

Durham Wildlife Trust

Conserving Wildlife from Tees to Tyne



Tadpoles and spawn in garden ponds

Concerned about too many tadpoles in your pond? During the spring frogs return to ponds to breed and lay eggs (spawn) in high concentrations. It is perfectly natural to have a high number of frogs laying eggs and therefore a large amount of spawn in your pond. A high proportion of these eggs will be eaten by other wildlife and of the survivors high competition for food will ensure only the strongest individuals survive. Only about 1 in 50 eggs will progress to froglet stage to leave the pond. There is no need to worry that your pond is over populated with spawn or tadpoles, instead sit back and enjoy watching nature unfold in your garden.



Can tadpoles be moved or relocated?

Spawn, tadpoles or adult amphibians should not be moved or relocated between wild ponds and public water bodies as there is a risk of unwittingly introducing diseases or invasive plants alongside the spawn. Furthermore, adult amphibians will often return to the same site which may not be suitable for future breeding. Amphibians will naturally colonise ponds which are suitable habitats so instead of introducing spawn into your garden pond focus on making the best possible habitat in your pond and surrounding garden and wildlife will soon move in!

Frogs will often lay eggs in small water bodies, sometimes a puddle of watering can. This has the advantage of fewer predators in the water but with the added risk of drying up. If you are concerned about tadpoles at threat of drying out they should be moved into a garden pond within 1 mile area. Due to the risk of disease transmission and invasive plants as mentioned above they should never be relocated into a wild habitat or public water bodies.

Tadpoles in Autumn and Winter

The majority of tadpoles will complete their transformation into adulthood through the summer. However, if there has been a shortage of food in the pond or if the pond has been cold through the summer then some tadpoles may overwinter in their larval form and wait until next spring to turn fully into froglets. These individuals stand a better chance of survival if they remain in tadpole form in the pond rather than as very small froglets through winter so if you notice tadpoles in the Autumn it is better to resist the temptation to supplement feed them so they remain as tadpoles until more favourable spring conditions.

Spawn and frosty icy weather

It is not hugely uncommon for some early spawn to be laid before another cold snap in the weather comes along. While exposed spawn will be destroyed by frost some of the spawn at lower levels may be protected by the eggs above it. It is quite possible that frogs will lay a second batch of spawn following the cold spell. If you are concerned about survival during a cold spell some spawn can be moved into a bucket and kept in a more sheltered area until the cold weather passes.

Tell us about your amphibian sightings

Amphibians are a wonderful part of our local wildlife and we would love to hear about where you are seeing these iconic animals. Please record all your amphibian sightings at www.durhamwt.com

Durham Wildlife Trust is the only charity dedicated to conserving wildlife and delivering environmental education across County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. The support of our members allows us to manage nature reserves, work with schools and community groups and deliver projects to conserve threatened habitats and species.

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Rainton Meadows, Chilton Moor, Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne & Wear. DH4 6PU.

0191 5843112

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