

FROG FAQs

Frogs are amphibians - creatures that are at home both on land and in water. Because they are cold-blooded their body temperature reflects the surrounding temperature and this makes them tolerant of a wide range of living conditions. There are nearly 2000 different species of frogs world-wide.

What kind of frog am I most likely to see in Britain?

The common frog is the only widespread species here. It varies in colour from green to brown, is approximately 10cm in length, has large bulging eyes, no tail, long hind legs, webbed hind feet and a smooth moist body (which helps it to breathe and regulate its temperature). It lives in damp shady places near water, hibernates during the winter in holes in the ground or in mud at the bottom of a pond, and mates in early spring. Eggs are laid in water by the female and fertilised by the male as they are laid.

What is frogspawn?

Frogspawn is fertilised frogs' eggs surrounded by a protective jelly sac. It's found in ponds in early spring and there can be up to 6000 eggs in a batch. It can be easily distinguished from toadspawn which appears in strings rather than in one big mass.

I would like to collect some frogspawn and watch it hatch - how should I do this?

Spawn is best left in the pond to develop naturally and viewed from the pond side. But we do appreciate that this can be of interest for school children because the development from egg, to tadpole, to froglet is so easily visible. Collect a small handful of spawn and put it in a large jar or small aquarium, preferably containing pond/rainwater. Write down the date on which the eggs hatch (usually about 2 weeks after being laid) and then watch how they change. Up to 6-8 weeks old, tadpoles are rather fish-like with a long swimming tail but no limbs, and at this stage they will eat pond weed. The first change to occur is the disappearance of the external gills and the development of internal gills which are later replaced by lungs. Once the back legs begin to grow, feed them on a few pellets of rabbit food from your pet shop or tie a small piece of raw meat hung on a string in the water. Tadpoles develop front legs after 14 weeks and by 16 weeks they'll have lost their tails. Put some stones in the tank so that they can climb out of the water on their newly acquired legs to breathe. The last change to occur is the disappearance of the tail. At this point return your little froglets to their pond, placing them in a damp area nearby.

Why is it important to protect frogs?

Frogs have suffered from a variety of environmental changes such as pollution of air and water, filling in of ponds, increasing urbanisation, and the dense network of roads. It has been estimated that in the last 50 years the frog population in Britain has fallen from around 300 million to about 7 million. They form an important part of the ecological chain, helping to control insects and other pests as well as being a source of food themselves for birds, reptiles and mammals.

How can I help to protect frogs?

- make a pond in your own garden and don't stock it with fish, which eat tadpoles.
- if your pond freezes make a small hole in the ice to allow the pond to breathe. This can be done by floating a small ball in the pond
- spawn should be left in the pond where it was laid - moving spawn it is discouraged because of the risk of spreading disease
- Join a local amphibian and reptile group

Do you know?

- A frog's tongue is attached to the inside of its lower lip with the tip of the tongue dangling down the throat. When catching food the tongue darts out rapidly and catches the prey on the sticky tip
- A frog will try to go back to the pond where it was spawned to breed.
- Frogs are very good at communicating with each other. Their hearing cells are adapted to receive particular frequencies of noise, and its vocal sacs can force air through the larynx at various rates and frequencies to make strange croaking noises.
- Once upon a time it was thought that hanging a small live frog around a child's neck would cure whooping cough.

Contact

Froglife 01733 558960

