/brown in colour with black spots. The belly is yellow with spots and the throat pink. During the breeding season the male develops a small tail filament and webbing on the hind feet. Young palmate newts look like females.

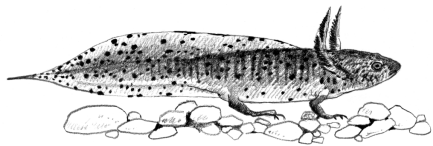
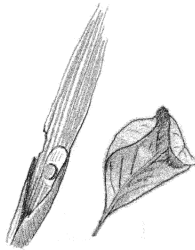
### Where to see newts:

The three species have similar life cycles and habitat preferences so can often be found in the same pond. With the loss of natural ponds, garden ponds have become even more important to these animals. They tend not to stay in the pond through winter, preferring to find a damp shelter to hibernate in. This may be under piles of leaves, among tree roots, or under rocks, so watch out if you are moving things around in your garden. In the countryside, newts will hibernate under hedgerows, in long grass and even in mammal burrows.

### Life Cycle:

**January—March** The milder weather awakens newts from their hibernation and they journey to the pond to breed. They spend the days feeding in the deeper water and move to the shallow water at night to breed. Males attract a mate with extravagant dances.

**April—June** Once breeding is complete the male newts disperse to live on land. Each female will lay around 200 individual eggs. The eggs are laid on aquatic plants and the leaf folded over to protect the egg from predators. After three weeks the larvae hatch and begin to feed on small water creatures. At this stage they have feathery external gills.



**July—September** Over the summer the young newts will absorb their gills, develop legs and grow in size. This metamorphosis takes approximately four months. The juvenile newts start to leave the pond and find damp places to hide in. They continue to grow and start to feed on slightly larger creatures. These animals won't breed until around three years old but are likely to stay near the pond they hatched in.

**October—December** Newts begin to hibernate, having fed well over the summer. Some adults may hibernate at the bottom of a muddy pond.

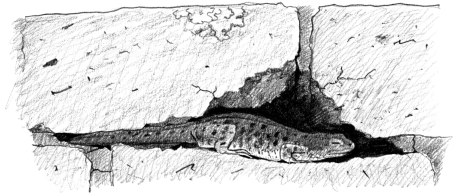
### Diet:

In the pond, newts are aggressive predators hunting aquatic invertebrates and even young newts. On land they mainly forage for food at night and are more active on warm damp evenings. Newts eat a huge variety of creatures including slugs, insects, spiders and worms.

### Threats:

All newt species have suffered a dramatic decline in numbers in recent years. Neglect of ponds and increased pollution, infilling and natural sedimentation has caused a loss of suitable breeding ponds. New housing developments and roads have split pond networks and limited the choice available to newt populations. Newts will only disperse approximately 1km and therefore a number of suitable ponds close to each other is optimal for their breeding success.

The importance of terrestrial habitat for newts is often over looked. Newts require a large area adjacent to the pond where they can forage for food, hide from predators and shelter from the weather.



### Legal Protection:

Because of the decline in newt numbers, Smooth, Palmate and Great Crested newts are protected by law. Great Crested Newts have the greatest level of protection and it is illegal to catch, possess or handle them without a licence, or to cause them harm or disturb their habitat in any way. It is also illegal to trade Smooth or Palmate newts.

### How you can help newts:

- Create a wildlife-friendly pond in your garden
- Create a hibernaculum. Logs and small branches piled in a quiet corner would provide a perfect damp place for hibernation
- Leave areas of your lawn slightly longer to encourage newts to move around the garden. Always check the area before you cut it!
- Encourage the creatures they eat with a compost heap or wood pile
- Support your local Amphibian and Reptile Group by attending events and activities. See back page for details.

### Features of an amphibian friendly pond:

- Gently sloping sides to enable animals to leave
- Choose water plants like water mint as they make perfect egg laying sites
- Avoid putting fish in the pond as they will eat your newt larvae
- Have varied depths to the pond
- Allow animals to colonise your pond of their own accord. Do not take eggs or animals from the wild as you risk introducing other animals, plants and diseases in to your pond.