

Umsiedlung einer Geburtshelferkröten-Population (*Alytes obstetricans*) in einem Kalksteinbruch des Niederbergischen Lands (NRW) (Projektbericht 2020–2025)

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Relocation of a midwife toad population (*Alytes obstetricans*) in a limestone quarry in the Niederbergisches Land region (North Rhine-Westphalia) (project report 2020–2025)

We report on the relocation of a midwife toad population from a limestone quarry in the Niederbergisches Land region (town of Wülfrath, district of Mettmann, North Rhine-Westphalia). Operations in the quarry, which opened in 1969, had been suspended since 1983. Instead, the site was leased for commercial use between 1997 and 2021. In the context of the planned resumption of quarrying operations, a significant conflict of interest between quarrying interests and species protection became apparent at an early stage, as the quarry is home to the last large population in the district of the nationally endangered midwife toad (*Alytes obstetricans*). In order to avoid project-related prohibitions, a species protection concept was therefore developed at an early stage, which, in addition to extensive habitat-shaping CEF measures, aims to relocate the population over several years. Between 2020 and 2024, ten foil ponds of various sizes were created on the extensive excavation areas. Between 2021 and 2025, more than 45,000 amphibian larvae of six species (midwife toad, pond newt, alpine newt, common toad, natterjack toad, and pond frog) were transferred from the two most important spawning waters in the quarry to the replacement waters, including over 28,000 *Alytes* larvae. In individual years, we estimated the midwife toad larval population to be approximately 10,000 animals. Taking into account 3 clutches per female per year, 35–40 eggs per clutch, and a hatching rate of approximately 80–90%, this suggests a population of approximately 105 (+/-15) adult females and, assuming a balanced sex ratio, a total population of over 200 adults. In at least three replacement water bodies, midwife toad larvae were detected in the first year after the new site was created, even before active stocking with larvae took place. In at least four other replacement water bodies, independent reproduction has since taken place, apparently due to relocated larvae. The situation remained unclear at the large main water body, where the first larvae were stocked in late summer 2023. Although several dozen calling animals were heard here in spring 2025, the search for larvae in late summer was unsuccessful. It is therefore assumed that the males became sexually mature after their second winter on land, but the females only became sexually mature a year later, which is to be confirmed by corresponding monitoring in 2026. Furthermore, in 2026, the remaining amphibian populations in the quarry are to be collected and relocated between the beginning of March and the end of August using an amphibian fence erected around the two main bodies of water, as quarrying operations are to resume in 2026.

Key words: *Alytes obstetricans*, relocation, limestone quarry, replacement habitats, recording methodology, population estimation, success monitoring.