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Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is a registered charity with more than 10,000 members supporting its work to protect the county's wildlife.

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Further Information

Langton et al (2001). *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*. Froglife, Suffolk.

Beebee & Griffiths (2000). *Amphibians and Reptiles*. The New Naturalist Library, HarperCollins, London.

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Derbyshire Wildlife Trust



All our native amphibians need shallow water for their breeding sites. As ponds and marshes are lost and become degraded in the wider countryside, so garden ponds are becoming an increasingly important breeding and feeding habitat for all but the rarest of our amphibians.

There are three species of newt native to the UK, and all of them may be found in gardens, breeding in garden ponds and foraging in hedgerows, rockeries, long grass and log piles.

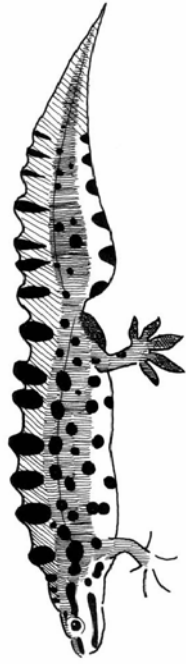
newts in gardens



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newts in gardens

Smooth Newt (*Triturus vulgaris*)



The smooth newt is the most widespread newt species in the county, and the one most likely to be found in garden ponds. The adults of both sexes grow to about 10cm in length and are an olivey brown colour on the upperparts, grading into creamy lower flanks and a peachy orange flash on the belly. The whole body is marked with round dark spots.

As the breeding season approaches, male smooth newts develop a large wavy crest that runs along the full length of the body from just behind the head to the end of the tail, a feature that sometimes leads to confusion with the larger and rarer great crested newt. This crest is a vital component of the male's courtship dance, an elaborate series of tail waving and whipping, body quivering and chasing that serves to attract a female and results in spawning. Unlike frogs and toads, newts lay eggs singly, folding each individual egg into the leaf of a submerged plant. A female will lay around 200 eggs during a breeding season, lasting between the start of Spring and early July.

Palmate Newt (*Triturus helveticus*)



Smooth newts avoid acidic waters. In these areas, particularly on heaths and moorland and in the uplands, the common newt species is the palmate newt. This is our smallest newt, with adults rarely growing longer than 6.5cm. In coloration, they are very similar to the smooth newt, with females in particular often proving difficult to identify. The key feature to look for is the throat. In female smooth newts, the throat is a creamy colour and nearly always spotted. In female palmate newts, the throat is a translucent pink colour and never spotted.

During the breeding season, male palmate newts differ from smooth newts in having a much shorter, smooth crest along the length of the body. The male's tail ends abruptly with a short filament sticking out at the end, and between the toes of his back feet, the male palmate newt grows obvious dark webs.

Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)



The largest and the least common is the great crested newt. Measuring up to 16cm in length, adult great crested newts are far bigger than the other two species. Their black warty upperparts contrast strongly with an orange belly marked with irregular black blotches and this colouring, together with their large size, make great crested newts unmistakable.

Great crested newts are specialists of predator-free field ponds surrounded by unimproved, tussocky grassland in which to forage. Where populations of sticklebacks or predatory water beetles have become established, great crested newts are unable to survive and, as a result, they often rely on ponds that will dry up during the height of the summer.

In Derbyshire, great crested newts can be found in a number of locations scattered across the lowlands. However, the main centre of distribution in the county is the White Peak, where the high density of traditional dew ponds still supports a healthy population.

The great crested newt has suffered from population declines right across its European range as a result of agricultural intensification, and is now protected under both UK and European legislation.

What can I do to help newts?

The best way to help amphibians is to dig a garden pond and manage it for wildlife. Only plant native plant species in it and avoid introducing fish or ducks, both of which predate newts and their eggs.

Elsewhere in the garden,

- ⇒ Create log piles or rockeries for amphibians to hibernate in.
- ⇒ Leave areas of long tussocky grass between the pond and hedgerows and walls to give amphibians a way out of the pond.