

### **Common Toad *Bufo bufo***

Common toads spend the winter lying dormant in places such as compost heaps, beneath log piles or in crevices in walls, sometimes coming out to forage for invertebrates. They are generally nocturnal and emerge on damp, mild nights when the temperature is above 5 degrees Centigrade. In the Bromley area breeding typically occurs in March, sometimes going on into April, but will vary from year to year and according to site. When toads are mature enough to breed (2-3 years old) they return to the pond where they were originally spawned, travelling up to 400 metres (occasionally as much as 2kms) but if suitable ponds are constructed en route to the original breeding pond these may be used. Males often start to move first and will wait around the pond for females to arrive and then climb on their backs. When they are returning to ponds many are killed on roads. Toadspawn is laid in long ribbons wound around the underwater stems of pond plants so toad ponds will have submerged and/or emergent plants. Vegetation around pond margins is also very important, providing toadlets leaving the pond protection from drying out and from predators such as birds. Native plants in and around ponds are always better than non-native as they are used as food by the invertebrates which are then eaten by toad poles and toads. The ideal toad pond is deeper than that required by frogs and has a depth in some areas of 90cms. Toadlets leave ponds in large numbers over a few days in summer. Toads spend most of their lives on land, living in scrub, woodland, beneath hedgerows or in coarse grassland feeding at night on insects, worms, slugs and other invertebrates.

According to Froglife, toad populations in south-east England have fallen by more than 68% since 1986.

Records of toads in the London Borough of Bromley submitted to Bromley Biodiversity Partnership Species and Habitats Sub-Group in 2017 show that there are breeding ponds in High Elms Country Park, gardens in Newstead Avenue near Newstead Woods, and West Way Petts Wood. Records of toads in terrestrial habitat suggest it would be worth looking for breeding ponds in the Keston Common/Padmall area, ponds around Belmont Lane and Bull Lane allotments Chislehurst, Covet Wood area, ponds in the area of Lower Chesham Allotments Elmers End, Crystal Palace Park, near Bromley Hill cemetery, ponds near The Knoll and Westgate Road Beckenham, near Manor Park Road West Wickham and Green Street Green.

The toad survey was repeated in 2018 with posters going out earlier than in 2017. 24 records were received. Breeding was confirmed at Keston and toads were also reported breeding in the pond at Spring Park and in nearby garden ponds, garden ponds near Coney Hall, near Grove Park Cemetery, near Crofton Woods, near Sundridge Park (known in the past for ponds where toads bred) garden ponds near Hollydale Open Space, near the Hawkwood Estate in Chislehurst and in the Norman Park area. New areas where adult toads were reported include Nash Farm near Keston, Darrick Wood and Scadbury Park (under log near Pond 5). Toads had previously been noted breeding in most ponds at Scadbury during a 2016 pond survey.

Surveys in 2002/3 also recorded toads in Jubilee Country Park, The Warren, Bassetts Pond and Camden Park. It would be useful to recheck these sites in 2019.

### **Next steps: Work for 2019**

Results from 2017 and 2018 have revealed a few ponds where toads breed and many areas where the presence of juvenile toads suggest they are likely to be breeding nearby, but hard evidence regarding which ponds is often lacking. In 2019 we therefore need to look at some of the possible ponds to see if we can confirm where they are definitely breeding. The easiest and safest way to do this is to have a look, in daylight, for male and female toads in amplexus (a male on top of and holding onto the larger female) in or very near to a pond. Help with this would be very much appreciated but it is very important that great care is

taken near ponds, the banks of which may be very slippery at this time of year. Using binoculars to look from a short distance away should be ok but we urge that no-one takes any risks in looking out for toads. If anyone is interested in having a look for toads in amplexus, please contact [bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com](mailto:bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com) Information received regarding when amplexus is first noted in the borough can be sent to interested parties so they know when to start checking nearby ponds.

### Threats to Toads

- Loss of suitable ponds
- Loss of suitable terrestrial habitat (scrub, rough grassland, hedgerows, walls with crevices)
- Habitat fragmentation: death on roads
- A decline invertebrate prey
- Pesticides (indirect effect: decline in invertebrate numbers, direct effect: build up of pesticide within toads from having eaten poisoned invertebrates).

### The following measures could help toads in Bromley:

1. Plant more native species in gardens and encourage others including schools and sports grounds to plant hedgerows of native species and leave areas of grass uncut during the summer. This would help to increase prey items available for toads because the invertebrates they eat tend to be adapted to live on native species rather than exotic plants.
2. Decrease pesticide and herbicide use and encourage others to do the same.
3. Have a wild area in your garden or local park with some scrub, a log pile and a pond.
4. If you are thinking of creating a pond which might be suitable for toads remember it needs to be about 90cms deep in some parts, contain pond plants which toadspawn could be wrapped around and include some marginal vegetation in which they can hide and feed on emergence. See <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk> for further advice.
5. When toadlets are emerging from ponds stop cutting or strimming grass in this area for a week or so until they have disappeared.
6. Consider contacting Froglife regarding helping toads cross roads: see [www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads](http://www.froglife.org/what-we-do/toads-on-roads)
7. Continue to send records to [bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com](mailto:bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com)