



Somerset
Wildlife Trust



Great Somerset
Wildlife Count

Frog & Toad Spawn Count

1 January - 31 March 2024

Dear Supporter,

Thank you so much for taking part in our Frog & Toad Spawn Count!

The count is part of the **Great Somerset Wildlife Count** – a community science initiative delivered in partnership with Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC). Its aim is to monitor changes in both the diversity (the variety) of wildlife species we have in the county and the abundance (the quantity) of species we have across the county – both of which also help us track the health of the habitats and ecosystems that exist to support them (and us), which are coming under increasing pressure from changes in our climate.

If we don't notice wildlife declines, we run the risk of losing species forever. There's gaps in our knowledge that we need YOUR help to fill.

How to take part

Step 1 - You've already taken the first step by downloading this pack...thank you!

Step 2 - Create an iNaturalist account.

We've chosen to collect wildlife data for all the counts for the Great Somerset Wildlife Count using this brilliant platform. It's really easy to use and once you have set up an account and joined the Great Somerset Wildlife Count project, you can see all our other counts – including the Frog & Toad Spawn Count. Download the app on your phone and you can be popping in your sightings on the go!

What to do first

- Go to www.inaturalist.org
- Click on the Sign Up button
- You can create a username and password specifically for iNaturalist or sign in with a social media account
- That's it! You'll then see a welcome message.
- If you want to just take part in the Frog & Toad Spawn Count for now, using the search bar, search for it and then click 'join' the project. If you think you might like to see all the counts we run during the year, search for and sign up to the Great Somerset Wildlife Count project too as this will host all of our counts in one place.

Need some help? There is a [video on the webpage](#) that takes you through the sign up.

What do I do?

Nothing out of the ordinary! We want you to record the presence of both toad and frogspawn in your garden ponds, local community ponds, and any ponds you come across in your adventures in the countryside. Frogspawn is laid in clumps and toadspawn is laid as 'strings of pearls' in a line. When you see it, just open up the App and record it! If you don't have your phone on you, you can make a note and then do it when you get home from your laptop.

Where to look?

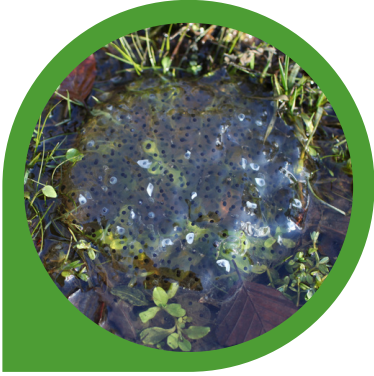
On the next page you can find out when and where you can find toad and frogspawn, as well as some of the adults you might come across.

Thank you,

Somerset Wildlife Trust



What to look out for & species guide



Frogspawn

The frogspawn of the common frog can be found just below the surface of ponds and other shallow, still water across the UK from around February onwards. But the timing can vary depending on where you are in the country and the weather conditions that year. Ponds that are shady and have lots of reeds and other vegetation around them are particularly popular with breeding frogs. But frogs will even lay their spawn in temporary puddles. You shouldn't move frogspawn from one pond to another, because conditions in the new pond may not be suitable and it can also spread diseases deadly to amphibians.



Toadspawn

Toadspawn can also be found between February to March, although breeding tends to be a little later than common frogs. Toads lay their spawn in deeper water than frogs and in long strings wrapped around vegetation. A string of up to 7 metres can contain over 4000 eggs! When you do find toad or frogspawn, as with all wildlife, it's better to enjoy it from a distance and not disturb it.



Common European Frog

Common frogs breed in ponds during the spring and spend much of the rest of the year feeding in woodland, gardens, hedgerows and tussocky grassland. They feed on a variety of invertebrates and even smaller amphibians. The common frog varies in colour enormously, from green to brown and even red or yellow. It has smooth skin, a dark 'mask' behind the eye and long back legs, covered in dark bands and it hops and jumps rather than walks.



Common European Toad

Common toads hibernate over winter, often under log piles, stones or even in old flower pots! Toads are famous for their mass migrations back to their breeding ponds on the first warm, damp evenings of the year, often around St. Valentine's Day. The common toad has olive-brown, warty skin, copper eyes and short back legs. It walks rather than hops, and lays its spawn in long strings around aquatic plants, with two rows of eggs per string.



Pool Frog

The northern pool frog became extinct in England at the end of the 20th century; it has since been reintroduced but remains our rarest species of native amphibian. Northern pool frogs are predominantly brown in colour with darker blotches, and a light yellow or green stripe along the back. They are similar in size to common frogs, and as with that species, male pool frogs are slightly smaller than female pool frogs. Pool frogs also have more pointed heads and longer legs than common frogs.



Natterjack Toad

Smaller than the common toad, the natterjack toad is very rare. This amphibian breeds in warm, shallow pools on sand dunes and sandy heaths in just a handful of special places in England and Scotland; sadly, just one or two colonies now remain in south east England and east anglia. The natterjack toad is more olive-green in colour than the common toad, and has a distinguishing yellow stripe running down its back. It tends to run instead of walking or hopping, giving it the name the 'Running toad'.



On the next page you can find some handy, printable spotter guides for other species you may come across on your adventures this winter.

For families taking part, we hope you enjoy colouring in the frog mask! Why not share your creations on our Facebook page?



www.facebook.com/somersetwildlifetrust

Cold blood detective



wildlife
watch



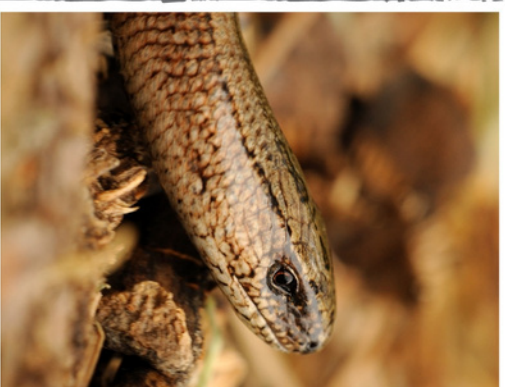
Common frog



Grass snake



Smooth (common) newt



Slow worm



Natterjack toad



Common lizard



Common toad



Adder



Great-crested newt



Sand lizard

Pond wildlife



wildlife
watch



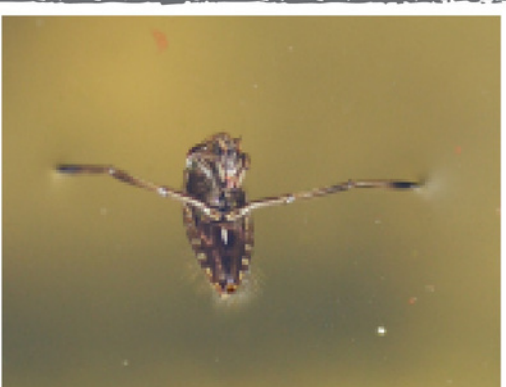
Whirligig beetle



Pond skater



Pond snail



Backswimmer



Common frog



Common toad



Smooth newt



Yellow iris



Damselfly

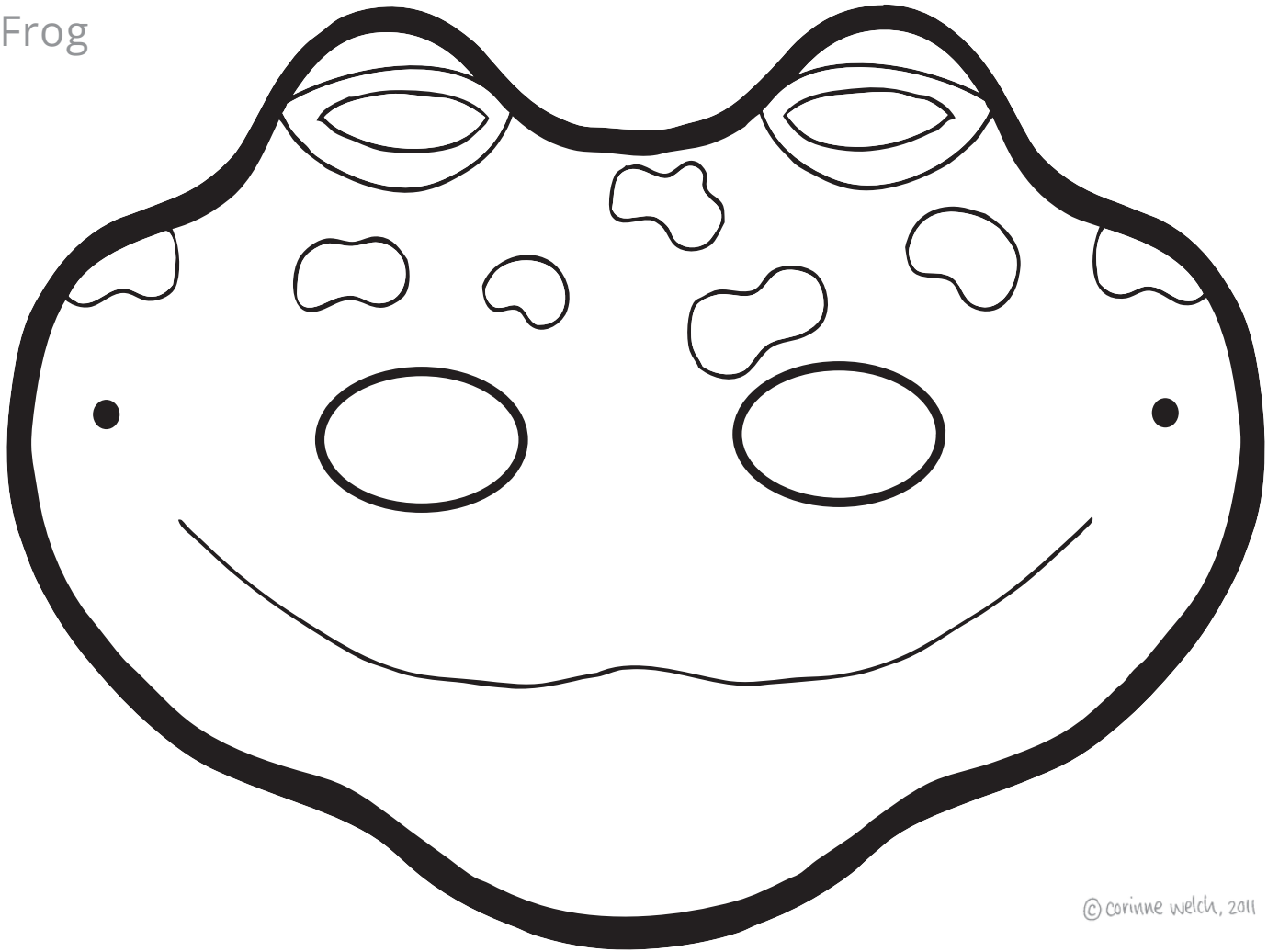


Common darter



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Frog



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