
Getting Toads Out of a Hole



Surveyor's Pack

Getting Toads Out of a Hole

Introduction to the Project

Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group (KRAG) launched the Getting Toads Out of a Hole project in November 2008 as an initiative that aimed to collect information about amphibian populations in general and specifically toad populations.

Why toads?

A lot of attention has been given to other amphibian species in recent years as is exemplified by KRAG's Great Crested Newt Monitoring Project. We now have a better understanding of where great crested newts are in the county, what their conservation status is and what the key sites are. However, this is not the case for common toads and it is also felt that common frogs are under-recorded as well. Common Toads have recently been made a priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan which reflects the concern shared by many that the common toad might be under threat. Habitat loss, both ponds and terrestrial habitat, as well as deaths on roads during migration are both thought to contribute to the decline of the species.

Will we only be looking for toads?

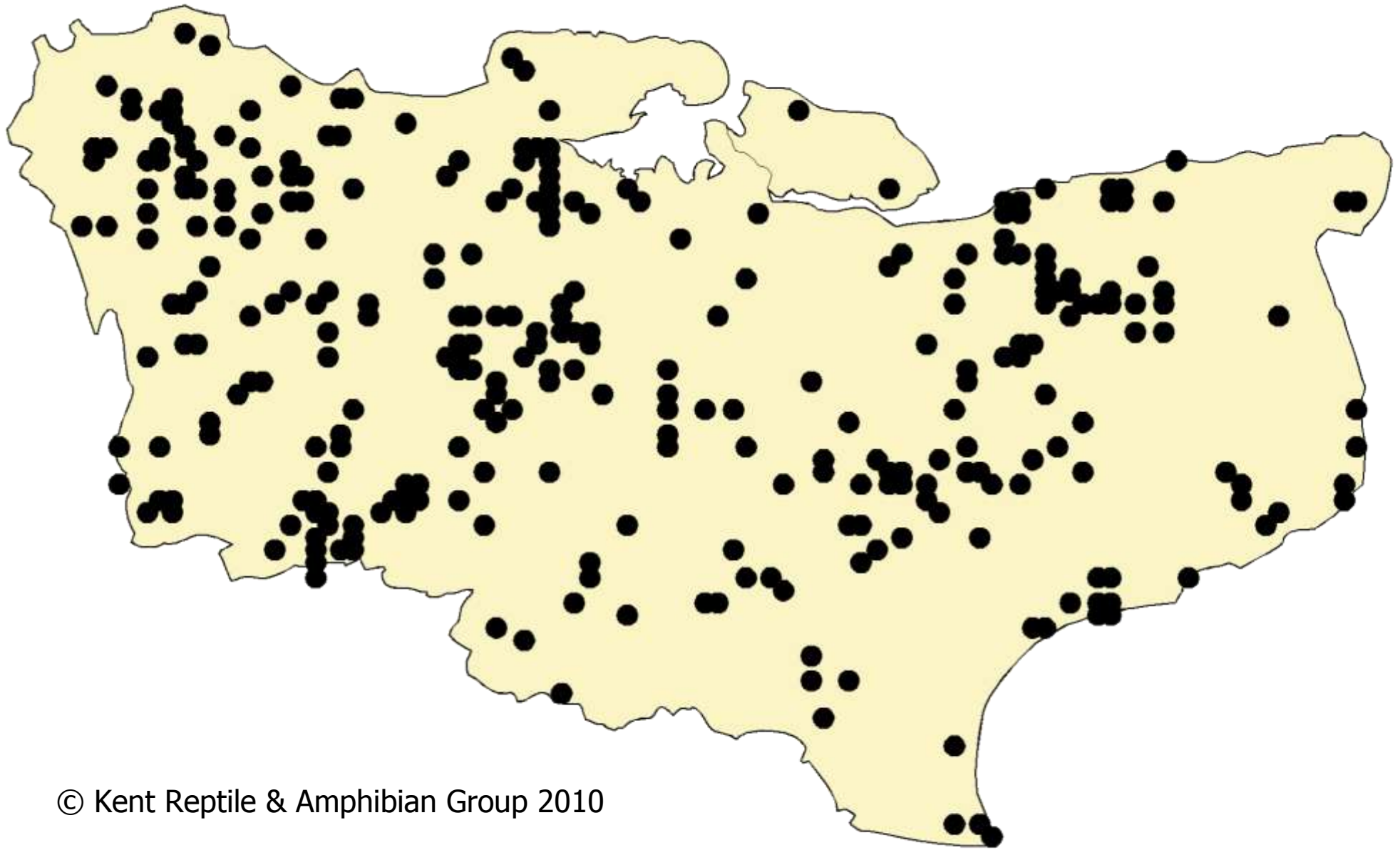
Whilst this project will focus on the common toad KRAG are very keen to find out about other species of amphibian and grass snakes that you might see when you are doing survey work. The reason that we are asking you to record all amphibians that you see is because KRAG are interested in all herpetofauna that you see. Knowing about other species also helps KRAG to understand more about which amphibian species live in the same sorts of pond and can help us to identify Key Amphibian Sites in Kent.

What will we do with the data?

All of the information that is collected by this project will be added to KRAG's database of herpetofauna. This not only allows us to analyse the information that you send but also means that we can share the data with other partner organisations such as conservation organisations, academic institutions and planning authorities. KRAG's objectives for the project include:

- Identify more toad breeding sites
- Gain a better understanding of toad distribution in the county
- Identify the most important toad sites
- Develop a habitat suitability model for toads

Common Toad Distribution in Kent



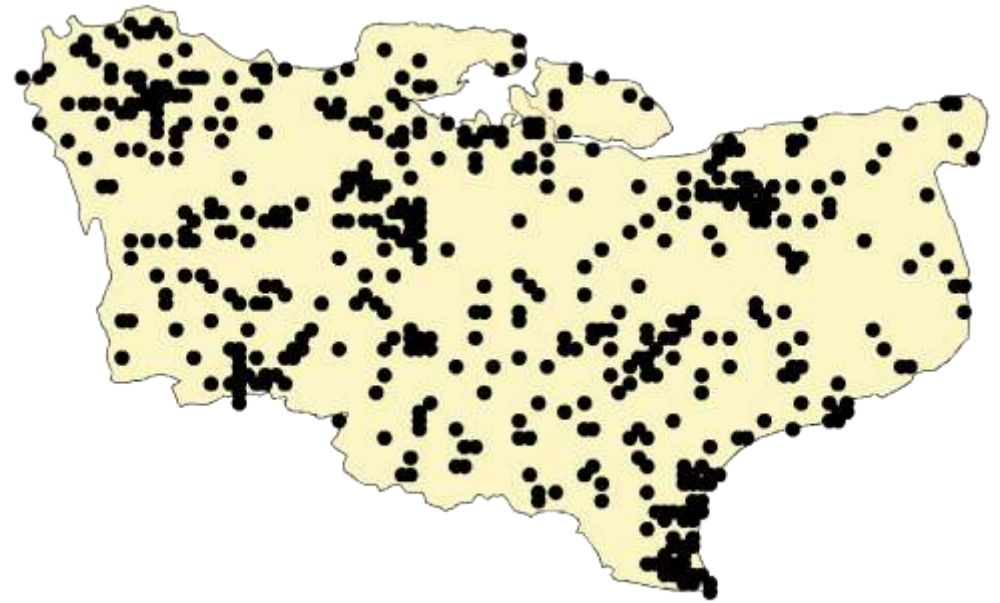
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Common Frog Distribution in Kent



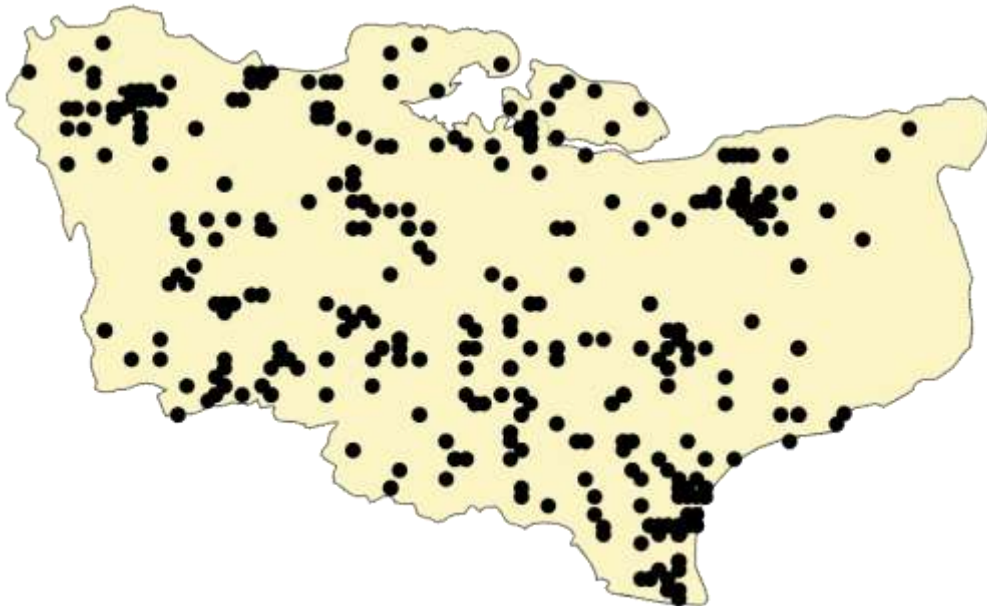
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Smooth Newt Distribution in Kent



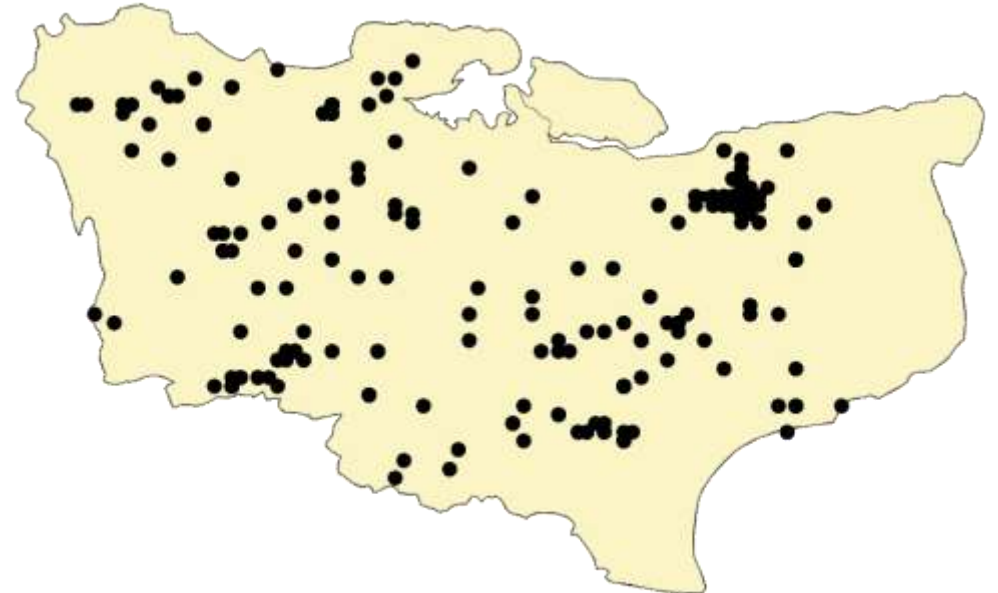
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Great Crested Distribution in Kent



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Palmate Newt Distribution in Kent



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Survey Procedure

1. Choosing ponds to survey.

There are a number of ways that ponds can be chosen for the Getting Toads Out of a Hole project:

a) Incidental Surveys

Survey ponds that you know about and have access to. You can survey as many or as few ponds as you wish. All records that you collect are important, even when there are no amphibians present as knowing where animals aren't is very useful to know too. If you are out on a walk and see a pond, have a look in it and record your results. It is as simple as that.

b) Targeted Surveys

Choose a pond to survey and then survey as many ponds within a 500m radius of the central pond.

c) Blanket Surveys

Survey all ponds within a particular area, e.g. in a Parish, on a nature reserve or farm.

2. Equipment

When surveying ponds, you will need to take:

- A survey form (provided in this pack)
- A clipboard and pen/pencil
- A GPS (optional, you can find grid references from maps)
- A net (optional)
- A torch (essential for night time surveys)
- Personal identification (if on private land)

3. Gaining landowner permission.

You will not need permission to survey many of the ponds that you visit. However, if you wish to survey a pond on private property then you will need the permission of the landowner. This project pack contains a letter template that can be sent to landowners. This letter introduces the project and requests permission for you, as the surveyor, to gain access to the owner's ponds. If the landowner does not agree to grant permission of access then you should not attempt to visit these ponds.

Landowner Liaison

Your meeting with the landowner can be a useful opportunity to generate good relations and minimize some potential hazards. 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?

4. Surveying the ponds.

Please note that the following is the ideal scenario. Whatever records you collect are very valuable and we really appreciate anything that you can send to us.

- i) **Visit 1.** The surveyor should familiarise themselves with the pond and its surrounds. Note hazards and other features that may influence surveys. Drawing a map may be helpful. Collect data to help calculate Habitat Suitability Index (see section 5). Surveyors should also walk around the edge of the water body visually searching for adult amphibians, tadpoles or larvae and eggs or spawn. The surveyor may then use a standard pond net to sample the pond at two-metre intervals of the water's edge. *Avoid netting in ponds with invasive plants.*
- ii) **Evening Visits (as many as you wish) (March – May).** The surveyor will carry out a torchlight search between dusk and midnight. This torching survey can be carried out on the same day as the first visit, provided that netting has not reduced water clarity.

What to survey for.

Please record all amphibians that you see in the ponds you survey. Give as much information as you can (e.g. species, sex, lifestage) on the forms provided. All we ask is that you don't guess. For example, if you see an animal and you are not sure whether it is a frog or toad then just record a frog or toad on the other observations section of the form. If you recognise an animal but are not sure whether it is male or female then recorded in the column marked U.

Great crested newts.

Great crested newts are protected from disturbance by European law and you are not licensed to cause disturbance to great crested newts as part of this survey project. Therefore, if you see great crested newts or suspect they are present you should record this and DO NOT carry out any more surveying on this pond.

Getting Toads Out of a Hole Recording Card

Surveyor name:

Pond Name (if known)						Pond Location (postcode or grid reference)					
	Common Toad					Common Frog					Frog or Toad tadpoles
Date	M	F	U	pairs	spawn	M	F	U	pairs	spawn	
TOTALS:											
Start time:			Finish time:				Key: M=Male F=Female U=Unknown Sex				
Other observations: Did you see newts, newt eggs, grass snakes or any other points of interest?											

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX										
SI	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Factor:	Location	Pond Area	Desiccation	Water Quality	% Shade	# Fowl	Fish?	# Ponds	Terrestrial Habitat	Macrophyte % Cover
										E / F / S
Value:										

E = Emergent; F = Floating; S = Submerged

Pond Name (if known)						Pond Location (postcode or grid reference)					
	Common Toad					Common Frog					Frog or Toad tadpoles
Date	M	F	U	pairs	spawn	M	F	U	pairs	spawn	
TOTALS:											
Start time:			Finish time:				Key: M=Male F=Female U=Unknown Sex				
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Value:										

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Notes:	



Please return completed forms to Mike Phillips at:
 KRAG
 c/o KMBRC
 Brogdale Farm Office
 Brogdale Rd
 Faversham
 Kent
 ME13 8XZ

E-Mail: treasurer@kentarg.org

5. Habitat Suitability Indices.

For each of the ponds that you survey we would ideally like you to carry out a habitat suitability survey. This is a relatively simple identification of environmental factors developed by Rob Oldham et al to assess whether ponds are suitable for great crested newts. One of the aims of this project is to try and develop a similar set of indices that can be used to assess whether a pond is suitable for toads. Therefore, the more ponds where habitat factors are recorded, the better chance Krag have of developing a suitable index for toads.

The HSI is a method by which habitat variables can be collected and used together to predict the likely presence of breeding great crested newt. It should not be used to replace ground-based surveyors. It is however a powerful complimentary tool. A summary of the definitions used can be found in the surveyors pack. Habitat variables measured include:

SI ₁ Map Location	SI ₆ Presence of water fowl
SI ₂ Pond area	SI ₇ Presence of fish
SI ₃ Desiccation rate	SI ₈ No. ponds within 1 km
SI ₄ Water quality	SI ₉ Terrestrial habitat quality
SI ₅ % Shade	SI ₁₀ % macrophyte cover

For more detailed information on the use of HSI, please see the ARG UK advice note on HSI.

6. What if I need some help?

We are here to help. Drop us an e-mail (treasurer@kentarg.org) with any questions you have or send a photo if you need a little help identifying things. There are a number of practice survey sessions going on around the county and you would be welcome to come and join us.

7. What to do when you have finished your surveys.

Please send all of your results back to Krag at:

Mike Phillips
Krag
c/o KMBRC
Brogdale Farm Office
Brogdale Rd
Faversham
Kent
ME13 8XZ

Or fill the forms in electronically and e-mail them to treasurer@kentarg.org

Health & Safety

Risk assessments.

Whilst surveying ponds, especially during the daytime, is not a particularly dangerous activity we do need to make sure that we are not putting ourselves in unnecessary danger. As a result, KRAG have devised a simple risk assessment form that can be completed on your first visit to the pond in daytime.

This consists of a list of generic hazards around ponds and all you have to do is tick whether the hazard is present, say who is at risk (usually just the surveyors) and add extra precautions on the right hand side of the page if appropriate. There is a separate section at the end of the form for you to add any hazards that are not included in the list of generic hazards.

A risk assessment should be filled for each pond that you survey but they only take a couple of minutes. It will help to ensure that you are covered by KRAG's insurance policy.

Insurance.

KRAG has an insurance policy that covers all members for public liability. Whilst the likelihood of a claim being made is very low, should you inadvertently cause damage to property and/or people there is cover for KRAG members.

All participants on this project are advised to join KRAG as it only costs £5 but those people who are not full members will be made honorary members of KRAG for the duration of this project.

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Risk Assessment

For your own safety, it is important that you should complete a risk assessment for each pond that you survey. It is hoped that this form will make the process as easy as possible. Simply tick the boxes that apply and fill in any extra information as you see fit. There is also extra space to add additional hazards specific to the site.

Pond name:

Location:

Date:

HAZARD	RISK	WHO	PRESENT	CONTROL	LOCAL COMMENTS
Slips, trips and falls	Cuts, bruises, broken limbs		<input type="checkbox"/>	Wear sturdy shoes. Take care when crossing rough ground	
Environment	Sunburn, hypothermia, exhaustion		<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoid working in extreme temperatures. Take suitable clothing	
Livestock and other animals	Bites, collisions and other attacks		<input type="checkbox"/>	Beware of livestock, consult landowner if necessary	
Infections	Leptospirosis etc		<input type="checkbox"/>	Cover all cuts and breaks in skin when working in water, consider the use of rubber gloves	
Human factors	Assault		<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure landowner is aware of your presence. Avoid confrontation if possible. Carry mobile phone	
Lone Working	Immobile, unable to summon help. Serious untreated injury, death		<input type="checkbox"/>	Lone working not advised	
Urban sites with syringes and other rubbish	Infection from syringes, cuts and piercing injuries		<input type="checkbox"/>	Take extra care in these situations, consider wearing gloves	

HAZARD	RISK	WHO	PRESENT	CONTROL	LOCAL COMMENTS
Waterbodies	Drowning, hypothermia		<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoid working in areas with steep banks and deep water and when tired. Carry an extra set of clothes in vehicle. Avoid lone working	
Working at night	As above but enhanced risk due to poor visibility		<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure torch is used, well charged and spare bulbs are taken. Take a spare torch	
LOCAL HAZARDS SPECIFIC TO YOUR SITE					
			<input type="checkbox"/>		
			<input type="checkbox"/>		
			<input type="checkbox"/>		
			<input type="checkbox"/>		