



NATURESPACE  
PARTNERSHIP

# NatureSpace District Licensing Scheme: Monitoring Results (2019-2023)

In spring 2023, we monitored 243 ponds that were created or restored between 2018 - 2022 under our District Licensing Scheme for great crested newts. Monitoring our ponds is important to understand how good our conservation work is for newts and other wildlife.

## Our achievements so far



**358** ponds created across **122** sites in **66** local planning authorities.



Provided **1,149** hectares of suitable habitat (over double the requirement).



**38%** ponds occupied by great crested newts in 2023 - the highest in-year occupancy rate.



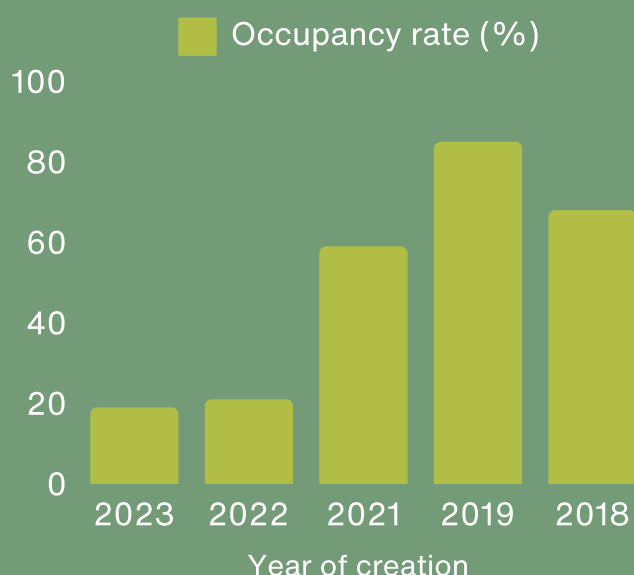
**58%** of sites occupied at least once in the past five years.



**42%** of ponds occupied at least once in the past five years.

## We are in it for the long term

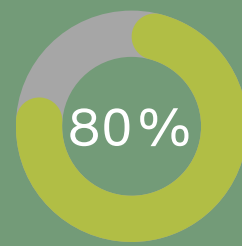
Pond occupancy starts low and increases as the pond matures (reaching 80% at 4 years). As our relatively young ponds mature, occupancy will get even higher.



*A wide variety of factors influence pond occupancy and the rate of colonisation.*

## Our conservation strategy is working

80% of ponds gained a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) score of 'Excellent' or 'Good' for great crested newts.



## How do our ponds compare?

Our ponds are above the national and regional averages for great crested newt occupancy.



NatureSpace District Licensing Scheme  
33%



South Midlands landscape-scale survey  
24%



National PondNet survey  
13%

## Our ponds benefit biodiversity



On average, **17 plant species** were found in every scheme pond - compared with an average of 7 for countryside ponds.



**130 ponds (53%)** have reached 'priority habitat' status.



Our ponds are habitats for other amphibians such as the common toad, a priority species.

### Anecdotal records of other amphibian species:



Smooth newt  
55 records



Common toad  
35 records  
(priority species)



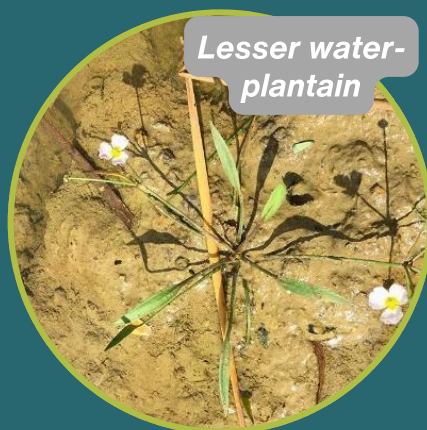
Common frog  
29 records

*Photo credit: Amphibian and Reptile Conservation*

## Our ponds support rare plants

Regionally and nationally uncommon plant species have naturally colonised our ponds, including:

- Common bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*)
- Lesser water-plantain (*Baldellia ranunculoides*)
- Red pondweed (*Potamogeton alpinus*)
- Common yellow-sedge (*Carex demissa*)
- Blunt-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton obtusifolius*)



Lesser water-plantain

*Photo credit: Newt Conservation Partnership*

## What is the NatureSpace District Licensing Scheme?

- Delivered by the Newt Conservation Partnership, the Scheme offers an **alternative to standard licensing** for compensating lost or degraded great crested newt habitat due to development - and is regulated by **Natural England**.
- Our goal: improve the conservation status of great crested newts in our regions by **creating, restoring, and managing high-quality ponds connected by terrestrial habitat**.
- The scheme is **supported by amphibian and freshwater experts** from NGOs **Amphibian and Reptile Conservation** and **Freshwater Habitats Trust**.



Freshwater  
Habitats Trust



amphibian and reptile  
conservation



Find out more about the District  
Licensing Scheme at:

[www.NatureSpaceUK.com](http://www.NatureSpaceUK.com)