



What to look for in February

In **February** look out for **Hazel** trees, with their catkins hanging from the branches. Small, red flowers are also visible. Well adapted for pollination by the wind, the long male catkins blow about releasing large quantities of pollen. When it lands on a female flower a tube grows from the pollen grain towards the base of the style. After fertilisation, the nut develops and ripens by late August.



Don't confuse the hazel catkins with **Alder**. Like Hazel, Alder trees bear both male and female parts.

Lt: Alder catkins & cones
Rt: Hazel Catkins

The male catkins remain on the tree throughout the tree's dormant months before they open in early spring and shed their pollen. The female cones are smaller than the catkins and are red in colour, appearing alongside the catkins before the new leaves come out. Once pollinated, the cones grow larger and their colour changes from red to green. The cones eventually drop their seeds in the autumn.



Common Frog

Frogs will start emerging from hibernation in February and search for breeding ponds in which to spawn. Frogs look for still water, such as stagnant ponds and ditches that are filled by rain water. After spawning, most frogs

will return to dry land, coming back to the ponds in late summer. Frogs breed before

Toads, which emerge from hibernation slightly later and lay their eggs around water plants, in ribbon-like strands 2-3 metres in length. They need deeper, better oxygenated water than frogs, so look for them in or near bigger ponds. As with frogs, toads are generally more active at night, males croak to attract females and cling to the back of the females to fertilise the eggs (spawn) as they are laid.



Common Toad