Alpine Newt, *Mesotriton alpestris*

**Overview**

**Short description of *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt**

A medium-sized newt. Males blue-black with spotted flanks, females less colourful with grey marbling on flanks, back and tail. Both sexes yellow-orange underneath with few or no spots. Colours darken when terrestrial and skin appears granular.

**Description of *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt status in GB**

The Alpine Newt is established locally at more than 40 sites in GB.

**Habitat summary: *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt**

A wide variety of ponds (not just uplands) and surrounding terrestrial habitat but mainly in gardens in the GB.

**Overview table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment:</th>
<th>Terrestrial and Freshwater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Species status:</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native range:</td>
<td>Albania, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Spain, France, Greece, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional type:</td>
<td>Predator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status in England:</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status in Scotland:</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status in Wales:</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of first record:</td>
<td>Surrey (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of first record:</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Invasion history: *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt**

**Origin**

Widespread in western and central Europe (from N Iberia east to Greece and N to Denmark) where it is native. GB colonies originate from multiple locations in the native range and so may belong to several subspecies.

**First Record**

20th Century. Documented introductions post-WWII but one colony pre-dates this.

**Pathway and Method**

Deliberate introductions in attempt to establish breeding colonies.
**Species Status**  
Stable or increasing in GB. New records arise largely from increasing public awareness of amphibian conservation issues.

**Ecology & Habitat: *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt**

**Dispersal Mechanisms**  
Unassisted dispersal is slow. New colonies establish either deliberately or by accidental transport via water plants, both between gardens and from gardens to the wild.

**Reproduction**  
Breeds in a variety of ponds. Females attach eggs singly to water plants. Larvae eat small aquatic invertebrates.

**Known Predators/Herbivores**  
Grass snakes and aquatic predators such as dragonfly larvae.

**Resistant Stages**  
None known.

**Habitat Occupied in GB**  
Mainly gardens and garden ponds but also slow-flowing freshwater. At least one colony occurs at a great-crested newt SAC (West Midlands) and the species appears to be well-established in the Blean (north Kent) pondscape.

**Distribution: *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt**  
More than 40 UK sites from Edinburgh south including Durham, Yorkshire, Shropshire, West Mids, Herts, Surrey, Brighton, London and Kent.

**Impacts: *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt**

**Environmental Impact**  
Some GB populations have been shown to be infected with the amphibian fungal pathogen *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd). It is as yet unknown whether the species is susceptible to this in the same way as native amphibians may be or whether it acts as a vector (or even as a resistant vector). In the 2008 National Bd Survey, 135 alpine newts were tested and were found to be positive for Bd at six UK sites. Research (led by the Institute of Zoology) is ongoing. Britain has yet to suffer mass amphibian die-offs due to Bd that have occurred elsewhere (e.g. Spain).

**Health and Social Impact**  
None.

**Economic Impact**  
None.

**References & Links: *Mesotriton alpestris*, Alpine Newt**

**Identification**  

**Biology, ecology, spread, vectors**  


**Management and impact**  
Garner, T.J.W., Walker, S., Bosch, J., Hyatt, A.D., Cunningham, A.A. & Fisher, M.C.

General

