

Mystery Sounds

Episode Two

Text and photos by Tom Forward



The great nocturnal migrations of frogs and toads back to their breeding ponds is a welcome sign of spring. The list of survival challenges for these amphibians is long.

There are two simple actions we can take to improve their fortunes:

- Build a garden pond.
- Keep dogs and cats away from ponds, especially during the breeding season and if they have recently been treated for fleas or worms. Commonly used flea and worm treatments can get into the water this way, at levels which are lethally toxic for aquatic life.

Mystery sound 1



Common Frog *Rana temporaria*

Who doesn't love the sight of clumps of spawn adorning the edges of a pond in early spring, and the [low-croaking love songs of the males](#) uttered to attract a female. The beauty of these mottled-skinned animals is that you can observe so much of their lifecycle from spawn to tadpoles, to the froglet stage when they depart the ponds in summer.

Common Frogs in my 80cm x 50cm garden pond.

Mystery Sound 2



Common toad *Bufo bufo*

Toads, with their blunter faces, more bulging eyes and warty skin are quite different from frogs. The males have a higher-pitched chirping croak and the females lay spawn in long strings which they tangle amongst plants emerging from the pond margins. Over-enthusiastic males can often form frenetic [mating balls](#) around a female during the breeding season.

Mating Common Toads with strings of spawn.

What happens when you cross a frog and a toad?



Sometimes in the heat of the occasion, at a mass spawning event in the dark, confusion arises. While out recording for the podcast at Ellison's Pond, my seven year old son Joseph spotted a male Common Frog mating with a female Common Toad!

Although this is not an unusual occurrence in ponds shared by frogs and toads, no offspring can arise from this pairing.

The frog-toad combo as Ellison's Pond, Ashdown Forest.