

# amphibian and reptile conservation



27<sup>th</sup> April 2016

## Heritage Lottery Fund awards £69,900 to Great Crested Newt Detectives

Scotland's rarest newts received a boost today. The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust has secured funding for a new project, called *Great Crested Newt Detectives*, from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). From 2016 to 2018 volunteers will survey ponds across Scotland for great crested newts, a rare and protected species, with the help of DNA technology. School children will also learn how DNA technology is being used to protect Scotland's wildlife, from great crested newts to Atlantic salmon and Scottish wildcats.

Training events for the public and educational activities for schools will be provided at 14 locations across Scotland. Adult volunteers will be trained in amphibian surveying and provided with a free environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling kit. Water samples collected from ponds by volunteers will be tested in a laboratory for the presence of great crested newt DNA. This species is highly protected under European and Scottish law but is declining in many parts of its range. Great crested newt populations discovered during this project will benefit from legal protection.

A national wildlife art and writing competition will also be held as part of this project. All children aged 8 to 18 in Scotland will be eligible to enter. Competition entry and prize details will be provided to all schools and publicised on the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Facebook page. Winning entries will be used to help illustrate a new publication called "Amazing animals, brilliant science!". Winners will also be invited to present their work and collect their prizes at a conference on Wildlife Conservation and DNA Technology, hosted by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) at Edinburgh Zoo.

ARC's Scottish Project Officer Pete Minting said: "We are delighted to have the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Scottish Natural Heritage for this work. Every day, advances in DNA technology allow people to answer important questions and make amazing discoveries. We hope that this project will encourage more people in Scotland to develop an interest in science and wildlife conservation." To

date, eDNA surveying for great crested newts in the UK has largely been limited to England and Wales, where the Freshwater Habitats Trust has included eDNA surveying as part of its PondNet project (<http://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/pondnet>), which is also supported by the HLF.

Pete will be speaking about the new Great Crested Newt Detectives project in Galashiels this Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April at 2.30pm, during the spring conference held by The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC). For conference information see [http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/recording\\_conferences.php](http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/recording_conferences.php)

## ENDS

### **About the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust**

ARC is a UK-wide charity based in Bournemouth, Dorset. Set up in 1989 and originally known as the Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT), ARC is the largest charity in the UK which specialises in the conservation of native amphibians and reptiles and their habitats. Today ARC has 25 staff, with offices in England, Wales and Scotland. Since 2013 ARC has been working with Scottish Natural Heritage and Caledonian Conservation Ltd to improve public engagement with amphibians and reptiles in Scotland. See [www.facebook.com/ARCTrust](http://www.facebook.com/ARCTrust) and [www.arc-trust.org](http://www.arc-trust.org)

### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

### **For further information, images and interviews, please contact:**

Pete Minting at the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust.

Telephone: 07747 270581 Email: [pete.minting@arc-trust.org](mailto:pete.minting@arc-trust.org)



*Pete Minting*



*Great crested newt (adult)  
by Chris Dresh*



*Great crested newt (larva) by Pete Minting*