

LAND AT CHICHELE ROAD, OXTED: AMPHIBIAN SURVEY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 During previous surveys, a small ephemeral pond in the ancient woodland has been repeatedly dry during the survey window for great crested newts and therefore no surveys for GCN were undertaken. However, in 2024 the wet weather has meant the pond did contain water in spring and therefore an eDNA survey could be undertaken.



Photo 1 Woodland pond May 2022



Photo 2 Wet pond – May 2024

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The woodland pond on site was subject to eDNA surveys on 22nd May 2024. The survey comprised the collection of 40ml samples from 20 locations around the edge of the pond. Samples were mixed together in a bag and six 15ml samples then extracted and stored within preserving fluid. These samples were then sent to ADAS, who analyse the samples for GCN DNA. This technique has been tested by DEFRA and found to have a reliability of 99.3%. Sampling methodology followed best practice guidance within Analytical and Methodological Development for Improved Surveillance of the Great Crested Newt (Freshwater Habitats Trust, 2014).

3 RESULTS

- 3.1 The results of the eDNA survey confirmed likely absence of GCN with 12 out of 12 tests negative for presence of GCN DNA. The test results are provided overleaf.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The absence of GCN in the ephemeral pond in the woodland in the north of the site provides additional evidence to confirm the previous assessment that GCN are likely absent from site.

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Sample ID: ADAS-5295 Condition on Receipt: Medium Sediment Volume: Passed
Client Identifier: Oxted 1 Description: pond water samples in preservative
Date of Receipt: 28/05/2024 Material Tested: eDNA from pond water samples

Determinant	Result	Method	Date of Analysis
Inhibition Control [†]	0 of 2	Real Time PCR	31/05/2024
Degradation Control [‡]	Within Limits	Real Time PCR	31/05/2024
Great Crested Newt*	0 of 12 (GCN negative)	Real Time PCR	31/05/2024
Negative PCR Control (Nuclease Free Water)	0 of 4	Real Time PCR	As above for GCN
Positive PCR Control (GCN DNA 10 ⁻⁴ ng/μL) [‡]	4 of 4	Real Time PCR	As above for GCN

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Signed:

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eDNA analysis was carried out in accordance with the stipulated methodology found in the Technical Advice Note (WC1067 Appendix 5 Technical Advice Note) published by DEFRA and adopted by Natural England.

** If all PCR controls and extraction blanks give the expected results a sample is considered: negative for great crested newt if all of the replicates are negative; positive for great crested newt if one or more of the replicates are positive.*

[†] Recorded as the number of positive replicate reactions at expected C_t value. If the expected C_t value is not achieved, the sample is considered inhibited and is diluted as per the technical advice note prior to amplification with great crested newt primer and probes.

[‡] No degradation is expected within time frame of kit preparation, sample collection and analysis.

[‡] Additional positive controls (10⁻¹, 10⁻², 10⁻³ ng/μL) are also routinely run, results not shown here.

Appendix 1: Interpretation of results

Sample Condition

Upon sample receipt we score your samples according to quality: good, low sediment, medium sediment, high sediment, white precipitate, and presence of algae.

There are three reasons as to why sediment should be avoided:

1. It is possible for DNA to persist within the sediment for longer than it would if it was floating in the water which could lead to a false positive result i.e. in this case GCN not recently present but present a long time ago
2. In some cases sediment can cause inhibition of the PCR analysis used to detect GCN eDNA within samples which could lead to an indeterminate result.
3. In some cases sediment can interfere with the DNA extraction procedure resulting in poor recovery of the eDNA which in turn can lead to an indeterminate result.

Algae can make the DNA extraction more difficult to perform so if it can be avoided then this is helpful.

Sometimes samples contain a white precipitate which we have found makes the recovery of eDNA very difficult. This precipitate can be present in such high amounts that it interferes with the eDNA extraction process meaning that we cannot recover the degradation control (nor most likely the eDNA itself) at sufficient levels for the control to be within the acceptable limits for the assay, therefore we have to classify these type of samples as indeterminate.

What do my results mean?

A positive result means that great crested newts are present in the water or have been present in the water in the recent past (eDNA degrades over around 7-21 days).

A negative result means that DNA from the great crested newt has not been detected in your sample.

On occasion an inconclusive result will be issued. This occurs where the DNA from the great crested newt has not been detected but the controls have indicated that either: the sample has been degraded and/or the eDNA was not fully extracted (poor recovery); or the PCR inhibited in some way. This may be due to the water chemistry or may be due to the presence of high levels of sediment in samples which can interfere with the DNA extraction process. A re-test could be performed but a fresh sample would need to be obtained. We have successfully performed re-tests on samples which have had high sediment content on the first collection and low sediment content (through improved sample collection) on the re-test. If water chemistry was the cause of the indeterminate then a re-test would most likely also return an inconclusive result.

The results will be recorded as indeterminate if the GCN result is negative and the degradation result is recorded as:

1. evidence of decay - meaning that the degradation control was outside of accepted limits
2. evidence of degradation or residual inhibition - meaning that the degradation control was outside of accepted limits but that this could have been due to inhibitors not being removed sufficiently by the dilution of inhibited samples (according to the technical advice note)