

Press Release:

Attenborough, Livingstone and The Archers receive Newt Year Honours, Froglife announce

Mayor of London Ken Livingstone, Sir David Attenborough and the script-writers of Radio 4's The Archers receive Froglife's Newt Year Honours, for services to amphibian-kind in 2007.

The alternative awards are recognition for raising public awareness of Great Crested Newts during the year, and promoting their downward plight in the UK.

Mayor Ken Livingstone, a renowned newt-enthusiast, has long-promoted the conservation of Great Crested Newts, supporting environmental projects to ensure their survival and speaking out on behalf of amphibians and reptiles; species he has argued are often neglected out of fear or misunderstanding.

On hearing of the award the Mayor of London said: "Amphibians such as Great Crested Newts are key species in the UK. Being vital parts of the foodchain, they are linked implicitly with the environment, which is itself linked to all of us – and our well-being."

"It's fantastic to be honoured in this way", he commented.

Sir David Attenborough receives a Newt Year Honour in recognition of two year's work on the upcoming 'Life in Cold Blood', the final in Attenborough's Life series. The series will focus on amphibians and reptiles –and the causes of their recent declines- globally.

Script-writers from Radio 4's The Archers were given last minute inclusion thanks to their recent Great Crested Newt storyline, which sees shifty businessman Matt Crawford stopped in his tracks by the discovery of Great Crested Newts on land which he hopes to develop.

Great Crested Newts and their habitats are protected by law, due to substantial declines throughout many parts of their European range.

Of the awards Froglife's Chief Executive Kathy Wormald said: "In the public-eye, amphibian and reptile enthusiasts are few and far between; so these awards are about patting the people on the back who publicly support efforts to conserve these species in the wild."

"Newts rarely receive positive publicity, yet their declining status nationally – as for many amphibians- warrants much more public support."

As 2007 draws to a close, 2008 has officially been listed internationally as the 'Year of the Frog' – a campaign to generate public awareness and understanding of the global amphibian extinction crisis which has been called "the greatest species conservation challenge in the history of humanity."

One third of the world's 4,000 amphibians are officially threatened with extinction.

ENDS

Press enquiries (questions, photos, interview requests):

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Great Crested Newt photo: http://www.froglife.org/pix/great_crested_newt.jpg
Please credit: 'Froglife – www.froglife.org'

Notes:

Froglife is a UK wildlife charity committed to the conservation of amphibians and reptiles – working with people, enhancing lives together for a healthier planet. Visit: www.froglife.org

Facts about Great Crested Newts:

IDENTIFYING FEATURES:

- Adults up to 16cm long.
- Warty skin.
- Belly is orange-yellow with black spots.
- Dark brown to black colour on back with black spots.
- Some warts, notably the sides and legs, might be white-tipped.
- Black and orange striped toes.
- During the breeding season males develop a crest that starts at the head and finishes on the tail, which lies flat on the body when the newt is on land. They have a white stripe through the tail.
- Outside of the breeding season males look similar to females.
- Female do not have a crest or white stripe on the tail; they have an orange line along the base of the tail.
- Young are similar to the adult female. Some have a yellow stripe down the back.

LIKES: Slugs, worms, hiding under logs during the day.

DISLIKES: Exposure to the sun, cats, birds and fish.

CURRENT STATUS: Following significant declines of great crested newts throughout the UK, they have full protection under law against any interference or disturbance.

DISTRIBUTION: Well distributed across lowland England and eastern Wales . Rare or absent in most of Scotland. Prefers large established ponds with lots of vegetation and no fish, as well as deep ditches and canals.