HAMPSHIRE & IOW AMPHIBIAN & REPTILE GROUP

Sampling from Newnham Green Pond 28th May

Great Crested Newt

GCN larvae

Smooth Newt

PHOTOS: Pete West

Pete West, North-East Hants Officer & Safeguarding Lead Hampshire & Isle of Wight Amphibian & Reptile Group (HIWARG)

HIWARG a non-profit volunteer group actively involved in the conservation of all native species of reptiles and amphibians. We work with over 30 organisations and land managers, such as Forestry England, National Trust, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and local authorities, among others.

We carry out surveys, provide population and distribution data and offer specific advice on habitat management to our land managers. We also take part in habitat management tasks, such as scrub clearance, remedial work or creating new habitats.

I am a licensed surveyor of Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) for HIWARG, and I'm currently focusing on Hook, Newnham and Rotherwick, as we have some small and isolated populations scattered across the area.

Great Crested Newts are the largest of the three native species, which also include the Smooth Newt and the Palmate Newt. Great Crested Newts are generally a dark brown to black, with a rough warty skin and their bellies are orange with black spots. In the spring, males develop an impressive jagged crest along their back and a white 'flash' along the tail.

Great Crested Newts are protected under both UK and EU law, making it a criminal offence to kill, injure, capture or disturb them, as well as to damage or destroy their habitat

I am very interested in surveying as many of the ponds in and around Newnham as possible to get a better understanding of the local population. If you have a pond, or have Great Crested Newts in your garden (they spend most of their life on land, only returning to water to breed) and wish to help us or find out more, please email me at petewest74@hotmail.com to discuss this project further.

I would like to stress that we are not trying to obstruct local development or home improvement, just to focus on the conservation of this iconic species.

Please contact petewest74@hotmail.com

We have a public Facebook group if you'd like to follow our activities, and a website with additional information:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/455730808110700/
https://groups.arguk.org/hiwarg

LEGISLATION PROTECTING NESTING BIRDS

'Bird Nesting Season' is officially from February until August (ref Natural England) and it is recommended that vegetation works (tree or hedge cutting) should be done outside of the nesting season. In reality the nesting period may start before this and extend beyond it. The busiest time for nesting birds is from 1st March until 31st July and of course varies according to species, etc.

The attached (right) and below is taken from the RSPB website...

'It will be an intentional act, for example, if you or your neighbour know there is an active nest in the hedge and still cut the hedge, damaging or destroying the nest in the process.'

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the primary legislation which protects animals, plants and habitats in the UK

About the Act

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, a wild bird is defined as any bird of a species which is resident in or is a visitor to the European Territory of any member state in a wild state.

Game birds however are not included in this definition (except for limited parts of the Act). They are covered by the Game Acts, which fully protect them during the close season.

Basic protection All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is thus an offence, with certain exceptions, to:
- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird.
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/wildlife-and-the-law/wildlife-and-countryside-act/