

Midwife Toad

Species Description

Scientific name: *Alytes obstetricans*

AKA: Llyffant Magu (Welsh)

Native to: West and south-west Europe

Habitat: Wide range of habitats including uncultivated land and gardens

The Midwife toad is a small amphibian with adults rarely exceeding 5 cm, ranging in colour from grey to brown with green blotches. They are nocturnal, hiding under debris or in crevices during the day. Their pupils are vertical 'cat-like', and they have no large glands behind the eyes. Males have a distinctive 'peep' call made during the spring. After the female lays her eggs, the male will attach the eggs to his hind legs and carry them until they are due to hatch, when he deposits them into ponds or small water bodies.

Accidentally introduced with water plants to a garden in Bedford in the late 1800s. Since then populations have been deliberately introduced to other gardens in Yorkshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Devon, where they have established breeding colonies. At present it is not believed that they pose a threat to native fauna.

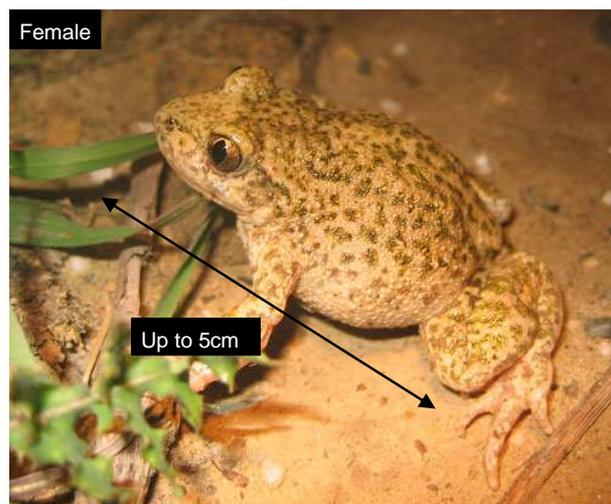
Midwife toad is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such, it is an offence to release or allow the escape of this species into the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



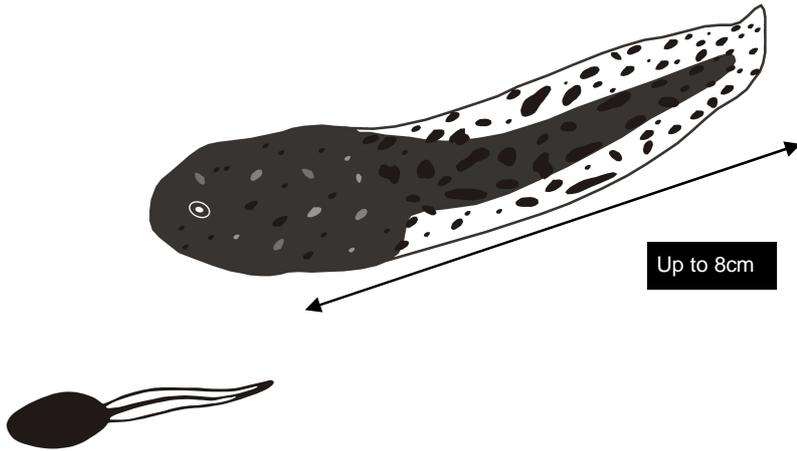
Key ID Features

Small toads with distinctive vertical pupils and no large glands behind the eyes. Grey-brown colour with green blotches.



Identification throughout the year

Tadpoles are brown with black blotches along their tail and can grow up to 8cm in length.

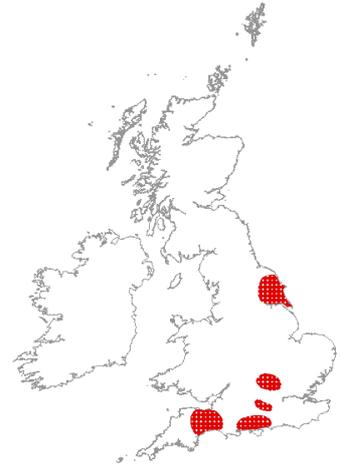


Common toad tadpole up to 3cm

Up to 8cm

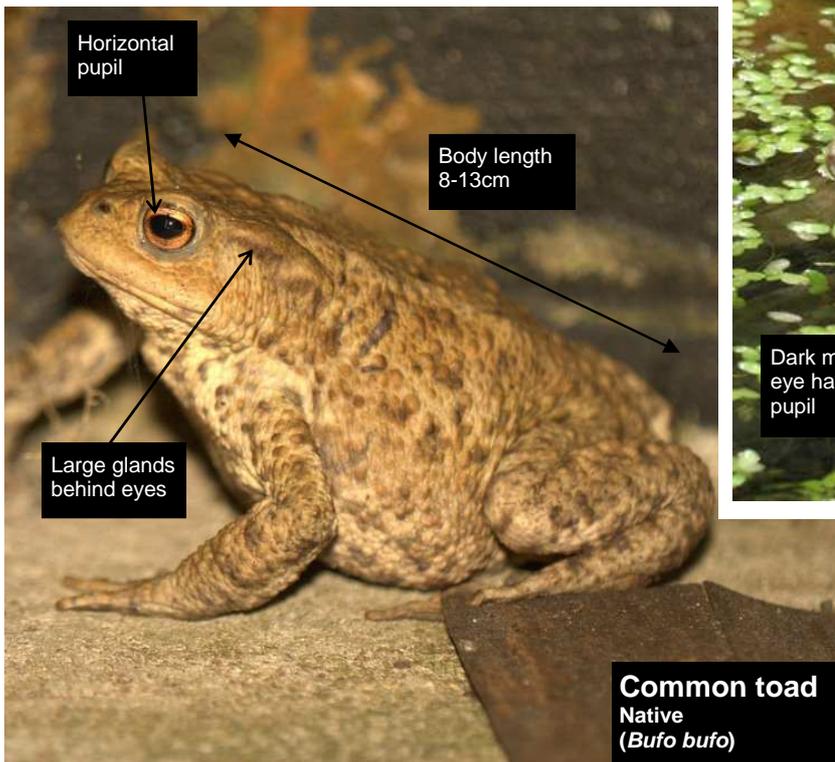
Distribution

Populations found in Bedfordshire, Yorkshire, Northamptonshire, Hampshire, Devon and South-West London.

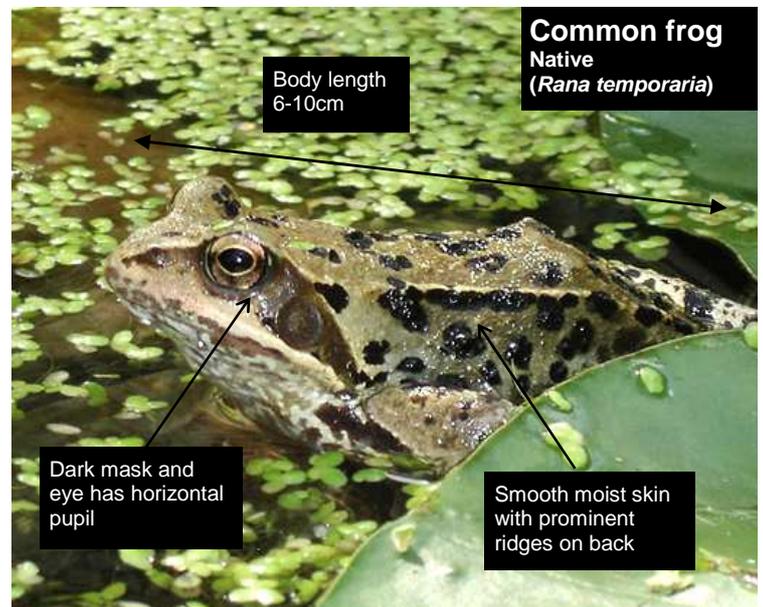


Source: Various

Similar Species



Common toad
Native
(*Bufo bufo*)



Common frog
Native
(*Rana temporaria*)

Both adult common toads and common frogs are considerably larger than the Midwife toad. Common toads and common frogs also have horizontal pupils. Neither of these species carry their eggs on their hind legs, but lay directly into still freshwater bodies.

Chytrid Fungus

Midwife toads are possible carriers of the chytrid fungus *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*. This can cause the disease chytridiomycosis which seriously affects some amphibian species. Cases of chytrid infection have been discovered in native amphibians in some parts of the UK.

Chytrid fungus is water-borne and so can be accidentally spread between water bodies. When looking for species in and around a water body, disinfect all footwear and equipment before moving to other water bodies to avoid spreading the disease.

References and further reading:

Arnold, N E & Ovenden, D W (2002) "*Collins Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Britain and Europe*". HarperCollins

Beebee, T and Griffiths, R (2000) "*Amphibians and reptiles: A Natural History of the British Herpetofauna*". HarperCollins

<http://www.alienencounters.org.uk>

http://www.herpfrance.com/amphibian/common_midwife_toad_alytes_obstetricans.php