

Palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus*



In Jersey the palmate newt is found scattered around the island, but recorded numbers are low. This could be due to under recording or a decline in the species. Palmate newts are the only species of newt found in Jersey. They are often mistaken for small lizards when on land, but can be told apart as unlike lizards, newts lack scales and move quite slowly.



Size – An adult palmate newt grows to about 8–9cm; males slightly smaller than the female. The fully-grown aquatic larvae are around 3cm.

Features – A small newt with smooth brown skin. Lines of spots occur along the side and tail of males, and sometimes females. Both sexes have a dull yellow/orange belly with a scattering of dark spots and a pink/pale yellow unspotted throat. Breeding males are darker or an olive brown, with a dark eye stripe, a small filament at the end of their tail, a low smooth crest running the length of the back to the tail and dark webs between the toes on the back feet.

These are key features to distinguish this sex. When in their terrestrial stage, both sexes are an orangey brown and the skin is dry looking. Males can still be distinguished in this stage as they keep their boxy appearance due to the two lines that run down each side of the back.

Habitat – Palmate newts are found in and around their breeding ponds in areas such as heathland, wetlands, gardens and some farmland. They prefer slightly softer water (with a higher pH). They can travel far from their breeding ponds and will take shelter under log/rock piles and within wall crevices. They are occasionally reported as being found inside homes/buildings.

Feeding - When newts are on land they feed on arthropods, small worms and slugs. Once in the ponds their diet is made up of small planktonic crustaceans, leeches, caddis fly larvae and frog tadpoles.



Reproduction – Breeding takes place between late February and early March, with females depositing individual eggs on to aquatic plant leaves between then and May. The male encourages the female to breed with a beautiful courtship dance. As the eggs are laid singularly, the larvae have staggered development. Some will leave the ponds come the end of summer once their external gills are absorbed, while others stay and overwinter in the ponds.

The palmate newt is protected by the Conservation of Wildlife (Jersey) Law 2000.