

SMOOTH NEWT

Lissotriton vulgaris

SIZE: Up to 10cm in length

HABITAT: Spring and summer in ponds; autumn and winter in gardens, grassland and woodland

FOOD: Insects, caterpillars, worms and slugs while on land; crustaceans, molluscs and tadpoles when in the water

FAST FACTS

- The smooth newt is also known as the common newt.
- Generally brown in colour with a yellow or orange belly with small blackspots. Males develop a wavy crest along their backs in the breeding season.
- On land, their skin takes on a velvety appearance and they are sometimes mistaken for lizards.
- Smooth newt or palmate newt? They can look very similar, but smooth newts have spots on their throats – palmate newts don't.
- Adults head to ponds from the breeding season to summer (February – June). Spawn is laid as individual eggs wrapped in pond weed. Newt larvae breathe through external feathery gills which sprout from behind the head.
- In late summer, both juvenile newts and adults leave the water. They can often be found sheltering in damp soil beneath logs and rocks. In winter they stay hidden underground, among tree roots and in old walls.
- Smooth newts are most active during the night. The best time to spot smooth newts is March to October. They love small garden ponds, and gardeners often disturb them accidentally in the autumn when they turn over large stones or pieces of wood.

ENDANGERED IN WANSTEAD

Smooth newts are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. They're at risk because of the loss of the habitats where they live, particularly the removal of ponds, and the fragmentation of green spaces as more land is developed. In Wanstead, small garden ponds help support the species, but if these ponds are filled in or stocked with fish, or if gardens are paved over, newt populations will suffer.

Help scientists track newt populations. Report sightings at www.gigl.org.uk/submit-a-record/

HELP PREVENT THEIR EXTINCTION

- Create habitats in your garden where newts can live and feed, like a long grass area or piles of old wood or leaves in a shady location.
- Build a wildlife pond – find out how at: www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-pond. If you install a pond, newts may find it within a fortnight!
- Help insects and mini-beasts thrive in your garden. Don't use slug pellets or pesticides. Invertebrates love dense undergrowth where they hide away so why not leave a corner to go wild.



More information:
www.froglife.org/info-advice/amphibians-and-reptiles/smooth-newt/



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Find out more at www.wildwanstead.org/angered