



Natterjack Toad

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Species English Name (Scientific name)

NATTERJACK TOAD (EPIDALEA CALAMITA FORMERLY BUFO CALAMITA)

Associated Habitat Action Plans:

- Coastal Sand Dune



Ecology

Appearance

Natterjack toads are the loudest amphibian in the UK. They are smaller than the common toad and have smaller back legs, which allow them to run more easily. Both limbs are adapted for digging. There is a thin, bold yellow line down the middle of the back of the natterjack toad. This is its key defining characteristic and can even be clearly seen on the toadlets.

Habitat

This species prefers sandy habitats with shallow, very warm ponds, as natterjack toads need warm water in which to breed. The species is confined to coastal areas, such as coastal sand dune systems, heathland and coastal grazing marshes. However a single colony has been found on an upland fell in Cumbria.

Food

Adult toads are known to retreat into burrows during warm weather and emerge in the cooler night temperature to feed on moths. Natterjack toads also feed on woodlice and other insects, sandhoppers and other marine invertebrates. This ability to run is used to catch their prey as they



Natterjack Toad

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

can run very fast for small distances.

Predators

Foxes, otters, herons, hedgehogs gulls and terns predate the adult natterjack toads. The spawn and tadpoles are more at threat from fish, birds, other amphibians and other insect larvae such as dragonfly larvae. However, the tadpoles of common toads are a more serious threat; not only do they predate the natterjack tadpoles, but more seriously they can suppress the tadpoles development.

Life Style

- * Natterjack toads hibernate through winter in burrows. Although they often excavate their own burrows for hibernation, they are known to use burrows of other animals such as rabbits, rodents and even sands martins.
- * The natterjack toad emerge from hibernation later than common toads, they can emerge anytime between early March and late June depending on the weather.
- * Mating takes place in sun-warmed ponds and then males and females leave the pond separately.
- * Spawning occurs in shallow water, each female produces between 1500 and 7500 eggs. These eggs hatch after about one week and the tadpoles then take 3-8 weeks to metamorphose into toadlets.

Current status

The stronghold of this species remains the coastal dunes and upper saltmarsh habitats of the Irish Sea coast from Liverpool Bay north to the Solway estuary. There are also populations on east coast dunes in Norfolk and Lincolnshire, and on heathlands in Norfolk, Suffolk, Staffordshire, Bedfordshire, Surrey, Hampshire and Dorset.

In the Cheshire region the only site for this species is Red Rocks Marsh SSSI at Hoylake on the Wirral. This coastal site is managed by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust as a Nature Reserve. The natterjack became locally extinct at this site in 1995, and the Cheshire Wildlife Trust are continuing to encourage establishment of the species through habitat management following spawn translocation from the Sefton Coast which ended in 2000. In 2001 12-20 males were found calling and six spawn strings noted. 36 natterjack toadlets counted by 20th July.

Protected through both national and international legislation including Bern convention, WCA 1981 Schedule 5, EC Habitats Directive and Species Directive (1992), also the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994 where it is listed on Schedule 2. The UK Steering Group Report,



Volume 2 (HMSO, 1995) contains a costed BAP for natterjack toad.

Threats

- * Competition from common toads (*Bufo bufo*)
- * Predation by aquatic invertebrates
- * Disturbance of embryo dune formation and natural dune accretion are limiting the available habitat of the toad
- * Recreational activities

How are we helping to conserve Natterjack toads in the Cheshire region?

- * A Natterjack Toad Site Register for the UK has been compiled on behalf of the British Herpetological Society's Conservation committee. This was first compiled in 1986 and is updated annually.
- * The Local Records Centre, rECOrd, is compiling records for this species. Please send details of all sightings to rECOrd.

Objectives, targets and actions

The objectives, targets and actions to help conserve the Natterjack Toad in the Cheshire region can be found on the [Biodiversity Action Reporting System \(BARS\)](#) along with full details of our progress so far.

How to find out more about Natterjack toads

UK BAP for Natterjack Toads - www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=173

How can you get involved?

Join the Cheshire and Wirral Amphibian and Reptile Group

Contact details

LBAP Chair: Cheshire Wildlife Trust
Phone: 01948 820728
National Lead Partner Natural England
National Contact John Buckley and Paul Edgar,
Herpetological Conservation Trust



Natterjack Toad

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

References and Glossary

- Beebee, T. J. C. & Denton, J. S. (1996): The Natterjack Toad Conservation Handbook, English Nature.
- Denton, J. S., Hitchins, S. P. & Beebee, T. J. C. (1995): The Natterjack Toad Species Recovery Programme Project 1992-5 final Report, English Nature.
- HMSO (1995): Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report, Volume 1: Meeting the Rio Challenge, London.
- HMSO (1995): Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report, Volume 2: Action Plans, London.
- Simmonds, J. (1993): Red Rocks Management Plan, Cheshire Wildlife Trust

