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Factsheet Number 5

Frog Facts

The common frog is the most widespread amphibian species in Staffordshire and indeed the British Isles. Each spring the Wildlife Trust receives numerous enquiries concerning frogs, frog spawn and tadpoles. This fact sheet attempts to answer some of the most commonly asked questions.

Should I move frog spawn, tadpoles or frogs?

The movement of frogs and their spawn should be avoided wherever possible.

By taking spawn or adults to another pond you may increase the risk of spreading disease. There is increasing evidence that diseases affecting frog populations can be spread by movement of infected spawn and adults from one pond to another.

Moving frogs, tadpoles or spawn can also result in the transfer of unwanted invasive plants and animals, including predatory fish. Such accidental transfers can drastically effect the wildlife value of the pond.

Introducing frogs to a new pond doesn't mean that they will thrive there. The new pond may be unsuitable for frogs, there may be high populations of predatory fish present for example, or the surrounding area may not provide suitable habitat for adult frogs to feed.

Do I have too many frogs/too much frog spawn in my pond?

Amphibians are naturally abundant

Sometimes garden ponds can seem to be over-crowded with clumps of spawn, tadpoles, or adult frogs. However, as long as you have not introduced animals from elsewhere, this is a perfectly normal situation. Amphibians can experience huge fluctuations in numbers, and by laying large amounts of eggs they can ensure that at least some of their offspring will survive the many perils they face in the first few weeks of life. It has been worked out that only around 2 or 3 per cent of frog eggs survive long enough to become adults.

Frogs are important as natural prey of mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and aquatic invertebrates. The survival of spawn, tadpoles and adult frogs can also be limited by destruction of habitat, extremes of water temperature and drying out of ponds.

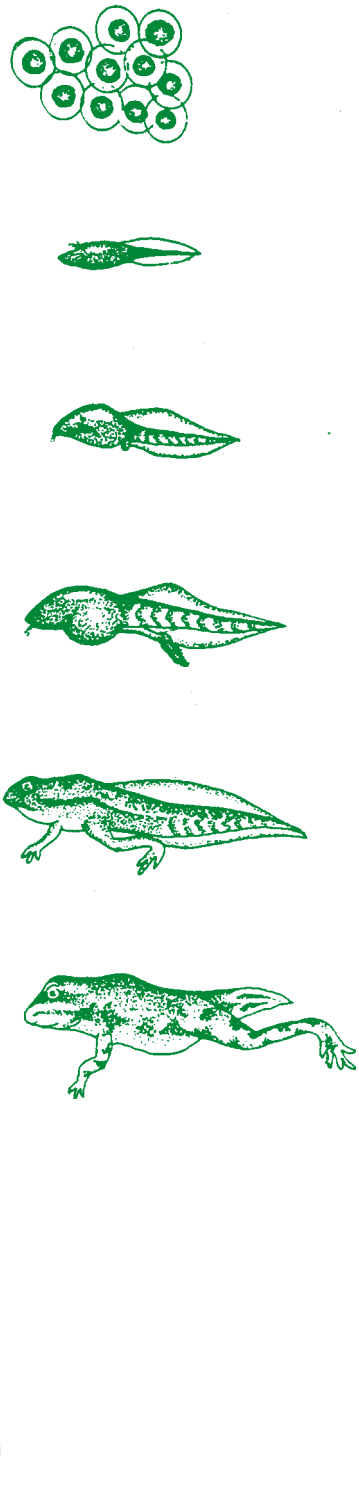
These factors ensure that there is often a high mortality rate, only a fraction of those potential frogs originally deposited as spawn will hop out as froglets. Even fewer will become adult frogs able to breed themselves.

Competition between tadpoles will ensure that only those best suited to the rigours of pond life will survive.

Will frogs harm the fish in my pond?

Fish benefit from living with frogs.

Occasionally frogs or toads grasp hold of fish and may (very rarely) end up damaging them. This tends to happen early in the breeding season when there is a large number of male frogs seeking to pair up with the less abundant females, and in desperation the males may grab onto almost anything they can. This is a rare occurrence however, and will only happen for a few days in the spring. In fact frogs are beneficial to fish in garden ponds since their spawn and tadpoles provide an ideal food source. Overall the fish benefit from the otherwise happy coexistence.



I would like to have frogs in my pond. Where can I get them from?

The best way to stock your pond with amphibians is to leave them to do it for you.

Frogs, toads and newts can enhance your garden greatly, adding to its wildlife value, providing educational interest for children and helping to control the pest species which try to turn your plants into a meal.

A great many households derive pleasure from watching their resident frogs return to breed year after year and in doing so play an increasingly important role in the conservation of amphibians as their wild habitats become more and more scarce. However, introducing frogs to a new pond artificially should be avoided, the site may be unsuitable for them (the Abandonment of Animals Act indicates that it is illegal to introduce animals into unsuitable places), and there is a risk of spreading disease.

In most cases amphibians will colonise a pond naturally within a few years if the habitat is suitable for them.