

## FROGS by Dave and Gill Shearing

Well, Spring is well underway. The cold winds that we have been experiencing have curbed my interest in getting out into the garden. However, the plants, birds and other wildlife are not deterred, as their activity is governed by the increase in day length rather than just temperature. Those of you with ponds may be lucky enough to have activity of an Amphibian nature in them. Frogs, Toads and Newts are all spawning around this time. Today, let's talk about Frogs.



In the UK we have two native species of Frog (Common Frog and the very rare Pool Frog) as well as a number of introduced species such as the Marsh Frog and Edible Frog.

The Common Frog was once very abundant and large numbers of breeding pairs could be found in March and April in most ponds of the UK.



The Males and Females pair up and the Male grasps the Female around the neck with his front legs. As the Female lays her eggs the Male fertilizes them. At first the eggs are quite small and laid in a clump but their jelly coating expands as it absorbs water (looking like tapioca).

A week or so later the eggs hatch into tiny tadpoles. These initially feed on their egg sac and the jelly coating. They then move on to eating algae and microscopic animals. Eventually they develop legs (back legs first) and their tail is absorbed and disappears. At this point they will leave the pond en masse and spend their time on land in damp areas feeding on small worms and insects. After two years they will return to the pond that they hatched in and breed.

The effect of diseases such as 'Red Leg disease' has resulted in a massive reduction in numbers. There is a viral condition called Rana virus, which also affects them.

