



# YounGnats Newsletter February 2017

## Frogs and Toads

During the winter frogs and toads do not hibernate but will find a safe 'frost free' home, in a compost heap, under a shed or in a pile of logs, where they will stay dormant. As overnight temperatures begin to increase at this time of year - to more than 5°C - frogs and toads will start to emerge and head to a pond or stream. Frogs and toads are called amphibians which mean they can live on land or in the water. So keep your eyes open when you are out and about in the countryside or even your garden to see if you can find any frogs and toads. The table below provides a guide on how to spot the difference.

Common Frog	Common Toad
	
Smooth moist skin	Rough 'warty' looking skin
Pointed snout (nose)	Blunt snout
Gold coloured eye	Copper coloured eye
Triangular stripe behind the eye	No eye stripe
Long powerful back legs for jumping	Shorter hind legs, compared to frogs,, so more often crawl than jump
Frog spawn is laid in clumps, usually in shallow water – sometimes even puddles	Toad spawn is laid in long strips, often wrapped around vegetation and in deeper water
Tadpoles are black at first but become a mottled brown colour	Tadpoles are jet black and remain so

Sometimes frogs and toads can be found as much as several hundred metres from a body of water. So gardens, particularly if they have a compost heap or log piles can be excellent habitat for frogs and toads, there doesn't have to be a pond.

In the spring when frogs and toads make their way to water, it is so they can breed. Sometimes a pond looks 'overcrowded' with frog or toads. However this is quite natural, as they will only stay a few weeks.

For more detailed information on all types of British amphibians visit the Froglife website [www.froglife.org](http://www.froglife.org)

## Did you know.....?

The UK is a wildlife migration hot spot. Approximately 1.7 million Swallows, 180,000 Swifts and 32,000 Cuckoos arrive from Africa in spring to breed, while around 720,000 Fieldfares and 7,000 Bewick Swans arrive in autumn from Scandinavia and the Arctic to escape the harsh winters.

- Swallows and Cuckoos arrive in April, Swifts arrive in May.
- Swallows cover 320 km a day, mainly during daylight, at speeds of 27 to 35 km per hour.
- Swallows, Swifts and House Martins return to the same place as previous year.
- Swallows weigh 18g, the same as two £1 coins. Swifts weigh 40g, the same as a Cadbury's Creme Egg.
- Swifts almost never land, except at their nest sites, they even sleep 'on the wing'.
- Swifts gather flying insects to feed their young; each food ball contains 300 to 1,000 insects.
- Swallows live to an average age of 4, for Swifts it is 7, but they can live up to 20 years.

## A Place to visit this spring – Flitwick Wood



Particularly between late April and mid-May Flitwick Wood is one of Bedfordshire's secret joys. The wood can be accessed from Tennyson Road, Flitwick (OS ref TL02543500), where you will find a useful "information Board". There is a circular surfaced path suitable for wheelchairs and buggies. You will hear woodland birds singing and bees buzzing everywhere searching for nectar from the many wild flowers that include Primroses, wild Daffodils as well as a multitude of Bluebells & Ramsoms.

Go and explore and tell us all about your visit. You can record any butterflies and other creatures that you saw at <http://www.bnhs.co.uk/adnoto>

**Have you been to one of our YounGnats events?** The next one you may like to come along to is:

- Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February – Sharpenhoe Clappers 10.30am - Walk for winter wildlife and traces of Iron Age hill fort. Meet in Sharpenhoe Clappers car park TL065295.
- Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March - Bromham Mill 10.30am - Walk for early spring wildlife. Meet at Bromham Mill café TL010507.
- Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April – Flitwick Manor Park 7pm. - A walk in one of the earliest planted arboretums in Britain. Meet at the site entrance, limited parking in local streets TL032342, MK45 1HU.

These events are FREE, why not bring along your friends.

See [www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/](http://www.bnhs.co.uk/youngnats/) for more details and a selection of interesting articles.

If you have enjoyed this newsletter, or have ideas for future ones, please contact us via our website.