

Observations of the smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and the great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* climbing drift fences in Britain

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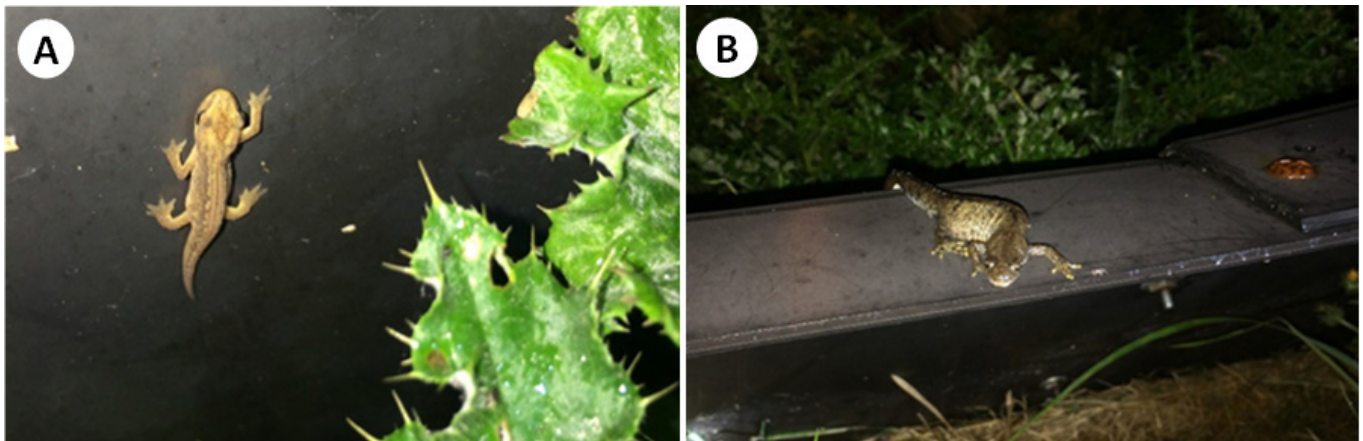


Figure 1. Newts climbing drift fences- **A.** Juvenile smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* scaling a plastic drift fence, **B.** A male great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* climbing a concrete drift fence

In Denmark and Germany, the smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* have been observed scaling vegetation and man-made structures in the form of pitfall traps (Bringsøe, 2013) and both species have been reported scaling vegetation in south-east England (Lynn & Allain, 2022). The feet of both species can adhere quite well to vertical surfaces by suction and surface tension but are not especially adapted for climbing, unlike those of truly arboreal amphibian species with adhesive toe pads (Stebbins & Cohen, 2021). This behaviour of *L. vulgaris* and *T. cristatus* generally goes unnoticed, as most of their activity is at ground level and so does not involve climbing. Herein, I report the first record of the smooth newt *L. vulgaris* and the great crested newt *T. cristatus* climbing drift fences in Britain.

On 29 September 2014, a routine check was made of drift fences deployed to divert amphibians away from roads along Nature's Way, Peterborough on the border of Hampton Nature Reserve. The fences were vertical and between 30–60 cm high. At 23:44 h, two *L. vulgaris* (Fig. 1A) were observed climbing over a plastic drift fence (52° 32'24.0" N, 0° 16'51.6" W). Additional observations were made on 6 October 2014 along the road. The first was at 22:17 h, where a male *T. cristatus* (Fig. 1B) was observed climbing over a concrete drift fence (52° 32'17.9" N, 0° 16'54.8" W), and the second at 22:29 h was of a *L. vulgaris* climbing the plastic drift fence (52° 32'24.0" N, 0° 16'51.6" W). In all instances, the observations were made at night, during favourable weather and temperature conditions for amphibians, and all newts were successful in climbing over the drift fences.

From these observations, it is clear that both *L. vulgaris* and *T. cristatus* can bypass drift fences. This has the potential to reduce both the recording rate in amphibian surveys and the efficiency of arrangements to avoid road kill. Further research to establish the proportion of individuals that climb drift fences would clarify the significance of this behaviour and alert practitioners to any need there might be for taking action to prevent it.

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