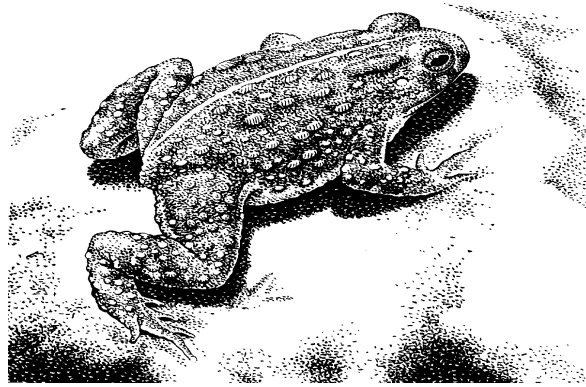


Natterjack Toad (*Bufo calamita*)

The Natterjack Toad is a pioneer species adapted for life in open habitats. In Britain, it relies on the hot conditions provided by sand dunes, lowland heath or upper saltmarshes (merse). Natterjack Toads breed shallow freshwater pools, which heat up quickly and allow the tadpoles to develop rapidly to metamorphosis un-hindered by the presence of other species.



1 Definition

The Natterjack Toad is the rarest of the six native amphibians currently extant in the British Isles. The narrow yellow stripe down its back and small size distinguish the Natterjack from the more familiar Common Toad.

Natterjacks live in the open, early successional habitats and thereby avoid competition from the Common Frog and Common Toad. When they are ready to spawn, the loud rasping call of the males attracts females to freshwater, temporary pools, with a circum-neutral pH, where they breed. This loud rasping call also gives the toad its common name. The long breeding season (late April to July) and is an adaptation that enables Natterjacks to use their ephemeral breeding pools when they become available. Spawn is laid in strings as with the Common Toad and tadpoles are small and black. They develop quickly in the shallow warm water and the yellow dorsal stripe is clearly visible on young toadlets. These shallow, ephemeral pools also lack predators.

Natterjacks have relatively short hind legs so that they can run rather than hop (hence the latin name *Bufo calamita* which refers to its running action). They are active predators and need large areas of bare ground or very short vegetation for hunting their invertebrate prey. Their legs are also used to dig burrows where they can avoid extremes of temperature and dryness. Several individuals often share the same burrow and in winter they dig deeper to hibernate.

2 Current status

2.1 National

The Natterjack Toad has suffered a substantial decline in numbers and range during the 20th century. The decline was particularly marked on heathland compared to dune and merse sites. Excluding translocation sites where populations have been recently re-established, the species can be found at four natural sites in Scotland and 35 in England, but has become extinct in Wales. The Natterjack Toad has now been introduced to 13 sites, including two in Wales.

2.2 Local

The last Natterjack Toad colonies in Suffolk became extinct during the 1950s and 1960s. This species was formerly found in colonies, at sandy locations, scattered all down the east coast from the Waveney to the Deben. They were extremely abundant at some places within the district of Lothingland where they were found at Burgh Castle, Bradwell, Belton, Caldecott Hall, Fritton, St Olaves, Herringfleet, Lound, and Gorleston.

Elsewhere Natterjacks were found at Easton Warren, Wangford Wood, Southwold, Walberswick, Coldfair Green, Aldeburgh, Alderton and at Bawdsey. Inland they formerly occurred at Wortham Ling and at Tostock.

2.3 Natural Areas

Suffolk Coast and Heaths, East Anglian Plain and Suffolk Coast Maritime.

3 Current factors affecting the Natterjack Toad in Suffolk

- Significant reduction in the area, of formerly suitable habitat due to the loss of heathland to agriculture, forestry, lack of grazing and to scrub encroachment.
- Loss of former breeding ponds due to the lowering of the water table, the change of drainage patterns, infilling and, perhaps, acidification.
- Habitat fragmentation preventing the dispersal of animals to new sites and genetical isolation may become a problem for existing populations. Predation by rising levels of corvids due to presence of outdoor pig units and waste disposal sites.

4 Current Action

4.1 Legal Status

The Natterjack Toad is listed on Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annex IVa of the EC Habitats Directive. Also protected by Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994, and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

4.2 Management, research and guidance

- The Natterjack has been the subject of conservation action by both statutory and voluntary organisation for over twenty-five years (The Herpetological Conservation Trust - HCT).
- A National Species Recovery Programme, funded by English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales, was completed in June 1995. This included habitat management, research and translocations to suitable sites.
- The HCT, as sole lead partner for this species, now undertakes this work and works with others to promote the national Species Action Plan.
- The HCT maintains the rare species database and updates the Natterjack Toad Site Register annually.
- In Suffolk management work has involved the creation of ponds at the reintroduction sites and the removal of scrub on heathland. Under the Species Recovery Project spawn from a site in Norfolk was translocated to the site at Walberswick. The two translocation sites at Westleton and Walberswick (1985 and 1995), are monitored annually by RSPB and EN.
- Creation of further suitable habitat on the Sandlings heaths close to the translocated populations was undertaken in 2000. Four new ponds were created/restored in 2003 as part of the Suffolk Sandlings Project and two ponds at RSPB Minsmere are currently being relined (2003). The third is to be relined in 2004.

5 Action Plan Objectives and Targets

- 1. Maintain and enhance the existing colonies of the Natterjack Toad – linking them with suitable habitat if feasible.*
- 2. Monitor the existing Natterjack Toad populations.*
- 3. Identify further reintroduction sites within the historical range of the species in Suffolk and ideally link to existing colonies at Westleton and Walberswick.*
- 4. Initiate at least one more re-introduction by 2007 within the area specified in Target 3.*

6 Natterjack Toad: Proposed action with lead agencies

Action	Date	Partners
POLICY AND LEGISLATION		
Maintain the two existing SSSIs where Natterjack toad populations occur, in favourable condition.	2005	EN, RSPB
SITE SAFEGUARD AND MANAGEMENT		
Ensure that suitable management work (particularly water levels) is undertaken bi-annually, or as necessary, on Sandlings Heaths to maintain translocated populations.	2003 2007	- RSPB, EN, HCT
Provide additional pools, where feasible, to increase the breeding range of the toads, within range of the Walberswick and Westleton colonies.	2003 2007	- EN, RSPB, HCT
Seek opportunities to re-establish heathland at sites between Westleton and Walberswick to form a habitat link between the two colonies. Draw up a map of suitable sites.	2003 2007	- EN, RSPB, FC, SBRC
Update site management plans to incorporate new proposals for enhancing the existing Natterjack Toad colonies.	2003 2007	- EN, RSPB,
SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION		
Prepare a list and map of sites suitable for translocations.	2004	HCT, SBRC
Maintain and protect existing sites at Walberswick and Westleton	2005	EN, RSPB, SARG
RESEARCH AND MONITORING		
Undertake bi-annual monitoring to assess the breeding success of populations at Westleton and Walberswick and produce a report bi-annually.	2003 2005 2007	- SARG, EN, RSPB
Ensure that national research into the ecology and management of this species is available and implemented at a local level.	On-going	HCT, EN, RSPB, University of Sussex

Ensure that survey information gathered is passed on to SBRC and HCT (National Natterjack Toad lead partner).	On-going	RSPB, EN
ADVISORY		
Liase with landowners and land managers of Natterjack sites to ensure appropriate management of key sites and adjacent suitable habitat.	2003 - 2007	RSPB, EN, SWT, HCT
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY		
Raise awareness of the species and its habitat by including progress summary in Sandlings Annual Report.	2007	SCHU, SWT, RSPB,