

What the data is being used for

So what does KRAG do with all of your data? When your records are sent to KRAG they are not just kept in a big pile gathering dust. Firstly, they are entered into KRAG's database so that we know where all of Kent's recorded amphibians are. These are then sent to the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre where they are added to their database so anybody studying amphibians in Kent will have access to the data and the records can be used to inform planning authorities when they make decisions about future developments. They are also sent to the National Biodiversity Network who keep a national record of all biological records. Therefore, your data will be used by people who are studying national distribution patterns of amphibians. We feel this is a really important use of the work that you do but there are more things that we do with your valuable records.

The Habitat Suitability Index information that you send us has been used as part of a wider test of how effective this method is for predicting the presence of GCNs, whether this method can be easily used by volunteers and to inform future habitat suitability models. In 2007, Lee Brady of KRAG has used the information gathered to try and work out what percentage of Kent's ponds contain GCNs, and hence, how many ponds in Kent contain GCNs. From the data that this project has collected and other records it has been calculated that approximately 44% of Kent's ponds contain GCNs and approximately 28% of these are ponds where GCNs are likely to breed successfully. So how many ponds in Kent contain GCNs? This is a good question as we don't really know how many ponds there are in Kent. The 2003 Kent Habitat Data suggests there are 41,000 ponds in Kent meaning 18,000 GCN ponds. However, this is a large overestimate as this data includes ditches and other waterbodies not likely to contain GCNs. Well, we can't come up with a definitive answer but the evidence does suggest that Kent is a very important county for GCNs. More information about how this figure was calculated can be found on the news page of KRAG's website (www.kentarg.org).

More recently, KRAG have been using the records collected to try and identify key amphibian sites in Kent. Work has been done that allows the database to automatically identify sites that meet certain criteria and they will be flagged as key sites. A list is currently being verified and will start appearing soon in future KRAG publications. This methodology allows sites to be identified objectively and removes sentimental attachments to sites that we are probably all guilty of. However, it is dependent upon amphibian records being donated to KRAG so please keep sending your records in and you may see one of your sites being recognised as a key amphibian site.



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Great Crested Newt Monitoring Project News

An occasional publication supporting participants of the project co-ordinated by Kent Pond Wardens and Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group
Winter 2007-8

The Great Crested Newt Monitoring Project was set up as a partnership between Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group and BTCV's Kent Pond Wardens in 2004. The aim of the project is to enable volunteers to survey Kent's waterbodies for amphibians. This information is used to increase the knowledge of amphibian distribution throughout the county and to inform conservation efforts.

The Project in 2008

So here we are in 2008 and welcome to a new occasional publication to support participants in the Great Crested Newt monitoring Project. The aim of this newsletter is to provide volunteers with supporting information to help them in their survey work and to update on progress so far. Please take a few minutes to read the articles as it will give you all the information you need to get involved in this year's project.

A huge thank you to everybody who has contributed their time and efforts to the project over the first four years and KRAG hopes that you will continue to support the project. The data collected is being used to help KRAG identify trends in amphibian populations and to identify key sites within the county. There will be more about this later on.

KRAG's AGM will be held at Tyland Barn near Maidstone on January 19th at 2.00pm where there will be some interesting talks relating to data collected by this project. If you would like to attend as a non-voting interested party then please contact Mike Phillips using the details below.



Common Frog: © Lee Brady



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How to get involved in 2008

If you would like to be involved in this year's project, all you need to do is to either be a member of KRAG or a Pond Warden and let us know (if you have not already done so). You will then be sent all of the necessary paperwork including a copy of a great crested newt license that allows you to survey for GCNs (great crested newts). This will tell you all about the survey strategy and how to record your results. Please note that if you have not attended a GCN Monitoring Project training day before you will have to attend this year's event before you are issued with a copy of the license.

There are a number of events that you can attend if you are new to amphibian surveys or if you would like to brush up your skills. We at KRAG are really keen to give people as much help as possible with their surveys so please do attend. We can also arrange for somebody to come to your own ponds to help you out.

Ideally, we would like people to pick a target pond and survey that pond and as many other ponds as possible within a 500m radius. One initial day time visit is required to risk assess the area, collect habitat suitability information and to net survey the pond plus up to three further night time visits to do torch surveys. KRAG realise that time is precious and this may not be achievable as we all have busy lives. Whatever you can do is very much appreciated.

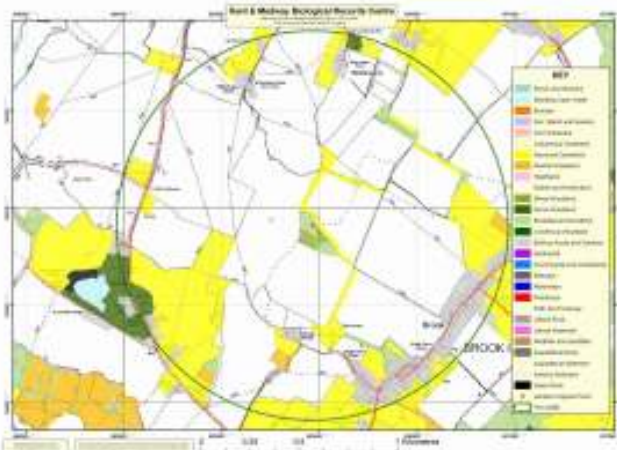


Great crested newt egg: © Lee Brady

2007 results

If anybody has any results from 2007 that have not been sent in yet please do so. Even if you didn't find any amphibians, just the fact that a pond or ponds have been surveyed is really important information.

Project equipment (including habitat maps)



Example of habitat map from KMBRC

KRAG will endeavour to lend a million candle rechargeable torch and hand net to all participants (please remember to keep it charged in winter). These will be distributed at events. Habitat maps which are really useful for calculating habitat suitability information can also be provided upon request from Irène Folliot at Kent & Medway Biological Records Centre (01622 685646 or irene.folliot @kmbrc.org.uk)

What to do if you are no longer participating

Please let us know if you no longer wish to be involved in the project. This is particularly important if you have borrowed equipment from either KRAG or Kent Pond Wardens as unused equipment will mean that KRAG has to purchase extra equipment at over £100 per participant so if, realistically, you are unlikely to take part then please arrange to return your equipment.

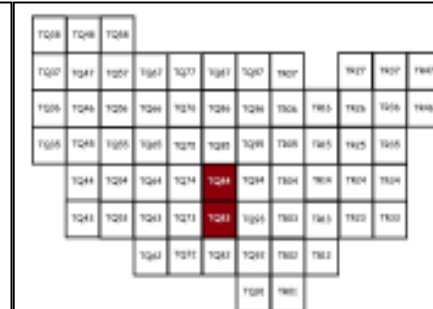
Target areas for the 2008 survey

Whilst many participants choose to survey ponds near their homes (and we are very grateful for this) KRAG has identified areas that it would particularly like people to work in. We are particularly keen to receive data from these areas:

1. Ten kilometre squares where GCNs have not been recorded. These are mostly in the east of the county
2. The two ten kilometre squares where pond density is highest. These have been identified using Kent Habitat Data and KRAG believe should support



10km squares with GCN



10 km squares with most ponds

the largest GCN populations. They are TQ83 and TQ84 (essentially a big chunk of the Low Weald). Bigger maps will be sent to participants.

Events in 2008

The following events are free to all participants. Please let us know if you would like to attend by contacting KRAG using any of the methods on the front and back cover of this newsletter.

GCN Monitoring Project Training Day Sunday, 16th March 2pm—8pm at Canterbury Env. Ed. Centre. Led by Jon Bramley and Mike Phillips. Find out all you need to know to identify Kent's amphibians and get involved in the project.

Field Survey Practice Sessions Brush up your practical survey skills by joining KRAG members in night time surveys.

Frittenden (near Cranbrook) with Mike Phillips
28th February, 20th March, 3rd April
Stodmarsh (near Canterbury) or Canterbury Environmental Education Centre with Alex Ewing. Dates to be confirmed. Your details will be passed to Alex and you will be contacted before events take place