

Pool Frog: European Protected Species

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ENGLAND



Adult male pool frog. Photo: Jim Foster/Natural England.

The Pool frog *Rana lessonae* has a more pointed snout than the common frog, closer set eyes and relatively shorter hind legs. Adults grow to around 65mm. The general colouration is brown with darker brown, black, green and yellow markings, most notably a pale vertebral stripe.

The male pool frog has white vocal sacs on either side of the head which are conspicuous when it calls, while the male common frog simply inflates a single vocal sac in the throat area. During the breeding season, male pool frogs develop golden or greenish colouration on the front half of their bodies.

Distribution

The pool frog became extinct in England in the 1990's and hence was not listed as a European protected species in the Habitats Regulations 1994. Drainage, changes in land management and habitat loss were the main factors contributing to its extinction.

Genetic studies and analyses of mating calls demonstrate clearly that the English native pool frogs were part of a distinct northern group (or clade), along with animals from Norway and Sweden. This northern clade pool frog is rare and threatened and shows distinct differences from pool frogs elsewhere.

The native form of the pool frog occurs at only one site, near Thetford in Norfolk, where they were reintroduced from 2005-8. These frogs were imported from Sweden, as the

reintroduction needed to use frogs closely related to the native English populations. The reintroduction project was organised and undertaken by a range of partners, including Natural England, The Herpetological Conservation Trust, Forestry Commission, Anglian Water, University of Greenwich and University of Sussex and the Institute of Zoology.

Pool frogs from central and southern Europe have been released at several sites in southern England but are of no conservation importance, as they are not considered native. They can be distinguished from the native form by their calls, colouration and - if necessary - genetic analyses. Central and southern pool frogs tend to have more green in the colouration, while northern clade (native) pool frogs are predominantly brown.

Habitat and Lifecycle

Pool frogs breed in medium-sized ponds in open areas close to woodland. Spawn is laid from May to June, with froglets emerging in late August and September. Pool frogs are highly aquatic during the active season, spending most time in or very close to the water. They prey mainly on invertebrates at or just above the water's surface, and activity is highest in hot weather. Pool frogs hibernate on land from October to April, in crevices providing protection against the cold.

Legislation

From 1 October 2008 the Pool frog is protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &C.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). As a European protected species the deliberate capturing, disturbing, injuring or killing of this species is prohibited, as is damage or destruction of its breeding sites or resting places (note that this is a simplified summary of the legislation, which can be viewed in full at

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1994/Uksi_19942716_en_1.htm)

Further Details

Further information on pool frogs and the legislation protecting them will be issued by Natural England shortly.

For questions regarding Wildlife Licensing please telephone 0845 6014523 (local rate) or email wildlife@naturalengland.or.uk



Adult female pool frog

Photo: Jim Foster/Natural England.