

GREAT CRESTED NEWT

Newts are lizard-like relatives of frogs and toads. The great crested newt is the largest of the eight newts found in Europe. There are two other species of newt in Britain – the common newt and the palmate newt. Like frogs and toads it is an amphibian – living both on land and in water, where it returns each spring to breed. Newts have to stay moist to survive so they never stray far from water.

They get their name from the magnificent crest grown by the male as part of its courtship display during the breeding season. Breeding happens in spring. This is when newts wake from their long sleep over the winter - called hibernation - and return to the same pool where they breed last year. These pools are usually ponds and lakes. Around 300 fertilised eggs are each individually wrapped in the leaf of a water plant. The eggs hatch into tadpoles, which by the end of the summer will have developed into miniature versions of their parents. They then crawl out of the water.

Due to collecting, pollution of its ponds and loss of breeding sites the great crested newt population in Britain has declined. great crested newts and their habitat are protected in both Britain and Europe by law. Hopefully this protection will result in their numbers increasing.