

Alpine Newt

Species Description

Scientific name: *Mesotriton alpestris*

AKA: *Triturus alpestris*, Madfall Ddŵr Alpaidd (Welsh)

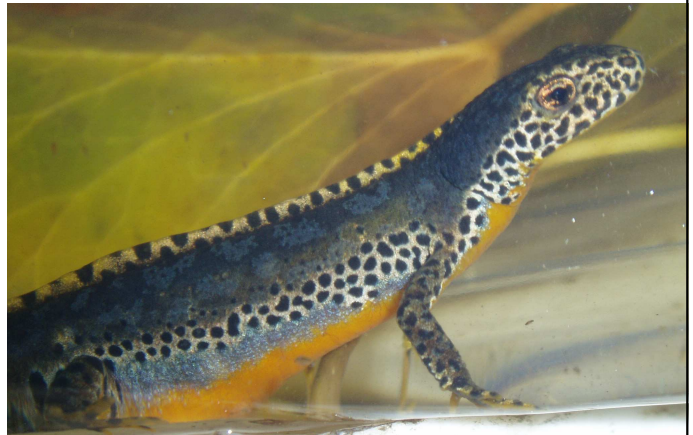
Native to: Northern, central and eastern Europe

Habitat: Most types of still or slow-flowing freshwater bodies

Both sexes are colourful, having blue-green marbling, orange undersides, usually without spots, a blue stripe along each side separating the underside from pale, sometimes spotted, lateral lines running from head to tail. Males have a grey-black back, whilst females have a brown back. Males also have a yellow or whitish crest with black spots during spring. Neither have an eye stripe.

The first individuals were recorded in Newdigate, Surrey during the 1920s; this population is still present. Other populations have been found in Brighton, Birmingham, south-east London, Shropshire, Sunderland, Kent and central Scotland. Populations were released into gardens and parks. The species is known to be a vector of chytridiomycosis which can be a threat to native amphibians.

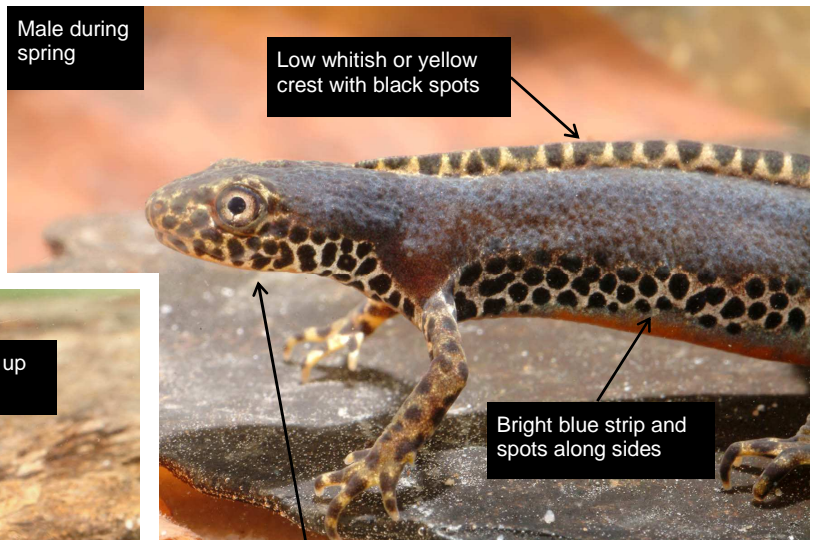
For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features

Male during spring

Low whitish or yellow crest with black spots



Bright blue strip and spots along sides

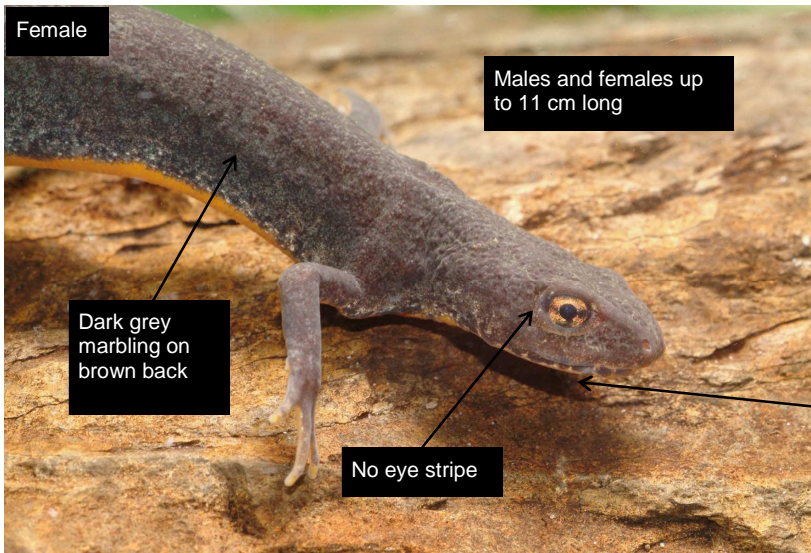
Bright orange underside and chin (usually un-spotted)

Female

Males and females up to 11 cm long

Dark grey marbling on brown back

No eye stripe



Identification throughout the year

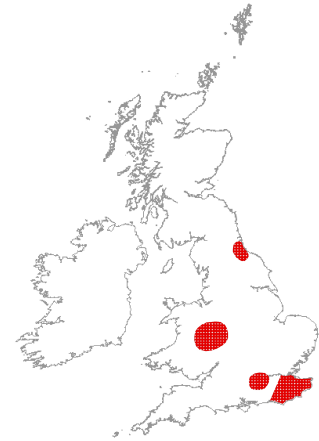
Breeding season during spring, with eggs laid individually wrapped in leaves of pond plants. Larvae (efts) are darker than efts of native newt species and have marbling on their body. Efts are smaller than those of great crested newt and do not have forward curling gills. They metamorphose in August and September. The terrestrial phase retains the marbling on its back.



Distribution

Populations are occasionally found throughout UK and can be locally abundant.

Source: Various



Similar Species



Chytrid fungus

Alpine newts are known carriers of the chytrid fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*. This can cause the disease chytridiomycosis which seriously affects some amphibian species. Cases of chytrid infection have been discovered in some native amphibians in some parts of the UK. The fungus affects amphibians by attacking their skeleton and skin

Chytrid fungus is water-borne and so can be accidentally spread between water bodies. When looking for species in and around a water body, disinfect all footwear and equipment before moving to other Water bodies to avoid spreading the disease.

References and further reading:

- Arnold, N E & Ovenden, D W (2002) "Collins Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe". HarperCollins
- Beebee, T and Griffiths, R (2000) "Amphibians and reptiles: A Natural History of the British Herpetofauna". HarperCollins