

GREAT CRESTED NEWT

(*Triturus cristatus*)



Identification:

- Adults up to 15 cm in length.
- Skin is black or dark brown and has a rough, 'warty' appearance.
- Underside is bright orange with irregular black blotches.
- Males have a crest along their backs which is more pronounced during the breeding season.
- Males have a white flash on the tail and females a yellow/orange one.
- 'Warts' along the side of the body may have white tips.
- Largest newt species in the UK.



Distribution:

- Native to the UK.
- Widespread but patchy distribution in the UK. Absent from Ireland.
- Found throughout northern and central Europe.
- Populations have disappeared from many sites across Europe due to habitat loss and intensification of farming practises.



Ecology:

- Favour large ponds with abundant weeds and no fish.
- Active at night, spending the day at the bottom of ponds or in vegetation.
- Feed mainly on invertebrates and tadpoles.

Lifecycle:

- Adults emerge from overwintering sites in March/April and travel to ponds to breed.



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- Males perform an elaborate courtship dance before the eggs are laid.
- Females lay individual eggs that are wrapped in leaves.
- Larvae hatch from eggs after 2-4 weeks.
- Efts (terrestrial juveniles) leave the pond around August.
- During the summer adult newts can be found in ponds hunting frog tadpoles and aquatic invertebrates.
- Adults and juveniles spend autumn feeding to build up fat stores in preparation for winter.
- Spend the winter sheltering under rocks, in compost heaps or buried in mud.
- May take advantage of milder weather to forage.

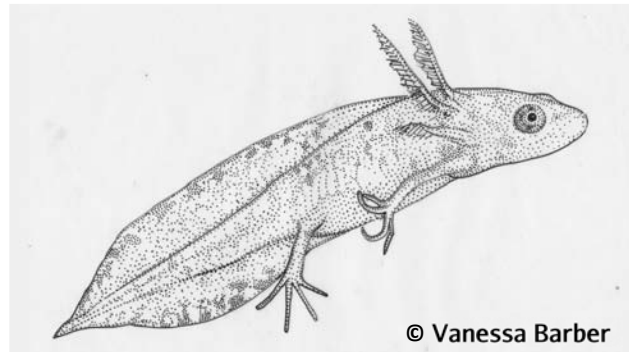


Photo: Silviu Petrovan

Eggs and larvae:

- Eggs are white with light yellow centre surrounded by a jelly capsule around 4.5-6 mm across. Single eggs are folded inside leaves of aquatic plants.
- Larvae have a filament at the tail tip and black blotches over the body, tail and crest. Larger than all other newt species encountered in the UK, reaching a length of 50 - 90mm before metamorphosis. Hard to identify from other newt species when they are less than 20 mm in length.

Predators and other threats:

- Eaten by foxes, badgers, rats, hedgehogs and birds.
- Threatened by habitat loss and the intensification of farming practises.

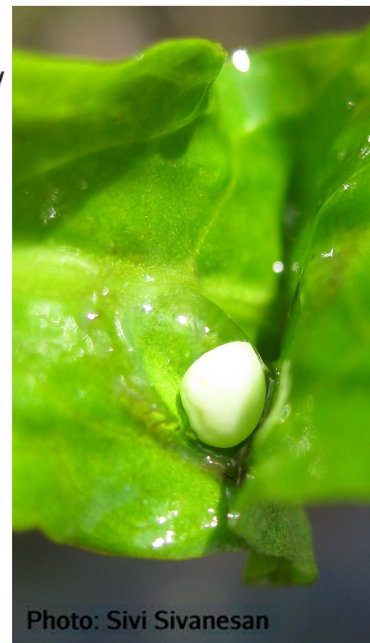


Photo: Sivi Sivanesan

N.B. Great Crested Newts have full legal protection under UK law making it an offence to kill, injure, capture, disturb or sell them, or to damage or destroy their habitats. This applies to all life-stages.



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