

Smooth (Common) Newt (*Triturus vulgaris*)



During the breeding season they're found in ponds, where they lay eggs individually, with each egg wrapped in the leaves of pond plants. Newt larvae develop their front legs first and have feathery external gills behind their heads. In late summer, both juvenile newts and adults leave the water. They can often be found sheltering in damp soil beneath logs and rocks. Newts eat frog tadpoles, as well as water and land invertebrates. Newts also have the ability to regenerate limbs, eyes, spinal cords,

hearts, intestines, and upper and lower jaws! How clever is that!

ID tips: Both males and females are brown in colour with spotty, orange bellies, with black spots extending up the throat. They can reach up to 10cm long and the males have a wavy crest along their backs.

Tawny mining bee (*Adrena fulva*)



This solitary bee nests in burrows in open ground. It makes volcano-like mounds of soil at its nest entrance in lawns and mown banks. The bright orange females forage on spring blossoms.

When to see them: March-June.

ID tips: Thick orange coat. Black leg and face hairs. Collects pollen on legs.

Field mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*)



Field mice thrive in woodland, rough grassland and gardens. They eat seeds, snails, insects, fruit, berries, nuts and mushrooms.

ID tips: Varied sandy brown fur and a white to grey belly. Its tail is about the same length as its head and body, with large back feet for leaping. They don't smell strongly (unlike a house mouse!)

Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*)



Common frogs are a regular visitor to garden ponds, where they feast on slugs and snails. They hibernate during the winter in pond mud or under piles of rotting leaves, logs or stones. They can breathe through their skin as well as their lungs. In spring males croak to attract females.

ID tips: The common frog varies in colour enormously, from green to brown and even red or yellow. It has smooth skin, a dark mask behind the eyes (think Zorro) and long back legs, covered in dark bands. It hops and jumps rather than walks, and lays spawn in large jelly-like clumps. They are most active at night.

Blue tit (*Cyanistes Caeruleus*)



The Blue tit is a very popular garden bird, due to its perky acrobatic performances when feeding. It can be often seen swinging beneath the holder, calling "tee, tee, tee" or a scolding "churr". The blue tit is a destroyer of pests. It is also fond of young buds of various trees, and may pull them to bits in the hope of finding insects. No species can eat more scale insects and aphids and so is definitely the gardener's friend. It also eats leaf miner grubs and green tortrix moths as well as seeds.

ID tips: Blue Tits are a colourful mix of blue, yellow and green, with white cheeks and a thin black eyestripe. The yellowness of the underparts of Blue tits depends on the number of yellowy-green caterpillars eaten which contain carotene!

Peacock Butterfly (*Aglais io*)



Stunningly beautiful and vibrantly coloured butterflies that live in woodlands, parks, gardens, and hedgerows, basking in the sun with their wings wide open. The name "Peacock" comes from the large "eye spots" on the butterfly's wings which have the appearance of peacock feathers. Caterpillars feast on nettles (so leave some in your garden). The adult butterflies sip the nectar of different types of flowering plants including clover, dandelion, willow, and buddleia, and play an important role as pollinators. When a Peacock butterfly senses danger, they stop moving, close their wings and pretend to be a leaf to blend in with the surroundings. They also rub their wings together to make a hissing sound to scare off predators.

Stag beetle (*Lucanus servus*)



The Stag Beetle is Britain's largest native ground-dwelling beetle and has horns that look like a stag deer's antlers. These are oversized jaws which are useless for feeding: instead they use them to challenge other males to a duel and to lift their rivals off the ground. It spends nearly all of its life (up to seven years) as a larva eating rotting wood but then lives only a few weeks as an adult. Adults can't feed on solid food – they rely on the fat reserves built up whilst developing as a larva, although they can use their feathery tongue to drink from sap runs and fallen soft fruit. Believe it or not Stag beetles can fly! Males will fly to look for a mate at dusk on humid, thundery evenings between May and August. They are only found in Southern

England, and Cambridgeshire is the northern limit of their range - so leave some rotting wood in a quiet place and keep an eye out for them!

Garden Spider (*Araneus diadematus*)



Garden spiders are widespread and common throughout the UK, except in some areas of northern Scotland. These spiders spin orb webs to catch flying insects. Garden spiders possess poor eyesight, so they must rely on other senses. To catch their prey, they wait near the edges of their webs or in a silk retreat. They monitor their web by holding onto a signal thread with one of the claws on their feet. If they sense any vibrations, they will rush forward to inject their unfortunate prey with paralyzing venom. This venom serves a dual purpose: it helps to sedate their prey and protect the spiders from potential injury. With their prey paralyzed, garden spiders then set about wrapping up their meal with silk. Depending on how much prey is readily available, they may consume their food immediately or save it for later.

Garden spiders can take down prey that measure over two times their size. Every night, garden spiders take down, roll up, and eat their webs so that they can recycle the protein in the silk. Isn't that amazing?

ID tips: Garden spiders vary in colour from pale yellowy-brown to very dark brown, but they all have a characteristic white cross-shaped group of spots on their abdomen - the latin name means "like a cross".

Earwig (*Forficula auricularia*)



Earwigs are mostly nocturnal, and seek out dark cracks and crevices to rest during the day. They are mainly vegetarian scavengers, but will eat carrion and other insects. Although they have wings, earwigs are usually reluctant to fly. Unlike most insects, a female earwig is a good mother. She lays 30-50 eggs and protects them through the winter. When they hatch, she feeds and tends the nymphs until they are able to fend for themselves. ID tips: Earwigs have a set of pincers that protrudes out of their very flexible abdomen - used to fend off an attacking predator or used to catch prey. They may

also use them in their mating rituals. You can identify a male vs female earwig quite easily by looking at their pincers. A male will have two distinct curved pincers while a female has two more narrow straight pincers.

Common banded Hoverfly (*Syrphus ribesii*)



There are more than 270 species of hoverfly in the UK, ranging in size from a few millimetres to 2cm. The common banded hoverfly is a very common hoverfly found along hedgerows, and in gardens and woodlands. Adults feed on the nectar of flowers and help to pollinate them, while the larvae are predators of aphids, so a great gardener's friend on both accounts! They mimic the colours and patterns of wasps and bees but they have no sting. This hoverfly has multiple broods; adults are seen throughout spring and summer, while the larvae survive the winter as pupae

ID tips: The common banded hoverfly has a rounded, black body with a pattern of yellow spots and bands. Many hoverflies can be tricky to identify, requiring a microscope to look at tiny characters, such as the shape of the veins in the wings. Try making a hoverfly lagoon for your garden and identify the many different species of hoverflies that hatch out!

Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)



Our most common owl species, tawny owls can often be heard at night, twit-twooing in woodlands. The tawny owl typically makes its nest in a tree hole where it can protect its eggs and young against potential predators. It is non-migratory and highly territorial: as a result, when young birds grow up and leave the parental nest in the autumn, they need to quickly find a vacant territory to claim, to survive the winter.

The tawny owl is nocturnal so it is often heard calling at night, but much less often seen. In the daytime, you may see one only if you disturb it inadvertently from its roost site in woodland up against a tree trunk or among ivy. Look for pellets below roosting places.

ID tips: Tawny Owls can be distinguished by their chestnut brown body with black spots on its wings, back and belly, with a ring of dark feathers around its face surrounding the dark eyes, and is the size of a woodpigeon. Tawny Owls also have large yellow eyes that help them see as they hunt mostly at night.

Tawnies do not hoot like other owls but instead the males make a "tu-whit tu-who" sound to communicate with each other; both males and females also make the haunting "ke-wick" call. You can imitate the sound of a male tawny owl by blowing through cupped hands. A study found that more than 90% of owls will talk back to you!

Fun fact: Tawny owls are famous for the fierce defence of their young: bird ringers usually wear crash helmets with visors to protect themselves when ringing baby tawnies.

Pipistrelle Bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)



The common pipistrelle is our smallest and most common bat, with reddish-brown coats and blackish-brown ears, nose and wing membranes. It is so tiny, it can fit into a matchbox! Like other bats, pipistrelles are nocturnal, emerging at dusk to feed for a couple of hours before returning to their roosts. Despite its tiny size, it can easily eat 3,000 insects a night. They feed on midges, moths and other flying insects that they find in the dark by using high pitched shrieks to echo-locate, well above the range of human hearing. They roost in tree holes, bat boxes and even the roof spaces of houses, often in small colonies. During the summer, females form maternity colonies and have just a single pup each. Look out for common pipistrelles darting about as they hunt for insects in gardens or around street-lights just after sunset. Its flight is rapid with lots of twists and turns. They hibernate

over winter, usually between November and April, but may come out to feed on warm days.