

UK progress report on the conservation of amphibians and reptiles

- A revision of the herpetofauna chapter in the GB guidelines for designating Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is nearing completion. These sites are designated under the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act. Many SSSIs underpin the SACs and SPAs which form the UK contribution to the “Emerald network”.
- With support from Natural England, the Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) have completed and recently published a IUCN Red List assessment of terrestrial amphibians and reptiles at both the Great Britain and individual country scale. The assessment reveals that 4 out of 13 species are in one of the “Threatened” categories. The most threatened species is the (reintroduced) northern pool frog (*Pelophylax lessonae*), now classed as “Critically Endangered”. The natterjack toad (*Epidalea calamita*), sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) and smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) are each assessed as either “Endangered” or “Vulnerable”. The common toad (*Bufo bufo*) is “Near Threatened” in Great Britain, England and Scotland, and the adder (*Vipera berus*) is “Vulnerable” in England and “Near Threatened” at all other scales. See Foster, J., Driver, D., Ward, R. & Wilkinson, J. (2021). *IUCN Red List assessment of amphibians and reptiles at Great Britain and country scale. Report to Natural England. ARC report. ARC, Bournemouth.*
- The UK Government has recently published a note on Bsal: *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans: how to spot and report the disease* - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/batrachochytrium-salamandrivorans> Suspected cases amongst wild newts can be reported through the Garden Wildlife Health scheme (Amphibian Disease Alert) although there have been no confirmed cases in the wild to date. It refers to associated guidelines for safe disposal of wastewater and other materials from captive amphibian enclosures. Existing standard biosecurity measures in place for working with wild amphibians and reptiles continue to apply more generally and will continue to be promoted.
- NatureScot in partnership with the ARC Trust and ARG UK will be undertaking a Scotland-wide survey of adders over the next 2 years involving a combination of a questionnaire survey of landowners and some targeted fieldwork. This is the first since the mid 1990s.
- The Coastal Treasures project (currently in development) is part of the Species on the Edge initiative involving NatureScot and 7 NGOs including, and is focusing on securing the future of the Scottish Solway natterjack toad population, working with landowners, volunteers and local communities. Other Landscape scale projects elsewhere in the UK have included actions for herp species, such as Sands of Life (Wales) e.g. great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and Back from the Brink (England) e.g. adders.
- Natural Resources Wales has published a report on the [wider benefits of great crested newt conservation](#) and completed a review of the (reintroduced) sand lizard range in Wales.

- In Northern Ireland a breeding population of non-native Alpine newts (*Ichthyosaura alpestris*) was recently discovered in County Antrim. These newts were removed by the Northern Ireland Amphibians and Reptiles Group (NIARG) for genetic testing and to test if they are carrying BSa1 (no results as yet). Since then, NIEA have been working in conjunction with the NIARG to see if there are any more populations - 87 more Alpine newts and approximately 200 eggs were removed for further testing. Further surveys and removals will be required. Previous test results for Alpine newts found in the Republic of Ireland were all negative.
- A recently published ARC report to Natural England assessed the status of the 4 widespread reptile species. It recommends Species Distribution Modelling and new field surveys. See: *Russell, L. & Foster, J. (2021). Establishing a baseline dataset for widespread reptiles in England to inform better management of development impacts. ARC report to Natural England. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Bournemouth.*