

Great Crested Newt Survey Season is Here

Now that the days are getting longer and the temperatures are starting to increase, Great Crested Newts are beginning to emerge from hibernation to populate ponds across the UK. The optimal survey season for Great Crested Newts is between **March and mid-June**, with survey work outside of this narrow seasonal window typically being ineffective.

How Can Aspect Ecology Help?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that full survey information is made available for protected species prior to the determination of any planning application. Great Crested Newts are also a S41 Priority Species under Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and as such, are a material consideration for planning. Should ponds be identified within a site due to be developed, or suitable ponds be present within the local area, Planning Authorities will expect survey work to be carried out, to establish whether Great Crested Newts are present or not. This ensures a development is policy compliant and to avoid breaching relevant legislation.



Aspect Ecology has a fully licensed and dedicated team, with a wealth of experience carrying out Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessments, Great Crested Newt surveys and Environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys across the UK. Aspect Ecology has extensive experience successfully obtaining mitigation licences and creating commercially sensitive mitigation strategies relative to the scale and nature of the development. Aspect Ecology is also able to advise on district licensing, which is available in certain regions.

What are Great Crested Newts?

Great Crested Newts are the largest of our native newts, growing up to 17cm in length, and can be found in ponds throughout the UK. As with other native amphibians, they spend the first part of the year in ponds and waterbodies where they focus on reproduction. Following this, they will often leave the pond in the late spring / early summer to explore surrounding habitats for food.



How and why are they Protected?

Due to substantial population declines in the last century, attributed to changes in land use, Great Crested Newts are protected under both UK and European Legislation. This legislation makes it a criminal offence to kill, injure, capture, disturb, damage or destroy their breeding or resting place (including ponds or surrounding habitats), and to possess or trade a Great Crested Newt. This legislation also applies to all life stages, including eggs within ponds.

Natural England can issue licences for projects where Great Crested Newts may be affected, to enable to project to continue without breaching the relevant legislation – if you would like to find out more about this process our ecologists would be pleased to help.