

## Dann's Pond and Great Crested Newts

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Male Great Crested Newt by James Grundy

With funding and support from the Friends of Richmond Park, we are working to enhance the waterbodies within the Park. One such project is Dann's Pond, located to the north of Coronation Plantation in the south of the Park.

Dann's Pond appears to have been named after Alfred Dann, a game keeper, who was on the staff in 1877 (Collenette, 1937). The first mapped record of the pond dates back to 1754 (McDowall, 2006).

In 2010, Froglife undertook a Great Crested Newt *Truturus cristatus* (GCN) survey of all of the ponds in Richmond Park, including the golf

course. This was the repeat of a survey conducted by Froglife in 1984. The survey found that several ponds within Richmond Park supported breeding populations of GCN (Froglife, 2010).

Great crested newts are by far the largest of the three native British newts and the most threatened. During the breeding season, the males look like small dragons; they have a large ragged crest on their back, which is used in their courtship display. These newts are a European protected species, so we're privileged to have several breeding populations in the Park.

In 2010, Froglife undertook a habitat suitability assessment of Dann's Pond and the surrounding habitat, to ensure that the site provided optimal aquatic and terrestrial habitat for the newts. The assessment identified that the pond was over-shaded by tree canopies, resulting in the production of a large amount of leaf litter which silted up the pond.

The shading also restricted the growth of marginal and aquatic plants, which limited egg-laying opportunities for the newts. With the aid of a combination of volunteers, tree contractors and machinery, half of the pond was transformed into optimal habitat for the newts.



Male Great Crested Newt by Julia Clark

In spring 2014, the Royal Parks Ecology Team carried out a repeat GCN survey in Dann's Pond. The survey found that the newt population had almost doubled since the 2010 survey. In response to these encouraging results, The Royal Parks are funding a project to undertake similar restoration work on the eastern half of the pond. Crown lifting and tree thinning began in winter 2014; silt removal will begin later this year.