

Water Features – Associated Species

Water features are important for a wide range of species and taxonomic groups, such as amphibians, water voles and otters, numerous birds, and a wide range of invertebrates. Species which have been found on road verges or in ditches include Sickle-leaved Hare's Ear, Ivy-leaved Water Crowfoot, and various rare snails such as mountain bulin. The vendace (a fish) is a UKBAP Priority Species known to occur in England in two lakes in Cumbria, one of which is alongside the A66.

Full Species Action Plans are presented in the HABAP for otter, water vole, great crested newt, vendace, southern damselfly, white-clawed crayfish and the diving beetle *Agabus brunneus*.

Common toad (*Bufo bufo*)

The common toad has a dry warty skin with a rounded nose and large swollen glands behind the eyes. They are generally brownish in colour, although this varies from sandy, to almost brick-red, rich dark brown, greyish or occasionally olive. Females grow up to 13cm long and the much smaller males to 8cm. Spawn is laid in strings, each with a double row of eggs and draped over water plants during March and April. The tadpoles remain black throughout their development and emerge as toadlets after about 12 weeks. Toads are mainly nocturnal, hiding during the day and emerging around dusk.

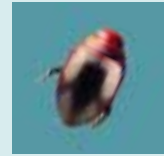
Common toads are relatively common and widespread throughout England, although unevenly distributed in the east Midlands and south-west England, and are not listed as a Priority Species in the UKBAP. However, they are listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, and amendments) in respect of sale, transporting or advertising for sale.

Toad populations require ponds for breeding and areas of moist or shady vegetation, such as grassland, woodland or hedgerows, to forage for invertebrates.

They also need hibernation areas such as banks, log piles and the roots of trees. Toads are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, and their dependence upon different habitats at different stages of their lifecycle makes them more likely to be affected by new road developments, either through habitat loss, or through roads severing their habitats. Toads will cross busy roads if they are built on routes between hibernating sites and traditional breeding ponds, and large numbers of animals are killed in this way each year.

New road developments should be planned to avoid impacting directly or indirectly on common toad habitat. This can include the provision of safe crossing points for toads, through a combination of fencing and tunnel installation. Toad mortality on the roads should be recorded and the possibility of installing toad tunnels at sites of high levels of toad mortality investigated.

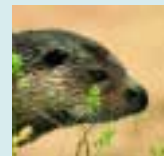
This leaflet is to be read in conjunction with the species Action Plans on:



Agabus brunneus



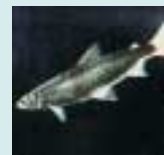
Great Crested Newt



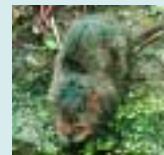
Otter



Southern Damselfly



Vendace



Water Vole



White-Clawed Crayfish