

# EUROPEAN COMMON FROG

As the cold of winter gives way to the cooler, mild climate of spring, a familiar scene to accompany this time are the rafts of frogspawn, across shallow water bodies, dotted across the Irish landscape. Found across most of Europe, as far east as parts of Russia, and as far west as our own shores, The European common frog (*Rana temporaria*), is the only species of frog found in Ireland. Found in almost any **habitat** with nearby suitable breeding ponds, many of these areas are located within our National Park.

Frogs are amphibians, meaning they are able to survive in water and on land, and are well adapted to both environments. They spend their **larval stage** underwater, eventually spending most of their adult lives in damp areas near marsh or ponds, or in long grasses. They are usually a shade of olive-green or brown, although species have been found from shades of pink to darker reds and black. The adult females tend to be larger than their male counterparts. The males grow up to be 9cm in length with the females growing as large as 13cm.

Frogs overwinter in hibernation. They are cold blooded, meaning they take on the temperature of their surroundings, which would make it difficult for them survive this time of year in the wild. When the temperatures become milder, they emerge from this state, and it is time for them to breed. They do so in shallow waterbodies, such as puddles, ponds or bog pools and from February onwards frogspawn will be visible in these areas across much of the country. These rafts of spawn can contain up to 2,000 eggs, with each egg being surrounded by a clear jelly like capsule. Tadpoles begin to emerge around April to May, **metamorphosing** into froglets, and leaving the pond around June to July. During this period, they are most active during the night when they feed on a variety of invertebrates.

Adult frogs eat insects and other invertebrates such as slugs and worms. They catch their prey with their long, sticky tongues. Young tadpoles feed on pond algae before becoming **carnivorous** in later life. From late summer through autumn the adult frogs and new froglets begin preparing for their winter hibernation. During the winter months, they find refuge under rocks, compost heaps, or even underwater, buried within the mud and vegetation on

the surface. Although in a hibernation like state, they can emerge to feed during this time taking advantage of milder weather that might occur.

**The common frog is protected under the European Union Habitats Directive and by the Irish Wildlife Act.**

## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Habitat:** The type of natural environment where a plant or animal lives.

**Larval Stage:** An early stage of an animal's life before they change into their adult form. For example in the frog, the larval stage is the part of the lifecycle spent as a tadpole.

**Metamorphosing:** This is the word given to the process of change that occurs from the juvenile stage of an animal to its adult form. For the frog this would be: Egg → Tadpole → Froglet → Frog

**Carnivorous (carnivore):** The name given to an animal that eats only meat. Humans are **omnivores** meaning we eat both meat and plants. Other animals that only eat plant-based foods are called **herbivores**.

# QUIZ SHEET

1. How many species of frog are found in Ireland?

---

2. What is the name given to an animal that can survive in water and on land?

---

3. What colours can the common frog be?

---

4. What time of year are you most likely to see frogspawn?

---

5. How many eggs can frogspawn contain?

---

6. When do tadpoles begin to emerge?

---

7. What sizes can the male and female adult frog grow up to?

---

8. Name three things an adult frog will eat?

---

9. Where do frogs and froglets hibernate?

---

10. What areas of the National Park are you most likely to find frogs?

---