



A frog he would a-woooing go!

Feb 19th 10.45am - It was raining and Janet & I had been drinking our coffee and watching migration in progress through the window for about half an hour.

3 frogs had leaped across our garden and into our pond. They crossed the lawn (not by the easiest more direct route) until they came to a low wall. They then skirted that, climbed a low bank, then hopped into the pond. 1 frog tried to climb the mossy wall but fell off and had to go round.

They moved independently of each other. They made a few hops, then stopped anywhere between 1 minute and about 10. Then took another few hops before stopping again. Were they getting their bearings?

Later I checked the pond - the small disturbances indicated only 3 frogs.

Feb 20th 10.00am - The weather is warmer and drier and there is pandemonium in the pond. The first 3 have company. There is upheaval - many frogs & spawn (see pic.).

I was disappointed that I did not take a migrating frog pic., so I decided to try to catch a lone male to re-enact the migration. Whenever I got within sight of the pond they all dived. So I tried standing against the fence holding my net on the edge of the water. After a while they began to pop up but at the slightest twitch of the net – they were gone. So I gave up. At about 8pm, I took out a flashlight to look at the pond. I could see several frogs lying under the water asleep but by the time I had organised my net and a bucket of water they had gone down into the weeds.

All except one 'couple' that were motionless suspended in the water. Which seemed odd but when I netted them – it was a 'menage a trois'. The second male was clasping the side of the female, which seemed to paralyse her. I tipped them onto the bank and prodded the second male until he let go. The couple then crawled back into the water. I tipped the second male into my bucket and decided to leave him there until morning to cool his ardour.

Feb 21st 10.30am – Dry, bright and cooler. I tipped the frog onto the grass and expected him to rapidly re-enact his migration, so I set my camera for speed. It had been quite cool during the night and the water in the bucket was cold, so he just lay there in a torpor (see pic). Of course, if he was not one of my 3 frogs, he might have originally approached the pond from a different direction, and was just confused. In the end, I took pity on him, and put him back in the pond. Whereupon he immediately dived down under the weeds.

The pond was quieter, no doubt due to the lower temperature and fatigued frogs.

I also saw a few newts, so they can look forward to 'free-range' tadpole on their menu.



Feb 22nd 2pm. I am afraid that when the 'Beast from the East' arrives – the frog spawn will get frozen. Although some at the bottom, would probably survive Heather wonders whether I can save some spawn by covering it over. I was preparing to do this when I decide to lift out a clump and put it in a bucket of water. This is so easy that I fill 4 buckets with nearly all the spawn, and put it in the shed until the weather improves.

Feb 23rd 1pm. The pond is covered with a thin layer of ice. I can see coupled frogs swimming about underneath, so I break up a large area. My precautions were just in time for the spawn – assuming they survive.

The beast blew in and the pond froze, as did the water in the buckets of spawn in the shed. Then it snowed. Soon the snow melted and an inch of water lay over the ice. Frogs could be seen swimming around under the ice, although one was entombed in the ice. After a few days the ice melted, but the entombed frog had disappeared, so I presume it survived.

Mar 1st. A few frogs can be seen with two fresh mounds of spawn. I pour the 4 buckets of spawn into the pond, where it sinks to the bottom. Will it survive after being frozen?

Over the next week more and more spawn is laid and it is obvious that there are many more frogs. The frogs took about 30 minutes to think I was just part of the fence.



Mar 10th 2pm. I estimate there must be over 30 frogs in the pond, and there is a fair amount of activity and a few croaks. How can they find enough to eat? The additional new spawn is more than twice as much as there was before the freeze. How will that amount of tadpoles survive? I see only 1 newt – were they caught

in the ice?

Mar 11th 1pm. I see a frog hopping rapidly away from the pond. I expect he is hungry.

Mar 12th 12 noon. There are still a number of active frogs but some more must have legged it. I see a few newts. They will be spoiled by the sheer volume of food waiting to emerge.

Mar 13th 11am. The original batch of spawn is clogging the pump for the waterfall. I have had to cul about half of them - there are far too many for the pond. Pity – the tadpoles were beginning to develop.

Has anyone a recipe for cooking frog's legs or using the spawn as a basis for a soup or sauce. Although there is some urgency in using up the latter, before the supply disappears.

DM