

National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme

Amphibian Survey Pilot – Spring 2006

Notes

Data protection and copyright agreement

Please sign this section to show that:

- You are willing for your survey data to be entered onto a computer database
- You are willing to share any intellectual property rights that may pertain to the information you are providing.

All current biological recording relies on collating information on a computer and using the records appropriately. Your signature is just a means of formally and overtly making it clear that you are happy for information that you provide to be used this way.

Pond details

The grid reference needs to be in the form SP 123 456, or more detailed. If you are not used to using Ordnance Survey grid references, then guidance can be found on the following website:
www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/freerun/nationalgrid/nghelp1.html

Pond name/address/reference number (and source) Most ponds will not have a name, but if yours does, then please note. If the pond is associated with a property (e.g. a house or farm), then the property address should be noted. If the pond is being surveyed as part of an existing scheme, then it may have a reference number under this scheme. Please give the number/code and note the relevant scheme.

If a pond targeted for survey turns out to be no longer in existence, then this information can be useful, so please note and return the form for such a pond.

Your details

We need your name and contact details as your name will be part of any biological records you submit and your contact details are helpful for feedback or follow-up enquiries concerning your data. Your address details will certainly not be passed on to any other organisations.

If you are submitting more than one survey form, then you do not have to put your full contact details on all of the forms. Full details on one form and just your name on the rest should suffice.

Landowner details

It is essential that you have the permission from any landowner before you visit a pond. If a landowner does not agree to grant permission of access then you should not attempt to visit the site. Many volunteer surveyors report that they would like to survey ponds where access has already been arranged. However, in practice, often the easiest way of locating a landowner is through making local enquiries.

Your meeting with the landowner can be a useful opportunity to generate good relations, to gather information about the pond and to minimize hazards that may arise during the survey. If a landowner is willing for you to survey ponds on his/her land, then:

- Ask about convenient car parking.
- Ask about safety issues at ponds (e.g. steep banks, deep water, butyl-lined reservoirs).
- Ask about the pond and its wildlife. Are fish present? Are ducks kept on the pond? How often does the pond dry out?

Habitat suitability factors

To determine the status of amphibians, we have to know about habitat quality, as well as the animals themselves. The survey form asks you to rate the pond and surrounding habitat by scoring ten components of a habitat suitability index developed for the great crested newt. The original version can be found in: Oldham R.S., Keeble J, Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000) Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10(4), 143-155. (If

you want to calculate HSI scores yourself, you should refer to this paper, but note that factor 9 has been simplified for current usage).

Many of the HSI factors rely on your estimates or subjective judgement. To estimate pond area (factor 2) it can be helpful to calibrate your stride against a tape measure and then pace out pond dimensions in the field. Scoring terrestrial habitat (factor 9) depends on your understanding of newt habitat quality. Good terrestrial habitat offers cover and foraging opportunities and includes meadow, rough grassland, hedges, scrub and woodland. Barriers to dispersal include main roads and large expanses of unsuitable habitat.

Surveying the pond

We need some ponds to be surveyed using three visits, and different techniques on each visit. We suggest three techniques should be carried out on each survey visit: visual search (especially to look for eggs), netting and a nighttime torchlight survey. However, in practice, surveyors may carry out fewer site visits and may not employ all three techniques. We still welcome information from such surveys.

To carry out an amphibian survey you do not need to enter the pond. The survey can be carried out from the pond banks. A visual survey involves walking once around the pond edge, searching for amphibians, and especially their eggs. If the pond contains submerged vegetation, then this can be searched by netting. Make another circuit of the pond making netting sweeps of any beds of vegetation that you can reach. Note the corresponding percentage perimeter of the pond.

After dark the pond should be searched again, by torchlight, making a single circuit of the accessible perimeter. The torchlight survey may take place on a different day to the visual search and netting. However, day time survey work should always be carried out before a torchlight survey, so that any potential hazards can be identified in daylight.

Survey results

Record in the boxes the numbers of amphibians (Adu = adults, Imm = immature) or clumps of frogspawn you see. Indicate the presence of eggs (other than frogs) or larvae with a tick. There are boxes to record the timing of the survey, weather variables and how much of the pond you were able to search. These are factors that may affect your chances of finding amphibians, so we need to record them. To record air and water temperature you will need a thermometer. Other weather variables can be scored from the scales provided on the recording form.

Survey equipment

To carry out a full survey you will need:

- Pond net
- Powerful survey torch (500,000 to 1,000,000 cp)
- Safety torch (a smaller torch for use if your survey torch fails)
- Thermometer
- Mobile phone (useful in the event of emergency)

Health and safety

Amphibian survey work is a relatively safe activity. However, it does involve working near water and may involve crossing unfamiliar terrain, both of which entail potential hazards. Training courses should consider health and safety issues. A pond survey risk assessment can also be provided on request from the NARRS project assistant (John Baker, 01986 872016, johninhalesworth@aol.com).

The National Amphibian and Reptile Recording Scheme (NARRS) is a partnership project coordinated by [The Herpetological Conservation Trust](#). For local conservation projects concerning amphibians or reptiles contact your nearest Amphibian and Reptile Group www.arg-uk.org.uk

